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Relationship between Social Dysfuction Factors and Femicide Cases among Young Women in Juja Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract: Femicide has increased in the last decade in the global index. In Kenya, femicide occurs under diverse age brackets but recently the trend is high among young women (16-35 years). In particular, the brutal murders of young women: emerging and with increasing trends and incidents in various places call for immediate solutions. The purpose of this study was to examine relationship between social dysfuctions and femicide cases among young women in Juja sub-county. The Feminist theory and Routine activity theory guided the study. The study was done at Juja sub-County in Kiambu County, Kenya. The study adopted a mixed–method research approach, utilizing the embedded design. The target population was 300,948 respondents. The accessible population was 200,510 respondents, out of which a sample of 278 was drawn through the Slovin's formula. The total sample was 288 respondents consisting of the 10 key informants included in the study. The researcher drew the sample using Stratified simple random sampling. Questionnaires and interview schedules were the main instruments of data collection where 245 questionaires were fully filled and returned and all the 10 interviews were conducted succesfully. Reliability was measured through Cronbach Alpha a statistic coefficient (a value between 0 and 1) used to rate the reliability of an instrument and was 0.813. Poisson regression analysis was conducted on the quantitative data with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0 software. Qualitative data was analysed through thematic content analysis utilizing MAXQDA tool. The study established **no statistically significant relationship** between social factors and femicide with a p-value of **.367**, well above the .05 threshold, the model indicated that social variables do not have a direct, independent effect on the number of femicide cases. The study concluded that social dysfunctions alone are not the cause of femicide but is as a result of a more complex, multi-faceted dynamic at play than a simple cause-and-effect and recommended that to reduce these risks, there is a need for **strengthened social support systems**. The study aimed to benefit the policymakers on formulating relevant social policies, inform the society on better societal practices, contribute to the academia theories and literature on femicide, as well as inform young women in adopting femicide prevention strategies.

Keywords: Social dysfunctions and femicide among young women

I. Introduction

political issue of global concern. Femicide is the killing of women and girls because of their gender (Websdale, 2014). It is currently seen through the view of violations of human rights. The problem of femicide is present everywhere in the world, so there is no country that does not need to deal with this phenomenon systematically (Richards, 2023).

According to the United Nations on Drugs and Crimes, globally, approximately 51,100 young women were killed by their intimate partners or other close people known to them during 2023, higher than the 2022 estimate of 48,800 victims. The 2023 figures mean that 60 per cent of the almost 85,000 young women killed intentionally during the year were murdered by their intimate partners or other close people known to them (UNODC 2023). In other words, an average of 140 young women, worldwide lost their lives every day at the hands of their partner or a close person. Worldwide. While the research has been done previously Further investigation on these factors and contexts of young women femicide, including victims aged 16 to 35 years, would improve our understanding of young women femicide and potentially guide the implementation of prevention strategies specifically tailored to the victims.

II. Literature Review

Social dysfunctional elements play a dominant role in femicide among young women because they allow violence, abuse and gender disparities to silently persist. The failure by social institutions to respond properly to gender-based violence stands as a major dysfunctional element (Cohen, 2013). The social institutional inadequacies combined with weak social support and agreements to fight femicide cases that occurs within the society is an important factor in femicide. Many young women especially those who face vulnerability feel unsafe and unsupported by the society hence increased chances of femicide (Twaine, 2012). The ongoing impunity of violent perpetrators exists because these environments provide them with complete assurance that their harmful acts will go unchecked. The absence of institutional responsibility gives abusive behaviors enough freedom to evolve into dangerous situations leading to femicide. According to Radford (2022), institutions with uncertain responses toward violence foster environments of silence and panic which push young women toward dangerous partner agreements and unsafeguarded violent encounters.

