

**THE EFFICACY OF MORAL EDUCATION IN ADDRESSING GENDER-BASED
VIOLENCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN VIHIGA COUNTY,
KENYA: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH**

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**A Thesis Submitted to the School of Education in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy of
Education of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology**

November, 2025

DECLARATION

I declare that this is my original work prepared with no other than the indicated sources and has not been presented elsewhere for a degree or any other award.

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EEP/H/01-70376/2022

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned approve that they have read and hereby recommend for acceptance of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology a research thesis entitled: **'The efficacy of moral education in addressing gender-based violence in public secondary schools in Vihiga county, Kenya: A phenomenological approach'**

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DEDICATION

This research thesis is dedicated to my grandmother Teresia Onyango Were and
Hon.Dick Maungu Oyugi.

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ABSTRACT

Moral education had long been recognized as a cornerstone of character development, emphasizing respect, empathy, and justice. In the context of secondary education, moral education provides students with tools to navigate through ethical dilemmas and it fosters respectful relationships. However, the persistence of gender-based violence (GBV) in schools underscored a gap in translating moral education into actionable change. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the efficacy of moral education in addressing gender-based violence in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya, using a phenomenological approach. Three main objectives guided the study: To examine lived experiences of teachers on the effectiveness of moral education in addressing GBV in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya, to investigate the lived experiences of teachers on the role of moral education in curbing GBV in secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya and to establish effective moral strategies in mitigating GBV in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya. The study was guided by Aristotelian theory of virtue ethics. Additionally, the study employed phenomenological hermeneutic and critical methods. Purposive sampling was used to recruit five guidance and counseling teachers from five public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya. At the same time, unstructured interviews were employed to collect primary data. Data was analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's six steps. The study established that moral education is a crucial component in the development of students' ethical beliefs and perceptions, especially regarding GBV. Secondly lived experience of teachers revealed that they understood that moral education could help in preventing GBV, but they encountered several barriers in its practice. Also, it was found that in order to improve the effectiveness of moral education in combating GBV, schools should incorporate more participatory teaching methods and engage with parents and communities more actively. The study recommended that, the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders should design training programs that will enable teachers to teach moral education and handle issues to do with GBV, the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) should ensure that moral education curriculum is well structured and should include issues to do with GBV and schools should involve parents and other members of the community in moral education programs to enhance ethical standards outside the classroom environment.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GBV – Gender-Based Violence

MDG – Millennium Development Goals

MMUST – Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

NACOSTI – National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation

PBIS – Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

PSHE – Personal, Social, and Health Education

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) – Any act of physical, emotional, sexual, or psychological harm directed at an individual based on their gender. This includes sexual harassment, physical assault, bullying, and discriminatory practices that negatively affect students' safety and well-being in secondary schools.

Lived Experiences – Teachers' personal accounts and subjective interpretations regarding their encounters with GBV and moral education.

Moral Education – A structured approach to teaching ethical principles and virtues such as respect, empathy, justice, and responsibility.

Phenomenological Approach – A qualitative research method exploring and understanding individuals lived experiences and perceptions.

Public Secondary Schools in Vihiga County – Government-funded secondary education institutions within Vihiga County, Kenya.

Virtue Ethics – A philosophical framework developed by Aristotle focuses on cultivating moral character through the consistent practice of virtues.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, justifications of the study, assumptions of the study, significance of the study, study limitations and delimitations.

1.1 Background to the study

Moral education has been one of the most important aspects of character education that focuses on respect, empathy, and justice. In the context of secondary education, moral education enables students to make the right decisions in ethical issues and to respect other people. From the perspective of virtue ethics, this is in line with Aristotle's view that education is a process of habituation of virtues. However, moral education cannot be theoretical; it has to develop practical reason or phronesis the ability to use ethical knowledge in practice. Without this, students may know what is right but are not able to do it. The persistence of GBV in schools is a failure in moral education as well as in moral practice, the gap between the knowledge of the good and the practice of the good.

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a prevalent issue in the world, and it cuts across all age, economic, and cultural demographics. Its existence in education sector reduces the quality of education and limits the opportunities of students, especially girls, in various countries (Wangamati et al., 2022). From a deontological point of view, this is a clear violation of the moral imperative to respect the dignity of every human being. Ethics of care, which focuses on attentiveness and relational responsibility, also reveals how educational institutions fail to address the emotional and relational costs of GBV.

Therefore, moral education cannot only teach students about values but also make them become responsible, caring, and safe individuals in practice.

Moral education in the United States is a complex process that is implemented in schools and is based on character education, ethical reasoning, and respect. Moral education initiatives may be linked to other educational objectives, including SEL, anti-bullying, and equity (Parkes, 2015). These initiatives are evidence of the desire to produce moral persons in society. However, from the critical pedagogy perspective, one has to wonder if such programs enable the students to question and transform the oppressive structures such as gender violence. For moral education to be effective in its transformative role, it cannot be a mere process of imparting knowledge but should enable students to engage with injustice in their daily lives. This means that ethics should be based on both the cognitive perspective and the moral subjectivity.

In the U.S., character education programs such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) focus on values like empathy, respect, and responsibility (Horner & Monzalve-Macaya, 2018). These programs seek to foster school environments that do not allow for negative behaviours such as bullying and harassment. From the virtue ethics point of view, such programs aim at developing ethical values in students by integrating ethical practices into their learning process. However, the philosophical question here is whether these habits translate into moral courage, the ability to do the right thing ethically even in difficult or high-risk situations like GBV. Although these initiatives enhance positive interpersonal relationships, their effectiveness in combating GBV has not been given the emphasis it requires (Parkes, 2015). This is a clear indication of the absence of phronesis, which is practical wisdom that would enable the students to

respond appropriately to real life ethical issues. Lack of a coherent national curriculum for moral education makes it challenging to implement across different states and communities, from a deontological perspective, is it possible that such an approach fails in the responsibility to protect every learner's dignity and safety?

Federal policies like Title IX are useful in combating GBV in learning institutions since they provide for equal opportunities and prohibit discrimination and harassment of students (Parkes, 2015). Although Title IX offers a legal framework for addressing GBV, the implementation of moral education to address the root causes of the vice differs. From an ethical perspective, this brings into question the ethical weight of compliance. While legalistic approach is important, it is not enough to bring about moral change on its own. Care ethics imply that to address GBV, it is necessary to provide not only policies but educational practices that are relational and empathetic to the victims. Some schools include lessons on consent, healthy relationships, and gender equality in health or social studies classes. However, if such content is delivered in a perfunctory or fragmented way, it risks becoming an ethical checkbox rather than a transformative learning experience. The Freirean critical pedagogy would pose the following questions: are learners being enabled to challenge the structures that enable GBV or are they just being taught what to do and not to do?

However, these efforts are not well-coordinated, thus creating gaps in addressing the social norms that fuel GBV. Cultural diversity in the United States presents both the prospects and the problems for moral education. The population of the country is diverse, and therefore, it requires culturally appropriate measures that will respect the cultural diversity while upholding the common principles of justice and equity (Parkes, 2016).

According to communitarian ethics, moral education should be based on the common morality but at the same time, cultural differences should be taken into consideration. However, the lack of consistency in programming and the inequalities in resources are problematic for equity and moral consistency. The integration of cultural relevance in moral education programs can be beneficial in the sense that it makes the programs more relevant to the community, but it also poses the danger of moral relativism if the basic human rights are not respected. The conflict is between moral universalism and cultural relativism. Meeting these challenges will require a coordinated approach to policy, practice, and curriculum, so that moral education plays a part in creating safe and welcoming schools. Finally, the question here is, are we preparing students to know the right thing, or to be the right person who can make the right thing happen?

The United Kingdom's approach to addressing GBV in schools is under the safeguarding and child protection policies that seek to provide safe learning environments for students. This is in line with the statutory document Keeping Children Safe in Education where the focus is on the prevention of abuse and the role of schools in promoting healthy relationships and respect for others (Dunne & Salvi, 2014). In curriculum subjects like Personal, Social, and Health Education (PSHE), students learn about issues like consent, equality, and healthy relationships. This curriculum is the main tool through which moral education is incorporated into GBV prevention measures (Dunne & Salvi, 2014). From a virtue ethics perspective, this approach seeks to inculcate moral character through the promotion of empathy, respect, and justice, which are virtues that are important for ethical citizenship. Simultaneously, deontological ethics affirms the emphasis on respect for others as a moral duty, not merely a social ideal. However, the question arises as to

whether such programs foster moral self-regulation or merely teach students to conform to organizational norms.

Moral education in the UK is integrated into the curriculum and focuses on the character education and ethical thinking. PSHE is designed to promote ethical attitudes and behaviors by teaching values like empathy, respect, and justice, as well as providing students with the knowledge of how to challenge unethical attitudes and behaviors. PSHE is usually integrated with other anti-violence programs in schools, including anti-bullying programs, to form a single approach to tackling different types of violence and prejudice. This integrated model is consistent with care ethics, which emphasizes the moral value of relational knowing and emotional attentiveness. Teaching students to recognize harm and respond with empathy is not only about the cognitive aspect of moral development but also the emotional aspect of ethical life. However, a critical pedagogical perspective would ask whether these efforts are sufficient in enabling the students to challenge and change the culture of violence against women. Moral education, in this view, should not only address the behaviour of individuals but also address the culture and policies that perpetuate injustice and violence.

However, there are still some issues that need to be addressed in order to guarantee the proper implementation of moral education and GBV prevention in schools. These differences in resources, teacher training, and regional priorities result in differences in the quality and effectiveness of these programs (Donaldson et al., 2018). Moreover, cultural taboos regarding certain topics such as sexual education or gender identity may limit the effectiveness of GBV-focused interventions. Some schools experience resistance from parents or communities that may consider such topics as sensitive or unsuitable for

learners of a particular age (Yount, Krause & Miedema, 2017). This tension is between ideal theory, the vision of what moral education should accomplish, and non-ideal reality, in which prejudices of society, lack of resources, and political opposition define what is feasible. On the philosophical level, it brings up issues of justice and agency, who gets to determine what values are being taught and whose values are being privileged? Moreover, the Kantian categorical imperative that all people should be treated as ends in themselves means that moral education should be provided to all without watering it down due to local politics or culture. If there is no ethical commitment, moral education may turn into a set of unrelated and uncoordinated practices.

Germany has developed a strong framework for the implementation of moral education in the educational system of the country with the aim of enhancing ethical understanding and appreciation of values such as diversity, respect and human rights. This vision is not far from Kantian ethics, which has its philosophical origin in Germany. In this way, the system is based on the principles of respect for persons and the dignity of every human being, which are deontological principles that do not allow for cultural or social prejudices. The integration of the traditional values with the modern issues like gender equity and violence also has the virtue ethics that aims at developing the character of the people in the society with the virtues of empathy and justice in the society. However, the question here is, are these values taught or are they really practiced in the moral fabric of schools?

One of the most significant characteristics of moral education in Germany is its connection with civic education, which focuses on the development of active citizenship and such values as empathy, justice, and responsibility. This integration is in line with

Aristotle's doctrine's where moral formation is not only individualistic but also aimed at creating a just society. The "Schools Against Violence" initiative in this respect is a practical attempt to achieve moral and civic virtue in the school environment. However, from the perspective of critical pedagogy based on the ideas of Paulo Freire, the following question arises, to what extent do such initiatives help students become agents of change who question the oppressive structures rather than become conformists? Education of human rights is important, but the change must go further and make students understand those rights as a means of fighting the vices.

In this way, the initiative promotes the school's culture of non-violence and non-discrimination of people with disabilities. In this case, care ethics provides a sound theoretical framework. The focus on the relations with other people and their needs corresponds to the moral goal of caring for the school climate. Teachers, as role models and as the ones who encourage ethical discussions, are involved in this model. However, the philosophical question here is , how can one teach justice and empathy if one is a part of a system that is unjust and unempathetic in terms of resources, expectations, and culture?

The promotion of human rights education in Germany is not limited to the classroom but also includes co-curricular activities and community participation (Malenya, 2014). Role-play and critical discussion as the forms of participation are designed to foster moral imagination and practical reason (phronesis) to translate knowledge into practice. This is in line with the experiential learning theories that postulate that ethical understanding is enhanced through practice and reflection. However, the questions here is, are these

opportunities open to all students or does it depend on the availability of resources in the local institution?