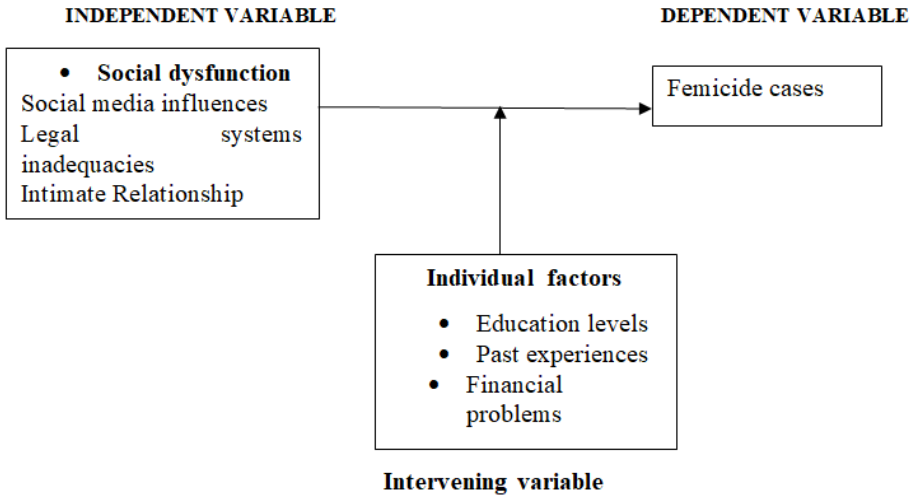
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The social training process frequently establishes a setting that supports justifications for violence against women leading to discontinued interventions (Banyard, 2015). Members of these communities typically accept violence as a suitable means to manage conflict because it helps them maintain control yet this habitual behavior results in tragedies of femicide, when violence escalates beyond controlled levels. Gender stereotypes held by peer groups because males need dominance together with females needing obedience remain persistent according to (Tepperman, 2017). The harmful environment found in the social spaces creates settings that accept violent dynamics while reducing awareness around femicide cases.

Victim blaming notion enable the rapid dissemination of narratives that frame victims as responsible for their own murders. This is evident in high-profile femicide cases in Kenya, such as the deaths of Sharon Otieno and Ivy Wangeci. Sharon Otieno, a university student who was brutally murdered in 2018, was vilified for her relationship with a married politician. Some labeled her as a "slay queen" and accused her of greed and immorality, effectively shifting blame from the perpetrators to her lifestyle choices (Mutua, 2020). Similarly, Ivy Wangeci, a medical student killed by a rejected admirer in 2019, faced posthumous scrutiny online. They suggested that her rejection of the perpetrator's advances and alleged material demands provoked her murder (Macharia J.2020). These narratives not only dehumanized her but also diverted attention from the act of violence to her perceived faults (Macharia, 2016).

Despite these important insights, there are also limitations in these analyzed factors and further studies are needed to explore more on issues of intimate relationships which is a crucial issue among young women, social media influences especially with the developed technological dynamics and also legal systems inadequacies and how these factors interconnect to cause femicide among young women. Eventually, such studies will help to develop better strategies to fighting the issue of femicide.

Conceptual Framework



III. Methodology

This study was carried out at Juja sub-County in Kiambu County, Kenya. The target population was 300,948 residents of Juja sub-county as per the official demographic statistics (Census, 2019). This sub-county has five wards; these are Murera, Theta, Juja,Witeithie and Kalimoni ward. The study used a mixed-method research design called embedded design. Research design are the various approaches that the researcher uses in answering research questions (Creswell, 2019). In this design, quantitative and qualitative components were combined at the same time. One method is given less priority, either quantitative or qualitative and then it will be embedded within the dominant method (Greene & Caracelli,1997). The quantitative method was dominant and qualitative method was embedded in this study

The target population for this research was 300,948 population of Juja sub-county as per the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census. Saunders (2007) defines the target population as the members of the real and hypothetical set of people, objects or events that the researcher intends to generalize the results of the research. The accessible population was 200,510 adult population of Juja sub-county. It consisted of both male and female gender. The population comprised respondents from different locations in the sub-county among the five wards. A sample size of 278 respondents was used in this study. 10 key informants from all the wards were purposively selected, comprising of the security officials i.e., police, and the community activists who provided a complementary insight on femicide.