However, there are some weaknesses in the moral education system in Germany, especially in the ability to change the existing culture and gender stereotyping. From a critical theory perspective, this raises the question of how progressive values are being taught within systems that are still entrenched in patriarchal and conservative ideologies. The resistance some communities have towards gender equality education raises an ethical dilemma between the global ethical standards and cultural ethical practices.

Moreover, the distribution of resources and teacher training in urban and rural schools is also a justice-based issue. Is it fair to provide moral education to some students but not to others? This resonates with Rawlsian theories of justice in terms of fairness in terms of opportunities and the moral responsibility to tackle systemic injustice. Canada has shown a good example in the fight against GBV through educational and policy measures that incorporate moral education with equity and anti-violence measures. The country's approach is to ensure that schools embrace diversity and respect for diversity is encouraged, making it a key principle of the country's education system (Ndwiga, Momanyi, & Mwal'wa, 2022).

This approach is most similar to virtue ethics, especially in terms of the focus on the development of virtues such as empathy, respect, and justice. Incorporating these values in the learning process, Canadian schools strive to produce not only knowledgeable but also ethical citizens. However, from the Kantian point of view, one may wonder whether these values are presented as categorical imperatives, as duties to others because they are

persons, or as means for social cooperation. The question that arises here is whether the moral education system promotes true moral agency or just compliance with norms?

In schools, moral education in Canada is usually incorporated in other programs such as the “Safe and Caring Schools” (Sautner, 2008). These programs seek to establish conditions that will enable students to learn without facing harassment or discrimination. From the perspective of the ethics of care, these initiatives are quite positive in terms of their focus on relationships and emotions. Teaching empathy, respect, and social responsibility is a pedagogy that is based on the ethic of care, which is a response to the moral imperative to care for others, especially women who are vulnerable to gender-based violence. However, there is a question that arises, are these programs just about empathy or are they about responsibility in relationships? Care ethics would require the latter that students not only know what harm is but also that they are to be held accountable for minimizing harm in their communities.

They include teaching concepts such as consent, healthy relationships, and conflict resolution so that the students can learn the right conduct in various aspects of life. These efforts indicate a rising trend of practical ethics or what Aristotle would refer to as *phronesis*, the ability to make the right decision in a given situation. From the critical pedagogy point of view, though, there is a question of whether these programs disrupt the root causes of GBV. While it is important to teach students about consent and respect, such programs may not empower students in a moral way if they do not also encourage students to critically analyze the power structures that underlie gendered experiences. The question is not only whether students know what is right, but whether they are able to identify and challenge wrongs that are structural.

Canada's moral education strategies are influenced by its multiculturalism policy, and there are many attempts to address cultural and societal differences (Ndwiga, Momanyi, & Mwal'wa, 2022). Teachings in curricula include aspects that embrace diversity and assist learners in managing multicultural relations. This is a pluralistic ethical perspective based on the premise that moral education should respect the moral rightness of different ways of being in the world. However, there is a philosophical dilemma when diversity meets culture that may not embrace women or discussions on sexual matters. How can moral education respect cultural differences and at the same time criticize them? A communitarian approach might stress cultural respect, while a liberal egalitarian approach would insist on individual freedom and gender equality even if the culture does not approve.

However, the extent of these programs may differ from one province to another depending on the policy focus and available resources. Some provinces require extensive moral education and GBV prevention programs, while others may offer only limited guidance, which leads to variations in the effectiveness of the programs. Furthermore, moral education in rural and under-resourced schools may not be effectively implemented due to lack of qualified teachers or teaching aids. These inequalities pose questions of distributive justice an important concept in Rawlsian theory. Is there equity in the moral and ethical development of students in different regions? If not, the system is likely to replicate the same injustices it aims at eradicating in the society. In addition, cultural and societal barriers to discussing issues such as gender equality and sexual rights can slow down the progress (Women, 2016), which creates a question of whether to respect the culture or to challenge practices that cause harm. The challenge here is not

only educational but ethical, how does one teach when the moral thing to do is to violate the social norms?

South Africa has a major problem in combating gender-based violence (GBV) in schools and in the society in general. The social-cultural context of the country has been shaped by apartheid and other forms of inequality that have led to power relations and gender inequalities (Keller et al., 2017). In schools, GBV takes different forms such as sexual harassment, bullying, and physical assault, and the girls are the most affected (Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2020). This reality raises a moral question based on social justice ethic and care ethic. From the Rawlsian theory, the continued occurrence of GBV is unjust because it fails to uphold the principles of justice as fairness especially the respect for the weaker parties. In addition, the feminist philosophy makes us aware of how the historical and structural factors such as gender and race influence the learners. GBV in schools is not just a moral failure but a moral wrong that requires institutional responsibility and ethical redress.

Ethical education is taught in South Africa's Life Orientation (LO), a subject that is taught to both primary and secondary school students. The LO curriculum seeks to promote personal and social responsibility, critical thinking, and cultural sensitivity (Mwasya, 2015). It comprises areas like gender, human rights, and healthy relationships, which are crucial in combating GBV. From the perspective of virtue ethics, this curriculum can be viewed as an attempt to develop the virtues of justice, empathy, and respect. In the same way, Kantian ethics would appreciate the fact that the LO curriculum aims at training students to respect the dignity of others and not to use them as mere tools, which is a principle that can help in preventing GBV. However, the proof of this

moral framework is in the pudding, does it not only teach students what is right, but also prepare and enable them to act righteously in wrong world?

However, as much as the curriculum offers a good theoretical foundation, its application is faced with some challenges. Lack of resources especially in schools that are not well endowed financially poses a major challenge to the teaching of moral education in South Africa. Teachers may not be well equipped to handle issues such as GBV and this leads to the development of different teaching strategies (Kadiri, 2017). In this case, critical pedagogy, particularly the work of Paulo Freire, offers a philosophical framework, education must be emancipatory, dialogical, and contextual. A curriculum that teaches justice in theory but does not address the justice issues of students in practice becomes what Freire would refer to as banking concept of education, which is the process of depositing moral knowledge without addressing moral agency. However, the clash between culture and the curriculum's values raises a meta-ethical issue, how far can one take the idea of applying global ethical standards (such as gender equality)? This brings into question the debate between moral relativism and moral absolutism, while emphasizing the need for contextualized ethical education without eradicating the need for fighting against violence and oppression.

Gender-based violence (GBV) in Nigeria is still prevalent and is a product of cultural, social, and structural factors. In learning institutions, GBV is evident in sexual harassment, physical assault, and exploitation, which are more prevalent among female learners (Ibrahim et al., 2024). However, the high incidence of GBV shows that there are still shortcomings in the prevention and elimination of these vices in schools (Malenya, 2014).

The prevalence of GBV, especially in institutions of learning, challenges the ethical fabric of society. It raises an ethical paradox, the places that are meant to educate and empower people have turned into places of abuse and terror. The greater effect on female students is a sign of a more profound epistemological problem, the denial of the female student's personhood and her worth. One may appeal to Kantian ethics which states that people should be treated as means to an end. GBV turns the victims into mere objects of satisfaction or domination, thus eradicating the categorical imperative and the universality of the law.

In Nigeria, moral education is taught under religious and civic education, which are crucial in the development of the students' ethical standards. Courses like Christian Religious Studies (CRS) and Islamic Religious Studies (IRS) are core courses, which teach values like compassion, tolerance, and fairness. Moreover, Civic Education helps citizens to be aware of their rights and duties in the society with the view of promoting principles that will reduce on social vices such as GBV.

On the epistemological level, it poses questions about how moral knowledge is passed on and incorporated. The use of religious and civic paradigms points to a prescriptive ethical curriculum, but one that may be tied to doctrine or relativism. Although these subjects are intended to foster virtues, their potential to produce moral actors is contingent on critical thinking rather than memorization. One might think of Aristotle's *phronesis* (practical reason) the notion that moral education should not only teach values but also teach people how to apply them in specific situations. However, a Freirean critical pedagogy would encourage dialogical processes that would enable the learners to challenge the oppressive structures instead of accommodating them.

However, these programs are not very effective in preventing GBV due to systemic issues. Another challenge is lack of training of teachers. Teachers themselves are not well equipped to handle issues such as GBV in their classrooms. This gap hampers the effectiveness of moral education programs in developing safe learning environments (Malenya, 2014). Moreover, cultural practices that condone or even encourage violence against women and girls prevent the transformation of moral messages into practical solutions. In patriarchal cultures, opposition to gender equity may weaken the effectiveness of moral education and maintain prejudice and discrimination.

The critique shows that ethical teaching is not applied correctly knowing is not enough without context, guidance, and courage. John Dewey's educational philosophy is that education should be based on experience and should be able to address social issues; if it does not, it is part of the problem. The continued prevalence of GBV in societies where moral education is taught raises questions about the gap between theory and practice. From a postmodern, postcolonial, and poststructuralist feminist perspective, this tension shows how patriarchal epistemologies colonize and pollute educational spaces and how an ethic of transformation is needed to address voice, body, and power.

These challenges are compounded by resource limitations especially in the rural and hard-to-reach regions. Schools do not have adequate structures and resources to provide for moral education programs. Lack of access to learning materials and overcrowded classrooms reduces the ability to engage with moral principles (ANDERE, 2018). This reality points to a failure to apply justice and equity as espoused in the theories of distributive justice. Moral education, which aims at nurturing the virtues and ethical subjectivity, remains an unfulfilled promise when it is framed by the structures of

oppression. These are not just logistical problems but moral imperatives to strengthen the preparation of teachers, to change the culture, and to distribute resources fairly. It is only when this ethical imperative is acknowledged and addressed that Nigeria can begin to use moral education as a tool for change in the fight against GBV and the cultivation of moral citizens.

Ghana has also made some strides in combating GBV through legislation such as the Domestic Violence Act of 2007 (Wafula, 2016). However, gender inequalities and cultural practices remain a major barrier to the provision of safe environments especially in school. This duality of legislative action and cultural practice is a philosophical divide between legal justice and moral justice. Although the law may provide for rights and protection, the moral awareness of a society is usually behind, especially when norms encourage passivity. Religious and Moral Education (RME) in Ghana focuses on moral education that teaches virtues like empathy, respect, and justice. Based on the Christian, Islamic, and traditional philosophical values, RME fosters ethical reasoning and moral personality development.

However, its effectiveness is constrained by poor compliance, inadequate teacher education, and culture of violence (Wafula, 2016). The failure to address sensitive issues such as sexual harassment also shows that the cultivation of moral agency is a challenge where ethical dilemmas continue to prevail (Vanner, 2017). Tanzania faces several challenges in combating GBV in education, especially in rural areas where cultural practices and poverty increase the risks. Schools are some of the places where GBV is realized in the form of harassment, exploitation, and discrimination, with girls being the most affected (Mwangoka, 2022). This reality calls for contemplation on the

philosophical role of education institutions not only to teach but to protect the moral compass of the society.

In Tanzania, moral education is taught through subjects like civics and religious studies, and the values that are taught include respect, equality, and justice. These values are reminiscent of deontological ethics, which focus on the duties and moral responsibilities of the individuals. However, these programs are not as effective due to inadequate teacher training, lack of resources, and cultural acceptance of violence (Mwangoka, 2022). Teachers, who are supposed to be role models, are not equipped with the skills to engage in reflective discussions on contentious topics. The government of Tanzania has put in place policies such as the National Plan of Action to End Violence against Women and Children to fight against GBV through structural change (Nkya & Kibona, 2024). However, the lack of consistency in the implementation of the law and the social rejection of survivors reveal a moral failure. This requires a re-orientation of communal morality and the cultivation of individual moral agency to challenge and transform oppressive systems.