From the accessible population of 200,510, a sample size was drawn using Slovin's formulae (Slovin, 1960):

$$n = \frac{N}{1+Ne^2}$$

$$n = \frac{200510}{1+200510(0.06)^2}$$

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$$n = \frac{200510}{722.836}$$

$$n = 277.393$$

Thus, the sample size is 278 respondents

The research instruments were questionnaires and interview schedules. The questionnaires leaned towards the objectives of the study to ensure validity. The questionnaires were used to collect data from the Juja subcounty residents and the interviews were used to collect data from key informants(police and gender activists). The questionnaires had closedended questions for the female inmates. The questionnaire also used Likert scale items extensively. There were four sections in the questionnaires; three addressing the objectives of this study and one section gathering biodata. The questionnaires were a key part of this research.

From the interview schedule, the key informants provided information useful to the research and suggested solutions. 10 of them participated in addressing the interview schedules.

The questionnaires were evaluated before the actual study to check for appropriateness and validity. The objectives of the study were also checked with the questionnaires to ensure alignment of purpose. Seeking counsel from supervisors and experts in the field assisted to sight gaps and areas that needed adjustments. Corrections were part of the process of ensuring the questionnaires were effective. Validity is about how well research findings show similarity between participants and true findings among individuals outside the study. A study instrument is valid when it can measure appropriately the different variables and how the variables influence each other and interact (Bryman, 2016).

A pilot study took place at Nairobi County, Kenya. Meru GK Prison and Embu GK Prison are similar only that the latter has fewer inmates. Nairobi county was chosen because it has similar characteristics with the primary study area and also, its proximity to Kiambu County for easier logistics.

A pilot study aims at testing for reliability and gauging the internal consistency of the questionnaire. The researcher employed the Cronbach alpha coefficient to test for internal consistency. The Cronbach alpha is a statistical coefficient that is a value between 0 and 1, used to test how reliable an instrument is. After getting the feedback, the data set was split into two and a score for participants was calculated from each half of the scale. Cronbach alpha value of at least 0.75 was acceptable and indicated reliability (Allibang, 2020). The same scores on each half indicated high correlation and reliability. The test gave a 0.816 result meaning that the research instruments were reliable.

The table below shows the Cronbach alpha test results:

Table 1: Reliability Test on Pilot Data

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.816	28

Data collection is the process of collecting data for purposes of study using the relevant sources (Allibang, 2020). The data collection procedure had the researcher secure an introductory letter from the Tharaka University Research Ethics Committee that assisted in obtaining a research permit from the National

Council of Science and Technology (NACOSTI) before starting the research process. The researcher sought permission from the Commissioner of Prisons before conducting any physical visits to the prisons. The researcher visited various institutions of interest and informed them of the intention to collect data. The researcher proceeded to sample and obtain the participants from the list of names offered. The researcher introduced the participants to the purpose of the research and sought their consent to participate in the research.

IV. Results And Discussions

The analysis was both qualitative and quantitative. Descriptive statistics like proportions, means, frequencies, and standard deviation were the data analysis and data were presented in tables. The researcher used Poisson regression to analyze the relationship of the independent variables and the dependent variable and thematic content analysis was used to analyze qualitative data. Quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS Statistics V26).

Respondents Response Rate

A sum of 278 questionnaires was distributed to residents across the five wards of Juja Sub-County. Out of these, 245 were successfully filled and returned, representing a response rate of 88.1%, which is within the acceptable range of 80%–100% as recommended for research standards (Morton, 2012).In addition, all 10 key informants purposively selected for interviews comprising 5 gender activists and 5 security officials fully participated, giving a 100% response rate for the qualitative component. This strong response enhanced the reliability and completeness of the study findings. The response distribution is summarized in Table 3 below.

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Table 3: Response Rate Summary

Respondent	Sample	Responses	Percentage (%)
Residents	278	245	88.1
Informants	10	10	100
Total	288	255	88.5

Distribution of Respondents by Age

This subsection presents the age distribution of respondents who participated in the study. Out of the 245 participants, the majority were within the 25–30 age group, representing 45.4% of the total sample. The age group with the fewest respondents was 46 and above, accounting for 10.6% of the sample. This distribution reflects the focus of the study on young women and the population dynamics within the sub-county. Compared to some international trends for example, a study by Bronson (2017) that noted a higher prevalence of certain age groups in violent crime victimization in the U.S .This study's findings show a higher concentration of affected individuals to be young , aligned with the Kenyan femicide trend among women aged 16–35.