Moral education in Kenya is not only a social function of socialization that is meant to produce ethical beings but also a philosophical scheme of producing ethical thinkers. Incorporation of moral values like respect, honesty, and justice in subjects like CRE and Social Studies based on virtue ethics especially the Aristotelian eudaimonia shows that education has a teleological inclination of producing a good and flourishing citizen. Kenya's broader educational goal of producing socially responsible citizens aligns with John Dewey's moral philosophy that education is a moral practice that takes place in the everyday world. The CBC, with its values-based approach, is a move away from the

acquisition of knowledge for the sake of passing examinations to the acquisition of knowledge for the sake of the formation of the mind and the heart. By learning moral lessons that are based on empathy, fairness, and human dignity, students are not only informed of what to think but also how to think morally, which is in line with Kantian autonomy and moral law.

Consent, relationship, and conflict resolution programs are ontological in nature as they deal with fundamental ethical questions of power, justice, and self-other dynamics.

However, the uneven implementation of these programs, particularly the rural-urban divide, poses an epistemological challenge to moral education's legitimacy and consistency. If education is to act as a moral guide, then the differential application of education negates the moral authority of education, thus exposing the relativistic contradictions between policy and practice. This also relates to Habermas's concept of communicative action, whereby the legitimacy of norms is based on reason-giving in public forums. In contexts where this discourse is limited, for example in underprivileged rural schools, moral education may turn into an empty ritual rather than a liberating practice.

Kenya has come a long way in developing a legal-philosophical foundation to combat GBV based on deontological principles of duty, rights, and justice. The Sexual Offenses Act (2006), the Children's Act (2001), and the Protection against Domestic Violence Act (2015) are some of the laws that show that South Africa is committed to the Kantian principles that people should always be treated as an end and not a means. Furthermore, the National Policy on Gender and Development (2019) aims at gender equality in accordance with Rawlsian justice, which is the arrangement of the primary social goods

such as safety and dignity in a way that is most advantageous to the least advantaged. The role of institutions such as the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) can be understood in the light of political philosophy: institutions as the enforcers of justice and the protectors of the social contract, which is to ensure that the principles of justice enshrined in the law are implemented in practice.

However, this ethical foundation is still strong, rural regions such as Vihiga County continue to face structural and philosophical dilemmas. The existence of patriarchal norms, economic disparities, and cultural practices that perpetuate gender inequality raises a Foucauldian paradox of power and knowledge, moral education is situated within discourses that may be oppressive of gendered power relations. The emphasis on religious and moral education in schools raises an ethical dilemma, on one hand, religious teachings promote morality, but on the other hand, they uphold gender inequality. This raises a critical theory question of whether moral education as it is currently practiced is emancipatory or simply a means of reproducing the existing order.

Moreover, the practical challenges, including overcrowded classrooms, lack of resources, and inadequate teacher training, are not only logistical but also ethical issues. If moral education is to foster moral subjectivity, then its absence is a sign of the state's lack of moral obligation to its people. Teachers are expected to make ethical decisions in their practice, but many are not prepared for the depth of ethical decision making that is expected of them. Therefore, the effectiveness of moral education in preventing GBV cannot be measured solely by the results but also by the extent to which it adheres to philosophical principles of justice, dignity, and the promotion of human well-being. Based on these ethical and epistemological concerns, the researcher embarked on a

phenomenological study to explore the essence of the experiences of teachers in Vihiga County to understand the existential meanings of moral education in combating gender-based violence.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Gender-based violence (GBV) in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya, presents a profound barrier to achieving safe and inclusive education. According to the 2022 Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) Demographic and Health Survey, approximately 34% of women aged 15–49 in Vihiga have experienced physical violence since the age of 15, reflecting a broader community context in which violence against young people is not uncommon. This social environment where violence is a part of life both inside and outside schools heighten the vulnerability of learners, particularly adolescent girls, to various forms of GBV. Within the school setting, such violence undermines students' physical safety, emotional well-being, and sense of belonging, all of which are critical to learning.

School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) directly disrupts learning environments and academic performance. Data from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)-supported secondary analysis of Kenya's Violence Against Children and Youth Survey (VACS) show that around 4% of girls and 3% of boys report sexual violence perpetrated by teachers, and many students' experiencing violence subsequently miss school. These findings indicate that GBV not only affects the immediate safety of students but also has downstream impacts on attendance, concentration, retention and achievement. In a rural context like Vihiga, where resources are limited and schools are already under pressure,

the disruptive effects of GBV represent a serious threat to the broader development of young people and the community.

Despite existing policy frameworks such as the Ministry of Education's Education and Training Sector Gender Policy and the National Guidelines for School Re-entry many interventions in Vihiga remain predominantly reactive. Schools often respond after incidents occur, typically through disciplinary action or referral to external services, rather than engaging proactively with the underlying causes of violence. This approach overlooks the broader cultural and behavioural norms such as patriarchal attitudes, power imbalances between teachers and students, and limited learner agency that sustain patterns of GBV. Moreover, most initiatives do not sufficiently address the ethical and character dimensions of prevention, meaning efforts to cultivate long-term behavioural change and safer school climates are lacking.

This study aims to investigate the efficacy of moral education in addressing gender-based violence in public secondary schools in Vihiga county, Kenya through A phenomenological approach. By focusing on character development and ethical learning within the school curriculum, the research seeks to identify strategies that complement existing policies and preventative measures. In doing so, the goal is to contribute to safer and more equitable public secondary schools in Vihiga County where learners are not only protected from violence but are also supported to thrive academically, socially and personally.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the efficacy of moral education in addressing gender-based violence in public secondary schools in Vihiga county, Kenya: A phenomenological approach.

1.4 Objectives of the study

- i. To examine lived experiences of teachers on the effectiveness of moral education in addressing GBV in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya.
- ii. To investigate the lived experiences of teachers on the role of moral education in curbing GBV in secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya.
- iii. To establish effective moral strategies in mitigating GBV in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya

1.5 Research questions

- i. What are the lived experiences of teachers on the effective of moral education in addressing GBV in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya?
- ii. What are the lived experiences of teachers regarding the role of moral education in curbing GBV in public secondary schools in Vihga County, Kenya?
- iii. What moral strategies can be established to mitigate GBV in public secondary schools in Vihga County, Kenya?

1.6 Assumptions of the study

- i. Participants to provide honest and accurate accounts of their experiences.
- ii. Moral education has the potential to influence attitudes and behaviors related to GBV.

- iii. The phenomenological approach was to capture the depth and complexity of participants' experiences.

1.7 Delimitations of the study

Delimitations are issues within the study over which the researcher has control. The study is limited to education and is further narrowed down to the philosophy of education as a discipline. Therefore, this study investigates the efficacy of moral education in addressing gender-based violence in public secondary schools in Vihiga county, Kenya: A phenomenological approach. The target population includes teachers who have direct experiences on moral education and its application in curbing GBV. Students were excluded from the study because of the study purposively targeted in-depth information from teachers.

1.8 Limitations of the study

- i. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases, such as social desirability bias.
- ii. Findings may not be generalizable beyond the specific context of Vihiga County.
- iii. Variations in participants' interpretations of moral education may influence the study's findings.

1.9 Significance of the study

This study significantly contributes to the expanding body of knowledge on gender-based violence (GBV) prevention by emphasizing the critical role of moral education in fostering ethical awareness and driving behavioural change among students. Moral education, as a tool for shaping values and attitudes, offered a proactive approach to addressing the root causes of GBV, instilling respect, empathy, and equality from an

early age. By focusing on public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya, the study provided localized insights into how moral education can influence young people's perceptions of gender and violence, ultimately fostering more harmonious and respectful peer relationships.

The findings hold considerable practical implications for educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders involved in shaping the educational landscape. This research offered concrete strategies and frameworks for integrating moral education into school curricula as part of broader GBV prevention initiatives. By equipping teachers with tools and methodologies to address sensitive topics related to gender and violence, the study bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, ensuring that educational institutions become safer and more inclusive spaces.

Furthermore, the study aligns with broader societal goals aimed at promoting gender equality and social justice. By tackling GBV through the lens of moral education, the research reinforces the importance of nurturing ethical and socially responsible citizens capable of challenging discriminatory norms and behaviours. Doing so contributes to national and global efforts to create safer learning environments and foster a culture of respect and dignity for all students.

Ultimately, this study advances academic discourse on GBV prevention and empower educational institutions to play a transformative role in cultivating respect, empathy, and non-violence, thereby supporting long-term social change and the realization of gender equality in communities.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter reviewed literature drawn from relevant sources and studies. The relevant theoretical literature was reviewed. The theoretical literature review was categorized as per the research objectives as follows: Firstly, to Examine the effectiveness of moral education in addressing GBV in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya, investigate the lived experiences of teachers on the role of moral education in curbing GBV in secondary schools in Vihiga county, Kenya and to establish effective moral strategies in mitigating GBV in Secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya.

2.1 Effectiveness of moral education in addressing GBV: global perspectives

According to Nyangaresi et al., (2024) moral education is a cornerstone of character development, aimed at fostering values such as empathy, respect, and justice. Across the globe, its implementation reflects diverse cultural, societal, and institutional contexts, with a common goal of nurturing ethical behaviors and addressing societal challenges, including gender-based violence (GBV). In schools, GBV manifests in various forms, such as harassment, bullying, and discrimination, disproportionately affecting vulnerable groups like girls (Fergus & van't Rood, 2013). The integration of moral education into school curricula has emerged as a potential solution for countering GBV by shaping attitudes, promoting respectful interactions, and addressing harmful behaviors.

Globally, countries have developed distinct approaches to moral education, influenced by their cultural and educational systems. In the United States, moral education is often delivered through character education programs such as Positive Behavioural

Interventions and Supports (PBIS) (Edwards et al., 2022). These programs focus on cultivating values like empathy and respect to foster a positive school climate. However, while these efforts aim to improve interpersonal relationships, their specific impact on reducing GBV remains underexplored. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, moral education is integrated into Personal, Social, and Health Education (PSHE), which emphasizes topics like consent and healthy relationships (Dunne & Salvi, 2014). Despite these efforts, inconsistent implementation across schools and cultural resistance to certain progressive ideas have limited their overall effectiveness (Yount, Krause & Miedema, 2017).

According to Gansewig & Walsh, (2023) Germany's moral education emphasizes human rights and integrates values like inclusivity and gender equality into the curriculum. Programs such as "Schools Against Violence" highlight the potential of embedding moral and civic education to create violence-free environments. However, societal norms and attitudes often pose barriers, requiring further adaptation and engagement (Bryant et al., 2017). In South Africa, moral education is included in the Life Orientation curriculum, addressing issues like gender equality and personal responsibility (Swart, 2011). While these initiatives demonstrate promise, deeply entrenched gender inequalities in the broader society continue to challenge their effectiveness.

In Kenya, moral education is taught through subjects like Christian Religious Education (CRE) and Social Studies, emphasizing respect, honesty, and justice. However, despite these frameworks, the prevalence of GBV in schools remains high, particularly in rural areas like Vihiga County (Ngilu, 2019). Cultural practices and limited teacher training impede the successful implementation of these programs. Teachers often lack the

resources and preparation necessary to address sensitive issues like GBV effectively, further hindering progress.

Challenges in implementing moral education extend beyond individual countries. Cultural relativism often leads to tensions between the values promoted in schools and the norms upheld in communities. Resource disparities, including inadequate teacher training and institutional support, create additional barriers (Kamore, 2021). Furthermore, measuring the impact of moral education on behavior, especially regarding GBV, remains an issue. Behavioural changes are not always easily quantifiable, as they often involve subtle shifts in attitudes and interactions over time.

Despite these challenges, evidence suggests that moral education can positively influence ethical awareness and interpersonal relationships among students. Programs that emphasize participatory learning and foster collaboration between teachers and students have shown particular promise. Such approaches create an environment where virtues like empathy and respect are not only taught but also practiced and internalized.

According to Wangamati et al., (2022), the global experiences with moral education underscore the importance of adapting strategies to specific cultural and societal contexts while maintaining a focus on universal values such as justice and equality. Addressing GBV through moral education requires a multifaceted approach that involves teacher training, community engagement, and policy integration (Decker et al.,2018). A unified framework that respects cultural diversity while promoting ethical principles could help harmonize efforts and maximize their impact. By embedding moral education into educational systems and aligning it with broader societal goals, stakeholders can foster

inclusive environments that empower students to build respectful and equitable relationships, contributing to a culture of mutual respect and nonviolence.

2.1.1 Cultural influences on moral education practices

According to Pring (2021), cultural influences play a pivotal role in shaping moral education practices, as they determine the values, norms, and ethical principles emphasized within educational systems. Across the world, moral education reflects the specific cultural contexts in which it is embedded, often mirroring societal priorities, religious beliefs, historical experiences, and collective attitudes toward issues like justice, respect, and gender equality (Mahlangu et al., 2014). Understanding these cultural dynamics is essential for evaluating the effectiveness of moral education and its capacity to address pressing issues such as gender-based violence (GBV).

Cultural traditions profoundly influence the moral frameworks taught in schools. In many societies, religious beliefs are central to moral education, serving as a guiding force for the values imparted to students (Crooks et al., 2019). For instance, in Kenya and other African countries, Christian Religious Education (CRE) often forms the basis of moral instruction, focusing on virtues like honesty, respect, and humility (Crooks et al., 2019). Similarly, in predominantly Muslim societies, Islamic teachings often guide moral education, emphasizing compassion, justice, and community responsibility. These religiously anchored approaches reflect the deep intertwining of moral education with faith, shaping students' ethical reasoning and behavior.

However, cultural influences also present challenges such as societal norms and traditions which sometimes conflict with the universal values that moral education seeks to promote. For example, in patriarchal societies, cultural practices that perpetuate gender

inequality can undermine moral education's ability to promote gender justice and equality (Akwara, & Idele, 2020). In regions where practices like child marriage or female genital mutilation are culturally entrenched, efforts to teach respect and equality may face resistance. This highlights the need for moral education programs to navigate the delicate balance between respecting cultural traditions and advocating for ethical principles that challenge harmful practices.

In Western countries, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, moral education often aligns with secular frameworks, focusing on principles like respect for diversity, individual rights, and critical thinking (Jesca, 2017). These approaches reflect broader cultural values of autonomy and pluralism. However, even within these societies, cultural differences across regions or communities can result in variations in how moral education is delivered. For example, debates over the inclusion of topics like gender identity or sexual orientation in moral education reveal the tensions between progressive values and conservative cultural perspectives.

Cultural diversity within countries further complicates the landscape of moral education. In multicultural societies like Canada, moral education must cater to a wide array of cultural backgrounds, each with its own ethical traditions and priorities (Leach, Slade, & Dunne, 2013). Efforts to create inclusive curricula often involve integrating universal values, such as empathy and respect, while remaining sensitive to cultural differences. This inclusivity can foster mutual understanding but also poses challenges in addressing conflicting moral perspectives.

Moreover, according to Iksal et al., (2024) globalization has introduced new dynamics to moral education practices. Exposure to global values through media, migration, and international educational programs can influence local moral education systems (Leach, Slade, & Dunne, 2013). While globalization promotes universal principles like human rights and gender equality, it can also create tensions with traditional cultural norms, necessitating careful adaptation to local contexts.

Cultural influences also shape the role of educators in moral education. In societies with strong collectivist traditions, such as those in Asia or Africa, teachers are often seen as moral authorities responsible for instilling communal values (Kimani, 2016). In contrast, in more individualistic cultures, teachers may act as facilitators, encouraging students to develop their own ethical reasoning.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of moral education depends on its ability to align with cultural contexts while challenging harmful norms and fostering universal values of respect, justice, and empathy. By understanding and integrating cultural influences, moral education can become a transformative force for social change, addressing issues like GBV while promoting ethical behaviour and mutual respect across diverse communities.

2.1.2 Evidence of behavioral change linked to moral education

According to Durkheim, (2012), moral education has been identified as a critical tool for fostering ethical behavior and reducing harmful practices, such as bullying, harassment, and discrimination, in various educational settings. Evidence from global studies and practical applications suggests that moral education can lead to significant behavioral changes among students, particularly in how they interact with their peers and address ethical dilemmas (Muthoni, 2019). These behavioral changes manifest in several forms,

including increased empathy, improved interpersonal relationships, and greater respect for diversity and social norms.

One of the most significant outcomes linked to moral education is the enhancement of empathy among students. Programs designed to teach virtues such as kindness, respect, and understanding have demonstrated a measurable impact on students' ability to recognize and respond to the feelings and needs of others. For example, interventions like the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program in the United States focus on cultivating values that promote empathy and reduce aggressive behaviors (Kamunya, 2019). Studies show that students participating in such programs are more likely to exhibit pro-social behaviors, including helping peers in distress and resolving conflicts peacefully, indicating a clear link between moral education and empathetic behavior.

Moreover, Anderson et al., (2013) state that another area where moral education has shown promise is in improving interpersonal relationships within schools. By promoting principles such as fairness, cooperation, and mutual respect, moral education fosters a sense of community and belonging among students. In Germany, initiatives like the "Schools Against Violence" program emphasize the importance of creating respectful school climates (Baiocchi, et al., 2017). These programs integrate moral education into daily interactions, encouraging students to adopt non-violent communication and collaborative problem-solving strategies. Evaluations of such programs reveal a decrease in incidents of bullying and peer conflicts, highlighting the role of moral education in promoting harmonious relationships.

Respect for diversity is another critical behavioral change associated with moral education. In multicultural societies, fostering acceptance and appreciation for differences is vital for reducing prejudice and discrimination. Moral education programs that incorporate teachings on human rights and cultural sensitivity have been particularly effective in this regard (Githaiga, 2020). In South Africa, for instance, the Life Orientation curriculum includes lessons on gender equality and respect for individual differences. Evidence suggests that students exposed to this curriculum are more likely to challenge stereotypes and discriminatory behaviors, reflecting the broader impact of moral education on attitudes toward diversity.

According to Durkheim, (2012), the link between moral education and behavioral change is also evident in students' increased ability to make ethical decisions. Through lessons that emphasize critical thinking and moral reasoning, students learn to navigate complex social situations and choose actions aligned with ethical principles (Kågesten et al., 2021). Research in the United Kingdom demonstrates that students who undergo moral education are better equipped to recognize inappropriate behavior, such as harassment, and take action to address it (Kågesten et al., 2021). This shift toward proactive and ethical decision-making underscores the long-term benefits of moral education in shaping responsible citizens.

Despite these positive outcomes, the effectiveness of moral education in driving behavioral change depends on several factors, including the quality of program implementation, teacher training, and the cultural context (Grace, 2011). Comprehensive programs that actively engage students in discussions, role-playing, and collaborative activities are more likely to succeed in fostering meaningful change. Moreover,

consistent reinforcement of moral principles by educators and community members ensures that the lessons learned in classrooms translate into everyday behaviors.

Therefore, evidence from various settings underscores the transformative potential of moral education in shaping student behavior. By fostering empathy, enhancing interpersonal relationships, promoting respect for diversity, and encouraging ethical decision-making, moral education lays the foundation for positive social change. While challenges remain in implementation and evaluation, the behavioral changes linked to moral education highlight its critical role in creating inclusive and respectful educational environments.

2.1.3 Comparative effectiveness of moral education programs

The comparative effectiveness of moral education programs is a critical area of study, offering insights into how different educational frameworks and cultural contexts shape ethical behavior and address societal challenges such as gender-based violence (GBV). While the underlying goal of fostering virtues like empathy, respect, and justice is universal, the strategies and outcomes of these programs vary significantly across countries, reflecting their distinct socio-cultural, political, and educational landscapes.

According to Harmawati et al. (2022), in the United States, moral education is often delivered through character education initiatives like Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and programs emphasizing social and emotional learning (SEL). These frameworks focus on cultivating virtues that promote respectful interpersonal relationships and a supportive school climate. The U.S. approach frequently incorporates measurable outcomes, using metrics such as disciplinary rates, academic performance, and student surveys to evaluate the impact of these interventions (Wight et al., 2022).

However, while these programs are generally successful in reducing instances of bullying and fostering a sense of community, their specific effects on mitigating GBV remain underexplored. This gap highlights the need for targeted moral education strategies addressing the unique dynamics of GBV, such as power imbalances and cultural stigmas.

Wight et al., (2022) adds that in the United Kingdom, moral education is integrated into Personal, Social, and Health Education (PSHE) curricula, which emphasize values like consent, healthy relationships, and gender equality. The UK's programs often align with safeguarding policies, such as "Keeping Children Safe in Education," aiming to create safer school environments (Wight et al., 2022). These efforts have demonstrated success in raising awareness of GBV-related issues and equipping students with the tools to recognize and report harmful behaviors. However, challenges arise from inconsistent implementation and regional disparities in program quality and emphasis. Additionally, cultural resistance to addressing sensitive topics, such as sexual education, can hinder the effectiveness of moral education initiatives in some communities.

According to Lee & Taylor, (2013). Germany's moral education programs often emphasize human rights education, focusing on respect for diversity and gender equality. Initiatives like "Schools Against Violence" use an integrated approach, blending moral education with civic education to promote inclusive school environments. This approach has proven effective in fostering an understanding of rights and responsibilities among students (Wight et al., 2022). However, societal norms, particularly those tied to traditional gender roles, sometimes limit the scope of these programs. Germany's experience suggests that while moral education can address broad ethical principles,

targeted interventions are necessary to address specific forms of violence, including GBV.

According to Parkes, (2015), South Africa incorporates moral education into its Life Orientation curriculum, which addresses themes of personal responsibility, gender equality, and social justice. These programs have shown promise in raising awareness about GBV and promoting respect among students (Parkes, 2015). However, systemic issues such as poverty, deeply rooted gender inequalities, and cultural norms that normalize violence often undermine these efforts. South Africa's case illustrates the importance of pairing moral education with broader societal interventions to achieve meaningful and sustainable outcomes.

Wangamati et al., (2022), state that in Kenya, moral education is integrated into subjects like Christian Religious Education (CRE) and Social Studies. These programs emphasize virtues such as respect and honesty, yet their effectiveness in addressing GBV is inconsistent. Cultural practices and insufficient teacher training pose significant challenges, particularly in rural areas (Wangamati et al., 2022). For moral education to be impactful, strategies must address these barriers, ensuring that educators are equipped to deliver lessons effectively and that cultural norms do not contradict the values being taught.

Comparing these approaches highlights several key lessons. Programs that combine moral education with participatory learning and community engagement tend to show greater effectiveness, as they bridge the gap between theoretical instruction and practical application (Parkes, 2016). Similarly, integrating moral education with broader policies,

such as child protection and anti-bullying initiatives, enhances their impact. However, the success of these programs ultimately depends on their adaptability to local contexts, their ability to address deeply ingrained societal norms, and the extent to which they include comprehensive teacher training and resources.

In conclusion, while moral education programs globally demonstrate potential in fostering ethical behavior in addressing issues like GBV, their effectiveness varies significantly. Tailored approaches that align with local cultural and societal dynamics, combined with robust evaluation mechanisms, are essential to maximize their impact. By learning from comparative experiences, stakeholders can develop more effective strategies to promote moral development and create safer, more equitable educational environments.

2.1.4 Conceptual meaning, curriculum interpretation, relevance to GBV prevention and teachers understanding of moral education.

The Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) of Kenya is one of the most ambitious education reforms in Africa, developed with the vision of changing the paradigm of learning to a competency-based and value-centered approach. In the Basic Education Curriculum Framework (BECF), the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD, 2017) defines education not only as the impartation of cognitive skills but rather as the comprehensive development of morally upright, artistic, and socially responsible citizens. In this framework, values, such as integrity, respect, empathy, as well as responsibility, are placed as cross-cutting competencies that support all areas of learning. The article by the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2019) projected moral education as a cornerstone of the CBC aim to develop an engaged, empowered, and ethical learner. This vision is very

much compatible with the international models, in particular, UNESCO's (2021) and UNICEF's (2020) advocacy of values-based education as a component of Sustainable Development Goal 4, which encourages inclusive and equitable quality education.

Moral education according to the CBC crosses subject boundaries in principle. It should be permeated in classroom teaching, co-curricular, and the school culture, whereby learners are encouraged to internalize the ethical values by modelling, reflection, and social practice. According to Arthur (2019), moral education cannot be effective without the presence of not only what is taught but also how it is lived in school communities. Nevertheless, in Kenya and in the East Africa region more broadly, empirical research has shown that conceptual understandings of moral education among teachers are diverse and seldom reflect the holistic vision of policy (Oloo & Ochieng, 2021; EA Journals, 2023; KICD, 2020). To most teachers, moral education is interchangeably understood as moral instruction or moral instruction, often taught through didactic preaching, moral exhortation, or moral correction. These constrained interpretations are largely a result of the tradition of the 8-4-4 education system, where the value of academic performance and rote memorization were more important than the ability to engage in reflective moral thought.