The age data are summarized in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
16–24	58	23.7	23.7	23.7
25–33	77	31.4	31.4	55.1
34–42	30	12.25	12.25	24.6
42-45	30	12.25	24.5	
46 and above	4		20.4	100.0
Total	245	100.0	100.0	

Distribution of Respondents by Level of Education

The majority of respondents had completed secondary education, accounting for 43.3% of the sample. This reflects the dominant educational attainment among young women in the area and suggests a basic level of literacy and awareness. The second most common level was primary education, representing 35.1%, while college or university graduates made up 15.5%. A small portion (6.1%) of the respondents had no formal education, which may point to disparities in educational access within the sub-county.

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by Education Levels

Education Level	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Education	15	6.1%	6.1%	6.1%
Primary Education	86	35.1%	35.1%	41.2%
Secondary Education	106	43.3%	43.3%	84.5%
College/University	38	15.5%	15.5%	100.0%
Total	245	100.0%	100.0%	—

Distribution of Respondents by Gender

While the main focus of the research was on femicide cases among young women, male respondents were also included to provide a broader community perspective on the contextual risk factors contributing to femicide in Juja Sub-County.

Out of the 245 respondents who successfully returned the questionnaires, approximately 61.2% were female, and 38.8% were male. This was consistent with the sampling design, which prioritized the inclusion of young women due to their direct relevance to the study topic. The presence of male respondents added value by offering insights into societal norms, gender dynamics, and community awareness surrounding femicide cases.

The distribution is summarized in Table 6 below.

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Table 6: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	163	61.2%	61.2%	61.2%
Male	82	38.8%	38.8%	38.8%
Total	245	100.0%	100.0%	—

Normality Test

To determine whether the dataset met the assumptions required for parametric statistical analysis, a normality test was conducted using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests.

Factor	**W-statistic**	**p-value**	**Interpretation**
Eco_Mean	0.894	0.377	Data is **normal** ($p > 0.05$)
Cul_Mean	0.777	0.052	Data is normal
Social_Mean	0.900	0.409	Data is **normal** ($p > 0.05$)

Data Analysis

All research instruments were consistently applied to this objective. The questionnaires used a Likert scale to measure the degree of agreement, ranging from 1 to 5, where: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. Additional views were gathered from key informant interviews with gender activists and police officers. The analysis of the findings is presented as follows: In regard to social media facilitating deceptive romantic approaches. The mean score for this item is 4.1, indicating a high level of agreement among respondents. About 66.9% agreed or strongly agreed that social media platforms are used to deceptively approach young women. Only 18.8% disagreed, while 14.3% were neutral. This reflects a strong perception that digital platforms are playing a role in exposing young women to risky relationships that may escalate to femicide.

A majority of **71.1%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this claim that **Young women are lured into dangerous spaces via social media**. The mean score is **3.9**, showing strong agreement. Just **15.1%** of respondents disagreed and **13.8%** were neutral. These findings affirm the concern that social media is an active tool in drawing young women into exploitative or dangerous interactions.

On the statement that there are no strict law enforcement measures, **only 14.3%** disagreed or strongly disagreed, while a much larger **73%** agreed or strongly agreed. The mean score of **3.5** and relatively high **SD of 1.28** reveal a weak perception of law enforcement effectiveness in protecting women. These results suggest systemic legal inadequacies that could enable femicide.

A substantial **73.5%** agreed or strongly agreed that legal delays are common in cases concerning young women. The mean score of **3.9** further supports this concern. Only **14.3%** of respondents disagreed. These delays may reduce access to justice and increase victim femicide vulnerability.

A strong **78.4%** of participants agreed or strongly agreed that violence is present in many young women's relationships, with a mean of **4.0**. This validates the frequent connection between intimate partner violence and femicide. These conflicts combined with poor decision making, poor self-control and lack of experience leads to poor solving of issues with physical abuse being involved and to extreme levels femicide.