This idealistic reductionism has a systemic effect on how CBC ideals can be translated to the classroom practice. Moral development is a process of iteration and dialogue, as Kristjansson (2020) and Narvaez and Bock (2021) state, and learners need the possible chances to think critically about moral dilemmas and test conclusions based on their reasoning. However, in most schools in Kenya, teachers claim to use lectures or

moralizing speeches instead of interactive methods that foster ethical thinking. This is complicated by the absence of pedagogical preparation in value-based education. Those educators often find themselves uncertain on implementing moral competencies in the non-traditional courses, such as mathematics, science, or ICT, where values might seem less evident (EA Journals, 2023). This results in a limitation of the potential of the CBC cross-cutting competencies, and the moral education is still marginalized in individual subjects like Christian Religious Education (CRE) or Life Skills Education (LSE).

This disjunction between curriculum purpose and classroom practice is also directly relevant to school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV). Moral and life skills education as a potent means of developing empathy, gender sensitivity, and respect of human dignity, which decreases tolerance to violence, are underlined by the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI, 2020) and Together for Girls (2021). Nevertheless, the majority of Kenyan teachers have not been specially educated to align moral education with GBV prevention models or survivor-sensitive pedagogy. This disconnection is especially consequential in rural counties such as Vihiga, where cultural norms and communal silence on sexual violence are widespread. Moral education may have been abstractly appreciated, but with no conceptual clarity and institutional underpinning to make it a violence-prevention strategy.

The current research thesis aimed to fill this conceptual gap by examining how educators at Vihiga define and explain moral education in their practice. It explores the ways in which they relate the moral aspects of CBC, namely respect, empathy, integrity, and justice, to the lived experiences of learners and to the prevention of GBV. Through the

elicitation of teacher stories, the research uncovers the conceptual ecology of moral education: the interactions between teacher ideologies, curricular principles, cultural backdrops, and classroom realities. Such meanings are essential not only to align pedagogy with policy but also to design professional development and curriculum support that enable teachers to transform moral education into an active tool of GBV prevention. Finally, this conceptual framing defines teachers not merely as bearers of moral knowledge but moral agents, who translate between policy ideals and community realities to bring about ethical change in schools.

2.1.5 Perceived relation between moral values and behavioral change - the role of virtues like respect, empathy and integrity in the behavior of students.

The relationship between moral education and behavioral change has been well-documented in various fields including psychology, philosophy, and education across the world. The central thesis, expressed by Lickona (2018) and Narvaez and Bock (2021), is that the intentional cultivation of virtuous traits, including respect, empathy, justice, and integrity can decrease aggression, bullying, and other antisocial behaviours and promote cooperation and prosocial behaviour. The necessity of this argument is supported by the Whole-School Approach to Preventing SRGBV by UNESCO (2021), which underscores that moral and social-emotional competencies are the foundation of safe and inclusive learning environments. Schools that proactively instill, model, and reinforce moral standards form what Berkowitz and Bier (2019) call ethical learning communities, an environment where students are directed by common values and mutual responsibility.

The potential of moral education in changing the behaviour of students in Kenya is specifically important in view of the ongoing issues of indiscipline, peer violence, and gender-based harassment in secondary schools. According to research by Oloo and

Ochieng (2021) and EA Journals (2022), when teachers consciously incorporate virtues like empathy, fairness, and mutual respect in their daily interactions, they are likely to notice measurable behavioural changes: a reduction in bullying cases, increased cooperation, and more respectful teacher-student relationships. These findings coincide with the social learning theory of Bandura (1977) that states that behaviour is acquired through observing and imitating role models. Here, the regular exemplification of moral virtues by teachers is an effective behavioural change agent that turns moral education into practice instead of mere rhetoric.

Nonetheless, although international literature confirms the behavioural efficacy of virtues-based education, African scholarship demonstrates gaps in implementation fidelity, contextual adaptation, and long-term measurement (Oluoch, 2020; Kilonzo, 2022). Most of them are donor-funded projects or temporary projects that are not sustainable or integrated into the national curriculums. Furthermore, research tends to be based on the perceptions of teachers or anecdotal data, instead of longitudinal behavioural data, which makes it hard to determine causal links between moral teaching and a decreased GBV-related behaviour, such as harassment, coercion, or bullying. In Kenya, as an example, even though the introduction of Life Skills Education (LSE) programs has been attributed to conflict resolution and self-awareness, limited empirical research studies monitor the lasting effects of such programs on violence prevention at school. Both MOE (2019) and UNICEF (2022) admit the necessity of systematic assessment systems connecting moral learning outcomes with observed behavior.

The situation in Vihiga County contains further complications. The transformative

potential of moral instruction can be buffered by cultural norms that valorize male authority and silence about gendered violence. Educators might preach the values of respect and empathy but fail to put them into action in ways that would disrupt established inequalities. To illustrate, moral teachings that stress obedience could unknowingly perpetuate the social order between genders instead of fostering respect among one another. Likewise, discipline methods in schools that are based on punitive systems as opposed to restorative justice are opposing to the empathetic and relational ethos at the heart of moral education (Wainaina & Njogu, 2021). These contradictions highlight the importance of context-sensitive pedagogy that helps learners to locate moral education in their social reality and promote critical thinking about power, fairness, and equality.

The current research helps fill this empirical and contextual gap by investigating the relationship between virtue teaching and student behavior as perceived by teachers in Vihiga. It discusses the ways in which teachers conceptualize behavioral change (in compliance, empathy, respect and self-discipline) and how they measure its effectiveness in mitigating the risk of GBV. By capturing these perceptions, the study clarifies the mechanisms by which moral education can work both at the micro level of the classroom and the macro level of the school culture. More importantly, it determines value-to-behavior pathways; the pedagogical and interpersonal mechanisms by which abstract virtues get instantiated as embodied dispositions that mediate behavior. By doing this, the study will contribute to the knowledge of moral education not merely as content delivery,

but as a transformational, behavior-shaping process that has a place within the social fabric of schools.

2.1.6 School culture and moral modelling teacher behavior, school rules, and co-curricular activities are all parts of the influence that teachers have on developing moral character.

School culture is the hidden curriculum that helps learners internalize values, expectations, and norms of behavior that form the moral identity. According to Deal and Peterson (2016), school culture refers to unwritten rules that guide behavior, attitudes, and relationships within a school community. It is represented not only by symbolic artefacts (rituals, ceremonies and rulebooks), but in everyday communication between teachers, administrators and learners. In this ecology, teachers act as strong moral agents whose actions come to signify the lived meaning of ethical practices. By modeling fairness, empathy, and respect, educators can turn classrooms into moral microcosms where learners can feel the value of justice as an actual practice, not as an abstraction. On the contrary, teachers who are favoring, punishing harshly, or gender biased, unintentionally justify the hierarchies that perpetuate school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV).

Empirical findings, including those by UNESCO (2021) and UNGEI (2020), highlight that SRGBV is not a single, heterogeneous behavioral aberration, but is entrenched in the school systems, peer cultures, and adult-student relations that either reinforce or challenge inequality. As an example, research in Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya proves that the acceptance of sexist language, unequal treatment of boys and girls in the classroom, or sexual harassment between teachers and students is a component of a deep-rooted gender regime that cannot be changed without systemic cultural change (Mirembe

and Davies, 2019; Hodzi, 2022; Wainaina and Njogu, 2021). Moral education can only be effective in these environments when placed within a whole-school moral ethos -a system of shared norms, rituals, and relational practices that constitute justice, care and accountability. Schools that have adopted participatory rule-making, restorative discipline, and moral recognition programs have reported better psychosocial well-being, reduction in bullying and increased peer support among students (Together for Girls, 2021).

In Kenya, school culture articulation in terms of moral education policy is still aspirational. Although the Education and Training Sector Gender Policy (MoE, 2019) and the CBC implementation guidelines suggest that gender-inclusive and value-based learning environments should be enforced, the responsibility to do this is largely left to the personal leadership approach and the school-level interpretation. Surveys conducted by EA Journals (2023) show that the hierarchical and authoritarian management models of numerous public secondary schools remain a legacy of the colonial administrative school of thought. Head teachers have disproportionate disciplinary power, typically without involvement by students or teachers in their participation. This continues the culture of fear and compliance instead of agency. Moreover, gendered practices like sending girls to cleaning chores or limiting their movement support patriarchal standards and constrain the practical implementation of equality. Gender-sensitive institutionalization, including mixed leadership in student councils, gender-balanced prefect systems, or inclusive clubs, has not been institutionalized in many schools in Vihiga County. These results indicate that moral education is not independent of structural and symbolic arrangements of school culture.

This paper places the moral education within the wider ecology of school life and asks how teachers see their moral modelling positions and how institutional artefacts (assemblies, co-curricular activities, guidance offices, and discipline committees) mediate the transfer of values. The study aims at uncovering the interactions between personal ethics and institutional morality by examining the experiences of teachers through narrative. It is expected that moral education that is congruent with GBV prevention demands congruence among what is taught, modeled, and practiced by teachers and the institution. True moral education is perpetuated, as Noddings (2013) puts it, not by policy requirements but by the caring relations that constitute a moral community. Explaining these processes within the schools in Vihiga will help clarify whether moral education is a cultural agency, or it is limited by institutional contradictions that reproduce gendered inequalities.

2.1.7 Effectiveness of existing moral education practices -teachers evaluation of life skills education (LSE), Guidance and Counselling, CRE Lessons in GBV reduction.

According to the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD, 2020) and the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2023), Life Skills Education (LSE) and Christian Religious Education (CRE) are the major curriculum paths to develop moral character and psychosocial competence. LSE aims to develop decision-making, empathy, communication, and conflict-resolution skills, whereas CRE offers ethical frameworks based on justice, compassion, and community. Collectively, these courses are designed to empower students both cognitively, emotionally, and spiritually to live ethically. When appropriately executed, they can decrease cases of school-based violence, increase tolerance, and foster non-violent conflict resolution. According to the Education Sector Policy on Learner Safety and Protection (MoE, 2023) it is clear that life skills play a

crucial role in fostering self-awareness and gender sensitive behaviour that supports safe learning environments.

But studies throughout Kenya show that there is a lot of inconsistency between the curricular goals and the realities of pedagogy. Research by Ochieng (2021) and EA Journals (2022) demonstrates that a significant proportion of teachers implement LSE and CRE using the traditional lecture approach, recreating the telling model instead of promoting experiential reflections. This strategy restricts in-house internalization and self-use of values. The evaluations conducted by UNESCO (2021) in Sub-Saharan Africa affirm that moral education that is not linked to participatory learning and institutional responsibility seldom results in better safety or gender equity. The teachers interviewed in the counties of Kakamega, Kisii, and Nakuru reported difficulty in framing life skills instruction to adolescent realities, especially around sexual morals, consent, and gender respect (Oloo & Atieno, 2020). Implementation is further undermined by the lack of systematic evaluation tools to behaviour change.

In the context of gender-based violence prevention, the effectiveness of LSE and CRE is contingent on how they are incorporated into counselling, reporting systems, and restorative disciplinary systems. As Together for Girls (2021) state, moral education coupled with survivor-centered counselling and well-defined referral routes leads to quantifiable decreases in cases of GBV in schools. But in the Vihiga County, anecdotal data indicates that there is a general lack of qualified counsellors or confidential discussion areas in Guidance and Counselling departments. Those teachers who are assigned to counselling duties normally do so during heavy teaching duties and therefore

support services are fragmented. As a result, moral education and counselling are viewed as disciplinary measures by many learners, instead of being supportive.

Measuring the perceived efficacy of moral education thus necessitates not only analyzing the levels of curriculum coverage, but also the degree to which teachers, students, and administrators co-create ethical learning conditions. In Vihiga, teachers might measure the success of the program in terms of better discipline or lower absenteeism, yet these measures fail to capture the more subtle results such as higher levels of empathy, self-efficacy, or bystander intervention. This research paper gathers such practitioner viewpoints to produce a subtle interpretation of the paths of moral education influence. In so doing, it transcends input-output analyses to examine how relational pedagogy, institutional ethos, and agency of learners intersect to inform behavioural change. The intended result is a contextual framework, which explains the most effective elements of moral education in alleviating GBV in the rural secondary schools of Vihiga and how these can be extended to the national level.

2.1.8 Difficulties in the implementation of moral education scarcity of training resources, curriculum overload, cultural opposition, and resource scarcity.

Systemic, pedagogical, and socio-cultural barriers are interrelated and obstruct the implementation of moral education within the framework of CBC. According to the KICD (2022) and MoE (2023), although there is a general positive attitude toward value-based learning, most teachers have insufficient training in moral and gender-responsive pedagogy. After receiving their training on the 8-4-4 system, several teachers have no idea about learner-centered and inquiry-based approaches that CBC requires. As a result, values education tends to be regarded as ancillary to examinable subjects, with little

instructional time or administrative attention. Oloo and Atieno (2020) observe that moral and life skills lessons are often cancelled or combined to create space to cover subjects whose results count towards national examinations. In big schools, large classes are impractical because dialogue or reflective discussion is impossible. Such a structural burden compromises the capacity of teachers to foster personal virtue and interpersonal empathy among students.

These structural constraints are further complicated by cultural resistance. Gender norms and disciplinary traditions present in most Kenyan communities contradict the principles of equality, empathy, and non-violence endorsed by CBC. Hodzi (2022) notes that educators who work in patriarchal institutions are subject to the community backlash as they discuss issues such as gender roles, sexual consent, or domestic violence. At Vihiga, where KDHS (2022) data indicate that 34 per cent of women aged 15-49 years have experienced physical violence, schools exist within social systems in which violence is normalized. Educators who break such conventions risk becoming alienated by parents or peers. This produces a moral dissonance in which the teachers preach equality in the classroom but adapt to the patriarchal hierarchies in the outside world. Moral education without shared cultural change is weak and limited by contradictions between school ideals and community realities.

Implementation is further weakened by financial and infrastructural constraints. Moral education is visible and engaging, but rural schools in Vihiga are not always equipped with basic materials, such as curriculum guides, counselling offices, teaching aids. UNICEF (2022) established that of all the schools sampled across the country, only 42 percent had operating counselling departments with trained personnel, and even fewer

established gender clubs or peer-support networks. Moral education in situations where improvising is required of teachers relies largely on personal initiative and not institutional ability. This inequity is further deep-rooted by the lack of committed funds to implement value-based programs or professional development. As a result, noble moral programs like student mentorship programs, community service activities, and drama clubs tackling GBV fail when donor funding ceases. This paper thus questions how educators in Vihiga negotiate these limitations, moralize pedagogy in the context of resource shortage, and mediate between the imperatives of curriculum coverage, discipline, and moral development. Through these documented struggles, the study seeks to inform contextually viable change that cuts across policy idealism and classroom reality.

2.1.9 Recommendations by teachers on how to reinforce moral education. proposed pedagogical and institutional reforms.

Recent evaluations by APHRC (2023), UNICEF (2022), and UNESCO (2021) all lead to similar conclusions that the GBV prevention, moral education should be multi-sectoral, integrating pedagogy, protection, and partnership. The key participants in this architecture are the teachers, as implementers of curriculum, and moral leaders, who mediate between policy and practice. The advice of teachers, thus, offers context-specific solutions to how value-based education can be enhanced in rural areas such as Vihiga. In research, teachers always promote three areas of reform: (1) pedagogical innovation, (2) institutional support, (3) community engagement.

Pedagogical innovation is the shift in teaching to experiential, reflective, participatory learning. Educators underline that drama, debate, storytelling, and peer mentoring may

assist students in bridging the gap between moral values and lived experiences (Amutabi and Wanyama, 2021). Integrating moral discussions into subject education, like one about fairness in history, environmental stewardship in science, or compassion in literature, produces interdisciplinary coherence. Teachers also suggest that gender sensitivity modules should be incorporated into LSE and CRE so that explicit treatment of SRGBV prevention occurs. Students exhibited better bystander intervention and less tolerance of sexist jokes, as one pilot based in Kisumu recorded by Usawa Agenda (2023) when teachers co-designed lesson plans that contended empathy, justice, and GBV awareness. These bottom-up innovations confirm that professional creativity of teachers plays a critical role in moral transformation.

The institutional support reforms are centered on establishing conditions in which moral education can flourish. Teachers promote explicit policy alignment, vibrant gender clubs, safe reporting, and ongoing professional growth. They emphasize that leadership in schools should set an example of ethical governance by being transparent, fair, and by ensuring the application of anti-GBV codes of conduct at all times. Policy templates already exist in the Education and Training Sector Gender Policy (MoE, 2019) and National School Safety Framework (2020), yet educators emphasise the importance of localisation, i.e. adapting guidelines to county-specific reality. In Vihiga this might consist of building GBV prevention goals into school improvement strategies, appointing moral education coordinators with training, and cooperating with child-protection officers. Educators also request workload interventions that provide sufficient time to LSE, counselling and co-curricular ethic programs. The introduction of moral education

indicators into teacher performance appraisal (TPAD) may institutionalize accountability and provide an indication of government commitment.

Lastly, the concept of community engagement emerges as an important sustainability lever. Educators observe that unless parents and communities are aligned, moral education within schools is easily compromised. They suggest collaborations with religious groups, Non-Governmental Organizations, and county gender offices to coordinate moral discourses and GBV-prevention educations outside schools. A common culture of respect and empathy may be cultivated through initiatives like community discussions, parent training, and inter-school moral festivals. The effectiveness of initiatives such as the Tuseme (Let Us Speak) program by FAWE shows that moral education can bypass formal instruction to guide daily behavior when communities, teachers, and students work together. Vihiga teachers also suggest the creation of peer learning among teachers' networks spaces to share experiences, challenges, and innovations in moral pedagogy. Foregrounding these practitioner-led reforms, the study aids in the designing of context-fit strategies which could match the CBC value-based vision to the realities of rural education systems.

2.1.10 General implications of the objective

Objective one emphasizes the fact that the conceptual, pedagogical, institutional, and cultural understanding of moral education has a multifaceted character of teachers. As the analysis has shown, national frameworks offer a good normative base, but their implementation into effective GBV prevention depends on the ability of teachers to interpret, model, and incorporate values in complex school settings. Moral education is a promise and a challenge in a Vihiga County where social norms, resource constraints,

and training gaps overlap. Through the lived experiences of teachers, this research contributes to theoretical and practical knowledge regarding the ways in which moral education can serve as a proactive, relational, and culturally localized reaction to gender-based violence. It emphasizes that teacher empowerment, institutional coherence, and community partnership are urgent in realizing the moral vision of CBC and ensuring that Kenya learners are not subjected to any violence.

2.2 Lived experiences of teachers: Teachers as role models in moral education

According to Campbell (2008), teachers play a pivotal role in moral education, serving as both instructors and role models who shape students' values and behavior. Their influence extends beyond the classroom, as students often look to teachers for guidance in navigating ethical dilemmas and understanding societal norms (Mwangoka, 2022). This dual responsibility places teachers at the heart of efforts to foster virtues such as empathy, respect, and integrity among students. The example set by teachers through their actions, words, and interactions significantly impacts the effectiveness of moral education initiatives.

Campbell, (2008) adds that when teachers embody the principles they teach, their credibility as moral educators is enhanced, making their lessons more impactful. For instance, a teacher who consistently demonstrates fairness and respect in their interactions with students reinforces these values implicitly, providing students with a tangible model of ethical behavior (Ponge, 2021). Similarly, teachers who display patience and empathy while addressing student concerns can foster a classroom environment where these qualities are not only valued but also practiced by students. This modeling of virtues is particularly crucial in contexts where moral education is integrated

into efforts to address societal challenges such as gender-based violence (GBV). By exemplifying respect and equality in their behavior, teachers can challenge harmful norms and promote a culture of non-violence.

However, the role of teachers as moral exemplars is not without challenges. Teachers, like any individuals, are shaped by their own cultural, social, and personal experiences, which can influence their ability to model certain virtues consistently. In societies with deeply entrenched gender biases, for example, teachers may unconsciously perpetuate harmful stereotypes, even while teaching about equality and respect (Malenya, 2014). This inconsistency can undermine the credibility of moral education programs and hinder their effectiveness. Moreover, the pressure on teachers to act as flawless role models can be overwhelming, particularly in environments where they may lack sufficient training or support to address sensitive issues like GBV.

According to Azer, (2005), the relationship between teachers and students is also a key factor in the success of moral education. A positive teacher-student relationship, built on trust and mutual respect, creates an environment where students feel valued and are more likely to internalize the moral lessons imparted to them (Ndwiga, Momanyi, & Mwal'wa, 2022). Conversely, authoritarian or dismissive attitudes from teachers can alienate students, diminishing the impact of moral education efforts. Teachers who foster open dialogue and encourage critical thinking empower students to explore and embrace ethical principles more deeply. This participatory approach not only enhances students' understanding of moral concepts but also helps them apply these lessons in real-life situations.

Muzakkir et al., (2024) indicate that to maximize the potential of teachers as role models in moral education, there is a need for comprehensive training and professional development. Such programs should equip teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary to address ethical topics effectively, particularly those related to sensitive issues like GBV (Malenya, 2014). Training should also focus on self-awareness, helping teachers recognize and address their own biases to ensure they model the virtues they seek to instill in students. Additionally, institutional support is essential to create environments where teachers feel empowered to lead by example without fear of judgment or reprisal.

Therefore, teachers as role models are central to the success of moral education. Their ability to embody the principles they teach, foster meaningful relationships with students, and navigate the challenges of cultural and personal biases significantly shapes the outcomes of moral education initiatives. By supporting teachers in this role, educational systems can enhance the impact of moral education, creating a foundation for ethical behavior and social change.

2.2.1 Students' perceptions of moral education programs

According to Harmawati et al., (2022) students' perceptions of moral education programs play a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of such initiatives, particularly in addressing complex issues like gender-based violence (GBV). The way students perceive these programs influences their engagement, willingness to internalize moral principles, and ultimately their behavior within and beyond the school environment (Yount, Krause, & Miedema, 2017). For many students, moral education represents an opportunity to explore ethical dilemmas and develop virtues such as empathy, respect, and fairness.

However, the extent to which they view these lessons as relevant, relatable, or actionable can vary significantly based on several factors, including the delivery of the curriculum, the attitudes of teachers, and the cultural context in which the program operates.

Additionally, Avci, (2017) states that a common perception among students is that moral education can often feel disconnected from their lived realities. While lessons may emphasize abstract virtues like justice and honesty, students sometimes struggle to see how these ideals apply to their everyday experiences, particularly when addressing sensitive issues such as GBV. For instance, when moral education programs are delivered in a purely theoretical manner without practical examples or relatable scenarios, students may find it difficult to translate what they learn into actionable behaviors (Ndwiga, Momanyi, & Mwal'wa, 2022). This disconnect can lead to apathy or disengagement, reducing the program's overall impact. Conversely, programs that integrate participatory methods, such as discussions, role-playing, or real-life case studies, tend to resonate more with students, fostering a deeper understanding and application of moral principles.

According to Mwasya, (2015), The role of teachers in shaping students' perceptions is another critical factor. Teachers who approach moral education with enthusiasm, authenticity, and empathy are more likely to create a positive impression of the program. Students are often influenced by the sincerity with which their educators engage with the subject matter (Mwasya, 2015). . When teachers model virtuous behavior and facilitate open, respectful discussions, they create an environment where students feel valued and heard. On the other hand, if teachers deliver lessons in a perfunctory or judgmental manner, students may perceive moral education as a token exercise rather than a

meaningful endeavor. Such perceptions can diminish the credibility of the program and its capacity to effect lasting change.