In regards to experiences of jealousy, control and possessiveness, most **72.8%** agreed or strongly agreed while 8.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 12.7% were neutral. With a mean of **3.9**, this suggests that toxic behaviors such as control, unfaithfulness, and jealousy are prevalent and likely contributing factors to femicide. This aligns with prior findings that femicide is often preceded by emotional abuse and coercive control.

Table 12: Influence of Social Dysfunctions on Femicide (N = 245)

Statement	**1 (%)**	**2 (%)**	**3 (%)**	**4 (%)**	**5 (%)**	**Mean**	**SD**
Social media facilitates deceptive approaches	27 11.0%	19 7.8%	35 14.3%	65 26.5%	99 40.4%	3.8	1.20
Young women lured via social media	176.9%	20 8.2%	34 13.8%	92 37.6%	82 33.5%	3.8	1.18
No strict law enforcement measures	23 9.4%	39 15.9%	4116.7%	8032.7%	62 25.3%	2.6	1.26
Legal process delaysfor women’s cases	14 5.7%	218.6%	30 12.2%	96 39.2%	84 34.3%	3.9	1.09
Intimate partner conflict observed	10 4.1%	17 6.9%	26 10.6%	101 41.2%	91 37.2%	4.0	1.03

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Jealousy, control in marriage	13 5.3%	22 9.0%	31 12.7%	89 36.3%	90 36.7%	3.9	1.10
Average Mean: 3.67 **Average SD: 1.14**							

The data clearly shows that social dysfunctions in the immediate environment of young women plays a crucial role in shaping violent tendencies that may eventually lead to femicide.

The Poisson regression was calculated to measure the strength of the relationship between social dysfunction indicators and femicide. The analysis also found **no statistically significant relationship** between social factors and femicide.

Parameter	Value	df	Significance (p-value)	Interpretation
Social	.814	1	**.367**	The relationship between social factors and femicide is not statistically significant.

With a p-value of **.367**, well above the .05 threshold, our model indicates that social variables do not have a direct, independent effect on the number of femicide cases. This outcome suggests that social dynamics contributing to femicide may not be easily isolated but are instead part of a larger systemic issue.

Our findings reveal that none of these factors, when considered in isolation, have a statistically significant relationship with femicide. This suggests a more complex, multi-faceted dynamic is at play than a simple cause-and-effect model would indicate.

Despite the lack of significance for individual predictors, the overall model fits the data very well. The **Deviance** and **Pearson Chi-Square** values were **.013** with 1 degree of freedom. Both of these values, when divided by their degrees of freedom, are very close to one, which indicates that our model adequately describes the observed variation in the data. The goodness of fit confirms that the model is well-specified and provides a reliable framework for future research into the intricate relationships between these factors and femicide.

To better understand how social dysfunctions, contribute to femicide among young women, the researcher interviewed gender activists and police officers within Juja Sub-County. The responses were categorized according to three key themes: social media influence, legal system inadequacies, and relationship-related risks.

These themes reflected the indicators in the conceptual framework. Interviewees were asked to share their perspectives and lived experiences dealing with cases of femicide, gender-based violence, and systemic challenges. Their insights provided in-depth qualitative context to the statistical results captured from the questionnaire.

Stakeholders observed that social media has increasingly become a deceptive gateway through which young women are trapped into relationships that expose them to harm, including femicide. According to both gender activists and police officers, platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram are commonly used by perpetrators to present false identities, offer fake job opportunities, or lure women with material promises. Here are some of the views.

"We have had many cases where young women were contacted online by men pretending to be offering jobs or relationships, only for them to end up in abusive environments—some were found dead days later. It's becoming common, especially where young women are desperate for work or attention."
(Informant 3, Female, 12th July 2025)

"There are real cases we're following right now where the victim was last seen going to meet a man she met on Facebook. These digital interactions are not being monitored well, and many young women fall for them."
(informant1, Male, 13th July 2025)

These responses indicate that media platforms vulnerability, especially in emotionally unstable situations, can expose young women to fatal outcomes. Social media creates easy access for predators, especially when the victims lack digital literacy or oversight.

In discussing how laws and law enforcement contribute to or prevent femicide, most respondents were critical of the effectiveness and implementation of gender protection laws in Juja Sub-County. While Kenya has a legal framework in place (e.g., the Sexual Offences Act, Protection against Domestic Violence Act), enforcement was described as slow, dismissive, and under-resourced. A police officer admitted that:

"We do have laws, yes, but most officers are not properly trained to handle femicide cases. Sometimes, reports are treated as 'domestic misunderstandings' until it's too late and someone dies."
(Informant 5, Male, 14th July 2025)

Similarly, a gender activist pointed out that

"Young women file complaints, but due to case backlog, lack of legal aid, and sometimes corruption, the suspects are released and end up harming or killing more women. The system does not protect them."
(Respondent 2, Female, 13th July 2025)

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Some respondents also noted that delayed investigations and poor witness protection discourage many survivors from reporting threats or abuse, even when their lives are at risk. These sentiments align with questionnaire findings where over 70% of respondents agreed that legal delays contribute to femicide vulnerability. A major consensus among stakeholders was that intimate partner relationships are the leading drivers of femicide cases in the area. Respondents noted a pattern: most femicide cases are not random acts of violence, but rather final escalations of long-term abuse, control, jealousy, unfaithfulness and emotional manipulation.

A gender activist reflected:

"We've lost too many girls because they were trying to leave abusive relationships. The boyfriends couldn't handle rejection and decided to kill them. It always starts with control, checking her phone, isolating her, threatening her and it ends in death."
(Respondent 4, Female, 12th July 2025)

A police officer also revealed:

"The hardest part is that most of these killings were predictable. There were threats, there were past assaults, but the women never felt protected enough to run or report. Some felt ashamed, others feared being judged."
(Respondent 6, Male, 13th July 2025)

These qualitative findings mirror international and regional studies. For instance, UN Women (2022) emphasized that most femicide cases globally are committed by intimate partners, and early warning signs often go ignored. Similarly, Africa UNiTE Campaign flagged weak justice systems and social media exploitation as emerging contributors to femicide in urban and peri-urban Kenya. The insights from gender activists and police officers highlight the multidimensional risk posed by social dysfunctions. From digital deception, systemic failure, to toxic intimacy, young women in Juja Sub-County face compounding threats that can lead to fatal outcomes. The stakeholders' voices reveal urgent gaps in prevention, legal protection, and public awareness

V. Summary, Conclusions, And Recommendations

The following are the summary findings of this study:

Social dysfunctions particularly social media manipulation, weak legal enforcement, and toxic romantic relationships were revealed to be a major contributor to femicide. The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that social dysfunctions play a significant role in femicide. Specifically, 82.9% agreed that social media manipulation contribute to femicide, while 81.6% agreed that intimate relationship issues is also a major risk in femicide cases. Moreover, a majority cited delays in legal proceedings as persistent problem in causing femicide. The overall mean score for this objective was 4.05. The Poisson regression analysis found **no statistically significant relationship** between social factors and femicide. With a p-value of **.367**, well above the .05 threshold, the model indicated that social variables do not have a direct, independent effect on the number of femicide cases.

Qualitative data from interviews further reinforced these findings. They highlighted how jealousy, control, and infidelity were recurring indicators in femicide cases.

Policy Recommendations

i. Public campaigns targeting both young women and men should promote awareness on digital safety, healthy online relationships, and how to detect manipulative behaviors online.

ii. Law enforcement agencies should fast-track investigations and prosecutions related to femicide cases. Gender desks in police stations must be strengthened and made youth-friendly and survivor-centered.

iii. The county government and NGOs should invest in psycho-social support, particularly for couples and young people. Relationship education should be integrated into youth programs, churches, and social media platforms.

iv. The government should integrate findings on social dysfunctions into the review and update of current gender policies in the country.

v. They should also prioritize multi-sectoral responses that address root causes such as unemployment, mental health, and social exclusion.

vi. Establishing community watch networks and safe spaces for at-risk women and girls.

vii. Training local leaders, social workers, and law enforcement on identifying early signs of social dysfunction that may escalate to femicide.

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