According to Muzakkir et al. (2024), cultural and societal norms also shape students' views on moral education. In contexts where traditional values conflict with the principles promoted in moral education programs, students may experience confusion or resistance. For example, in patriarchal societies, teachings that emphasize gender equality and respect for all individuals might clash with norms students encounter at home or in their communities (Keller et al., 2017). This dissonance can create challenges for students as they navigate conflicting expectations, potentially undermining their trust in the moral education framework. Programs that fail to address these cultural dynamics risk alienating students or appearing irrelevant to their lived experiences.

Additionally, Women, (2016) state that students' perceptions of the relevance of moral education are influenced by how well the program addresses contemporary challenges. When lessons align with pressing social issues, such as bullying, discrimination, or GBV, students are more likely to view the program as meaningful and beneficial (Women, 2016). Programs that incorporate diverse perspectives and allow students to share their experiences tend to foster a sense of ownership and investment in the process. By making moral education a collaborative and reflective experience, schools can enhance its perceived value among students.

Ultimately, students' perceptions of moral education programs are shaped by the interplay of curriculum content, teaching practices, cultural influences, and relevance to their personal and social contexts. Addressing these factors can help create programs that

resonate with students, encouraging them to internalize ethical principles and apply them in their daily lives. By prioritizing student engagement and cultural sensitivity, moral education can become a powerful tool for fostering ethical awareness and reducing harmful behaviors like GBV in schools.

2.2.2 Successful moral education interventions

Case studies of successful moral education interventions reveal the transformative potential of targeted programs in fostering ethical behavior and reducing harmful practices in educational settings. These interventions, implemented in diverse cultural and institutional contexts, demonstrate the importance of aligning moral education strategies with local needs while addressing broader societal challenges, such as gender-based violence (GBV). By examining specific examples, valuable insights emerge about the factors contributing to the effectiveness of these programs.

According to Lee, & Taylor, (2013), one notable case is the "Schools Against Violence" initiative in Germany, which integrates moral and civic education to create inclusive, violence-free school environments. This program emphasizes respect for human rights, diversity, and gender equality, fostering a culture of empathy and collaboration among students (Kadiri, 2017). By embedding moral education principles into daily interactions and academic curricula, the initiative encourages students to practice non-violent communication and resolve conflicts constructively. Evaluations of the program highlight its success in reducing bullying incidents and improving interpersonal relationships, illustrating the potential of moral education to transform school climates when combined with well-designed civic frameworks.

According to Keller-Bell & Short, (2019), in the United States, the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program has shown promise in cultivating pro-social behaviors and fostering a positive school environment. By focusing on values such as respect, responsibility, and kindness, PBIS creates a structured framework for promoting ethical behavior through reinforcement and consistent feedback. Teachers and administrators play a critical role in modeling these behaviors, ensuring that moral principles are integrated into the school's culture (Andere, 2018). Case studies of PBIS implementation reveal measurable reductions in behavioral issues, improved peer interactions, and heightened awareness of the importance of empathy and respect. Although its impact on GBV specifically is underexplored, the program demonstrates how moral education can influence attitudes and behaviors in meaningful ways.

According to Mphuthi, (2024), South Africa's integration of moral education into its Life Orientation curriculum offers another compelling example. This approach addresses themes such as gender equality, personal responsibility, and respect for diversity, tackling the societal norms that contribute to GBV. The curriculum encourages critical thinking and ethical reasoning, enabling students to challenge harmful stereotypes and discriminatory behaviors (Heslop et al., 2019). Case studies from South African schools indicate that students exposed to Life Orientation lessons are more likely to report incidents of violence and advocate for gender equity, suggesting that moral education can empower students to act as agents of change within their communities. However, these successes are tempered by systemic challenges such as poverty and entrenched gender inequalities, underscoring the need for holistic strategies that extend beyond the classroom.

Cismaru & Cismaru, (2018) indicate that in Canada, programs like "Safe and Caring Schools" emphasize inclusivity and respect, integrating moral education into broader anti-bullying and equity initiatives. These interventions prioritize creating safe environments where students feel valued and supported. By addressing issues such as harassment and discrimination, the programs reduce the prevalence of harmful behaviors while fostering a culture of acceptance and mutual respect (Fergus, & van't Rood, 2013). Case studies highlight the importance of teacher training and community involvement in sustaining these efforts, with effective programs incorporating feedback from students, parents, and educators to refine their approaches.

These examples collectively demonstrate that successful moral education interventions share common features, including a strong theoretical foundation, participatory learning strategies, and alignment with local contexts. By prioritizing inclusivity, fostering collaboration, and addressing systemic barriers, moral education can serve as a powerful tool for promoting ethical behavior and reducing violence in schools. These case studies provide valuable lessons for developing scalable, context-sensitive programs capable of addressing complex social issues.

2.2.3 Impact of teacher-student interactions on GBV outcomes

According to Azer, (2005), the interaction between teachers and students plays a pivotal role in shaping the educational environment and has a profound impact on addressing gender-based violence (GBV) within schools. Teachers are not only facilitators of knowledge but also role models who influence students' behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions (Vanner, 2017). Their ability to engage students in meaningful discussions, foster respectful relationships, and uphold ethical values significantly determines the

outcomes of efforts to mitigate GBV. Positive teacher-student interactions create a culture of trust and respect, which is essential for addressing sensitive issues such as GBV.

Orr et al (2022) state that when teachers actively engage students in discussions about respect, equality, and empathy, they contribute to creating an environment where harmful behaviors are less likely to thrive. For instance, lessons that emphasize the importance of treating others with dignity can challenge entrenched gender stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes, which are often precursors to GBV (Wafula, 2016). Teachers who consistently model these values in their interactions with students reinforce the principles of fairness and mutual respect, fostering a school culture that rejects violence and promotes inclusivity. This modeling extends beyond the classroom, as students often emulate the behaviors and attitudes of their teachers in their interactions with peers.

Further Prezenszky et al., (2018), indicate that the quality of teacher-student relationships also affects students' willingness to report instances of GBV. When students perceive their teachers as approachable and supportive, they are more likely to disclose experiences of violence or harassment (Edwards et al., 2022). Such disclosures are critical for addressing GBV, as they provide an opportunity for timely intervention and support. Teachers who listen empathetically to students' concerns and take appropriate actions send a powerful message about the unacceptability of GBV, reinforcing the importance of accountability and justice within the school community.

However, the potential for positive outcomes from teacher-student interactions is contingent upon teachers' ability to address GBV effectively. This requires adequate

training in recognizing the signs of GBV, responding to disclosures sensitively, and fostering discussions that promote critical thinking about gender and power dynamics (Bryant, et al., 2017). Without this preparation, teachers may inadvertently perpetuate harmful norms or fail to provide the support students need. For example, dismissive or judgmental responses to students who report GBV can discourage others from coming forward, perpetuating a culture of silence and impunity.

In addition to direct interactions, the broader practices and policies enforced by teachers influence GBV outcomes. Teachers who maintain consistent and fair discipline practices contribute to an environment where all students feel safe and valued (Swart, 2011). Conversely, favoritism or gender-biased practices can exacerbate feelings of marginalization and perpetuate inequalities, undermining efforts to address GBV. Teachers' ability to implement policies that promote gender equality and protect vulnerable students further reinforces the role of education in combating violence and discrimination.

According to Mphuthi, (2024), the impact of teacher-student interactions on GBV outcomes also extends to the cultivation of peer relationships. Teachers who facilitate activities that encourage collaboration and mutual understanding among students help build a sense of community and shared responsibility (Kamore, 2021). This collective ethos can reduce instances of bullying, harassment, and other forms of GBV by fostering an environment where such behaviors are socially unacceptable.

Therefore, teacher-student interactions are central to efforts to address GBV in schools. By fostering trust, promoting ethical values, and modeling respectful behaviors, teachers

can influence students' attitudes and actions, creating a foundation for safer and more inclusive educational environments. To maximize the impact of these interactions, it is essential to equip teachers with the training and resources needed to address GBV effectively, ensuring that their role as educators and mentors contributes to meaningful and lasting change.

2.2.4 Moral agency of teachers in GBV prevention sense of responsibility, ethical leadership, and professional duty.

The educators lie at the ethical core of the education system. More than providing the curriculum material, they embodied the moral values, relationship conventions, and justice principles that students internalized (Campbell, 2018; Sockett, 2019). Moral agency, in this regard, is the ability of a teacher to make principled decisions and be a responsible actor in the presence of competing social and professional demands. The Teachers Service Commission (TSC) Code of Conduct and Ethics (2021) addresses this expectation succinctly: educators are expected to protect the well-being of learners, be honest, and report or stop maltreatment. However, it takes professional courage, reflection, and institutional support to translate this professional obligation into practice.

Research in Kenya and Eastern Africa indicates that there is a significant difference in the moral agency of teachers in regard to gender-based violence (GBV). Other teachers interpret GBV as a disciplinary or administrative issue, believing that it is not within their area of professional expertise (EA Journals, 2023). Some understand it as a lapse of ethics in the school community and consider themselves as guardians of student dignity, practicing fairness, empathy, and accountability (Oloo & Ochieng, 2021). According to UNESCO (2021), in schools where the teachers exercise high moral agency (expressed in transparent actions, fair treatment, and open communication), fewer reports of

harassment and bullying occurred. These teachers incorporate the principles of safeguarding in the teaching process, in counselling and in co-curricular mentorship, transforming classrooms into moral communities where respect and non-violence become everyday norms, not occasional topics.

Yet, systemic inequities and situational tensions limit moral agency. Educators in rural states like Vihiga frequently work with excessive workloads, scarce resources, and ingrained patriarchal frameworks that deter resistance to abuse (APHRC, 2023). This is a common moral challenge among teachers who have to deal with personal relationships in intimate communities and the ethical necessity to report misconducts, particularly when the offenders are colleagues or elders. The threat of retaliation or reputational damage may govern action, transforming moral agency into passive compliance. In addition, teacher-training programs seldom incorporate any long-term consideration of ethical dilemmas, and educators are not well prepared to translate codes of conduct into moral practice (Kilonzo, 2022).

This research thesis explored the meaning of moral agency and its execution among teachers in Vihiga under GBV contexts. It discusses their feeling of responsibility, the bravery to intervene, and the boundaries they view their professional role as having. These perceptions are critical to understand since teacher agency is the transition between normative policy and lived reality. By foregrounding moral agency as an ethical and professional construct, the study reshapes the notion of teachers not as the passive enforcers of policy but as agentic moral subjects whose actions, or lack thereof, turn schools into safe, nurturing environments or spaces that unconsciously condone violence.

2.2.5 Moral education as preventive pedagogy - incorporating value-based learning into classroom and co-curricular situations.

Moral and citizenship education are becoming more and more accepted and viewed as preventive mechanisms against violence and social intolerance worldwide (Lickona et al., 2018; Narvaez and Bock, 2021). Powerful programs develop empathy, perspective-taking, and moral judgment-skills that protect learners against aggression and prejudice. The Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) of Kenya incorporates these ideals via Life Skills Education (LSE), Religious Education, and the cross-cutting competency of values and social responsibility (KICD, 2017). The idea is that moral study flows in all aspects of learning, connecting both academic and character development.

However, according to the evidence in Kenyan schools, there has been an ongoing problem in realizing this integrative vision. According to many teachers, they are unsure of how to relate moral values to subject matter or classroom management. Empathy, respect, or consent lessons are typically taught as discrete moral lectures, often during assemblies, pastoral sessions, or disciplinary meetings, but not as ongoing experiential learning (Usawa Agenda, 2023). According to Kilonzo (2022), educators are not often provided with pedagogical training on gender-responsive moral education but instead tend to employ didactic learning, lecturing approaches that lack the ability to capture the emotions and intellect of learners. The disjuncture is ideological but rather pedagogical: educators share the significance of moral education but have no means of translating values into behavioral skills.

Moral education as preventive pedagogy should be participatory and reflective. According to UNICEF (2022) and APHRC (2023), scenario-based learning, debates, role-plays, and peer mentorship are the approaches that allow students to train their moral

reasoning and empathy. By engaging in the analysis of dilemmas about respect, consent, or equity, students will learn to apply ethical principles to real-life interactions, which is exactly the skillset needed to oppose GBV. Furthermore, internalization is improved through attachment of classroom-based learning to co-curricular activities like theatre, community service, or peer-counselling. On this respect, moral education is very related to the concept of conscientization by Freire (1970), the development of critical awareness via dialogue.

Preventive pedagogy is a dream in the public secondary schools in Vihiga. The perception of its relevance by teachers is the crucial factor in making moral education transformative or rhetorical. This paper explores the conceptualization and practice of preventive pedagogy among teachers: Do they regard moral learning as a tool of social transformation or simply as a means of behavior management? By eliciting stories of teachers, the study sheds light on the daily pedagogical choices that perpetuate cultures of violence and/or challenge them. Finally, the results will be used to develop policies that can transform value-based learning into an experiential, student-centered process that can influence ethical behavior in the classroom and beyond.

2.2.6 Community and parental involvement, cooperation with parents, religious institutions and local leaders in moral nurturing.

Moral development is an ecological process which stretches beyond school. The conceptualization of moral behavior in the ecological systems theory by Bronfenbrenner (1994) is based on the interactions between the various environments: the microsystem of family and school, the mesosystem of community institutions, and the macrosystem of cultural values. In Kenya, MoE (2019) and KICD (2020) note the role of community

involvement as a fundamental component of CBC due to the idea that schools cannot combat GBV alone or change deeply held gender norms. Moral reference points of children are affected by parents, religious leaders, and local administrators even before and after classroom teaching.

Nonetheless, school-community collaboration tends to be informal and flat. According to Wambugu and Muturi (2020) in rural Kenya, most school-parent interactions are centered on school fees or punishments instead of joint moral growth. Discussions surrounding sexuality, consent, or gender equality are often evaded because of cultural taboos. Teachers, therefore, work in an ethical vacuum: as they promote empathy and non-violence in a classroom, learners can receive messages that are conflicting at home where patriarchal authority or corporal punishment are the norm. Such contradictions are intense in Vihiga, which is characterized by strong Christian influence and traditional norms.

However, there is empirical evidence that structured community engagement improves moral outcomes. The research by UNICEF (2022) and Usawa Agenda (2023) indicates that the school with an active parent-education forum, inter-faith conversations, and mentorship programs have lower rates of indiscipline and peer harassment. Community partnerships further justify the attempt of teachers to raise sensitive issues and eliminate resistance and encouragement of the cultural ownership of moral reforms. The current paper examines the experiences of teachers in collaborating with parents and local institutions: what works, what obstructs, and what innovative technological solutions can be proposed. It aims to find models of co-responsibility that entail the integration of GBV prevention into the daily life of communities- transforming moral education into a societal ethic.

2.2.7 Institutional and policy support - school policies, ministry guidelines, and gender desks in support of GBV prevention.

Institutional structures define the extent to which the moral ambitions of teachers are fostered or suppressed. The Gender Policy of Education and Training Sector (MoE, 2019) and the National School Safety Framework, as well as the Whole-School Approach to SRGBV offered by UNESCO (2021), promotes the incorporation of moral education into school governance. The major mechanisms are codes of conduct, gender desks, safeguarding committees and mandatory reporting procedures. These are designed to cushion learners and make teachers the first responders to GBV.

Practically, there is inconsistency in implementation. APHRC (2023) records the fact that a minority of less than half of Kenyan secondary schools have functional gender desks or counselling units. There is a poor coordination between county education offices and child-protection agencies resulting in under-reporting and disjointed response. In many rural schools, policy frameworks are perceived by teachers as bureaucratic burdens rather than as supporting mechanisms. UNGEI (2020) discovered that moral education and GBV prevention are seldom a part of school improvement plans or teacher performance appraisals, with responsibility being diffused.

The perception of institutional support by teachers is thus decisive. Once teachers have confidence in the leadership to maintain due process and confidentiality, they will be more inclined to report incidents and moral advocacy. In contrast, avoidance or informal resolution takes place when systems seem to be punitive or inaccessible. In Vihiga, there are anecdotal reports of symbolic gender desks, with no trained staff or specific budgets. This compromises teacher confidence and safety of learners. The research problem

addressed in the present study is to understand how teachers perceive these institutional dynamics: Do policies enable their moral agency, or do they feel constrained by them? The results will be used to inform local reforms like incorporating moral-education indicators into school performance contracts, enhancing mentorship of gender-desk officers, and connecting moral pedagogy with accountability frameworks. Finally, making moral education institutionalized turns moral education into a systemic culture of care and justice.

2.2.8 Gender norms and power relations in schools - teachers' reflections on the problems of challenging patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes.

The issue of gender-based violence in schools is a reflection of larger patriarchal systems that favor masculinity and dismiss femininity. When it is interrogative rather than a reproduction of these hierarchies, moral education can be transformative. According to UNESCO (2021) and UNGEI (2020), schools are miniatures of the entire society, where gender norms are enacted every day, through language, discipline, dress codes, and leadership practices. There is a tremendous impact on how teachers view gender roles that will either reinforce or break them down.

A study conducted in Kenya has shown that student empathy increases and their harassment tolerance decreases when teachers model egalitarian relationships—sharing in decision making, using gender-inclusive language, and encouraging equitable participation—consciously (Oloo & Ochieng, 2021; Usawa Agenda, 2023). On the other hand, when educators support stereotypes, including linking leadership to males or moral

decency to feminine chastity, they justify inequality. Kilonzo (2022) decries the lack of gender sensitivity training in pre-service education, pointing out that too many educators understand gender issues in defensive terms, as attempts to corrupt morals instead of dispensing justice.

This terrain is complicated in Vihiga, where patriarchal customs and powerful church influence are highly prominent. Teachers navigate competing moral discourse: religious teaching with a focus on chastity and obedience, cultural norms with male dominance, and policy guidelines with gender equality. These tensions may culminate into selective engagements whereby educators treat GBV on a surface level and evade underlying issues. Teachers, however, possess their own transformative power. By placing moral education in the context of universal virtues, respect, empathy, fairness, instead of the dichotomy of gender rhetoric, they can implicitly disrupt hierarchies without estranging communities. This paper examines the way teachers of Vihiga negotiate such complexities, how they use pedagogical strategies to encourage critical reflection, and what dangers or opposition they face. By comprehending these dynamics, it is possible to develop gender-responsive moral curricula that are culturally resonant and socially progressive.

2.2,9 Measured effects of moral education - modifications in student discipline, peer relations, and tolerance levels.

The final test of the relevance of moral education is visible behavioral change. In African contexts, schools with organized moral and life-skills initiatives show reductions in bullying, absence, and classroom disturbances (EA Journals, 2022; KICD, 2020). Teachers often report an increase in empathy, cooperation, and peer mediation abilities.

Such results support social-cognitive theories that indicate that moral thinking anticipates prosocial behaviour (Bandura, 1977). However, the evidence base is still scattered; the majority of assessments are made based on anecdotal findings instead of longitudinal evidence.

Moral instruction in Kenya was associated with better respect of authority and peer tolerance, but effect differed by school culture and teacher commitment (Oloo and Ochieng, 2021). Similarly, UNICEF (2022) noted that students showed better self-regulation and reduced disciplinary referrals where guidance and counselling departments were operational. However, APHRC (2023) warns that the effect of moral education becomes watered down in the absence of explicit behavioural surveillance frameworks. Most school-based incident-tracking or feedback systems do not have the capacity to capture slight changes in attitudes or empathy.

In Vihiga, the anecdotal data indicate promising but heterogeneous results. Teachers correlate successful moral education with less fighting in the classroom, less use of force, and more cooperation in working with groups in the classroom. Co-curricular activities, such as debate clubs, religious affiliations, and community-service projects, seem to be especially effective in putting values into practice. But moral teaching, when kept to the lecture, is soon exhausted. This paper systematically records the observations made by teachers of these outcomes, and cross-checks them with school records and qualitative evidence. It aims to explain the mechanism and circumstances in which moral education reduces GBV-associated behaviours (including harassment, coercion, and discrimination) by mapping the causal pathways between moral pedagogy and behavioural

transformation. The results will inform assessment models that consider moral outcomes, empathy, tolerance, cooperation, to be performance measures of school quality alongside academic performance.

2.2.10 Conclusion

Objective two builds on conceptualizing teacher perceptions of the role of moral education in GBV prevention. The analysis shows six interlocking dimensions: moral agency, preventive pedagogy, community collaboration, institutional support, gender norm transformation and behavioural outcomes. Personal ethics, professional training, as well as institutional and cultural ecologies, influence the perceptions of teachers. The preventive value of moral education in Vihiga County is very high, but it all depends on whether teachers will be empowered to be moral leaders working in well-wish systems. Moral teaching becomes dialogic, gender-responsive, community-based, and so it can change the culture of the school of compliance into that of care. On the other hand, its ability to prevent GBV is constrained when it is limited to moral rhetoric with no structural support.

This work offers a contribution to both theoretical and empirical discussions on ethical agency in limiting settings and empowers policy frameworks that would locate teachers as co-creators of safe and ethical learning environments. Finally, promoting moral education as preventive pedagogy is consistent with the CBC vision of Kenya to raise responsible, empathetic, and peaceful citizens, which cannot be achieved without the wider context of fighting gender-based violence in schools and society.

2.3 Moral strategies to mitigate GBV: participatory approaches in moral education

According to Keller-Bell, & Short, (2019), participatory approaches in moral education emphasize the active involvement of students, teachers, and the broader community in the learning process, fostering a collaborative environment that encourages ethical reflection and behavior. These approaches prioritize engagement and interaction, moving beyond traditional lecture-based methods to include dialogue, role-playing, group activities, and shared decision-making. By placing learners at the center of the educational experience, participatory methods help cultivate a sense of ownership and responsibility for ethical practices, making moral lessons more relevant and impactful.

Decker et al., (2018) indicate that in moral education, participation allows learners to explore ethical dilemmas and real-world scenarios in a way that promotes critical thinking and problem solving. This hands-on engagement is essential for developing virtues such as empathy, respect, and justice, which are often central to moral education frameworks (Decker et al., 2018). Role-playing exercises, for example, enable students to step into the shoes of others, fostering an understanding of diverse perspectives and the consequences of different actions. Group discussions and debates encourage learners to articulate their values, challenge biases, and consider alternative viewpoints, creating a dynamic and inclusive learning environment.

Muzakkir, et al., 2024 state that teachers play a critical role in participatory approaches by acting as facilitators rather than authoritative figures. Their role is to guide discussions, pose thought-provoking questions, and create a safe space for open dialogue. This facilitative approach not only empowers students but also encourages mutual respect and trust within the classroom (Mahlangu, Gevers, & De Lannoy, 2014). When students feel their voices are valued, they are more likely to engage actively and internalize the

moral principles being taught. This process helps bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, ensuring that moral education has a lasting impact on behavior and decision-making.

Thomas et al., (2022) state that participatory approaches also extend beyond the classroom to involve the wider school community and local stakeholders. For instance, community-based projects that address social issues allow students to apply moral principles in real-life contexts (Crooks et al., 2019). Activities like organizing campaigns on environmental conservation or volunteering in social initiatives provide opportunities for students to practice virtues like responsibility, cooperation, and compassion. Such experiences help reinforce the moral lessons learned in the classroom and demonstrate their relevance to societal well-being.

According to Akwara & Idele, (2020) one of the strengths of participatory approaches is their adaptability to diverse cultural and social contexts. By incorporating local values and traditions into the curriculum, educators can make moral education more relatable and meaningful for students. Community involvement further enhances this process by ensuring that the content of moral education aligns with the specific needs and challenges of the local context (Akwara & Idele, 2020). This collaborative effort fosters a sense of unity and shared purpose, making moral education a collective endeavor rather than an isolated academic subject.

Despite their many benefits, participatory approaches require careful planning and adequate resources to be effective. Teachers need specialized training to manage interactive sessions and facilitate discussions without imposing their own biases (Jesca,

2017). Additionally, schools must provide supportive environments that encourage creativity and experimentation in teaching methods. Addressing these challenges can enhance the efficacy of participatory approaches, ensuring they contribute meaningfully to moral development.

By engaging students and communities in the learning process, participatory approaches in moral education create opportunities for individuals to explore and practice ethical principles in a collaborative setting. This dynamic model fosters not only moral reasoning but also the development of virtuous habits, laying the groundwork for a more empathetic and just society.

2.3.1 Integration of cultural norms in moral strategies

According to Lima & Guedes, (2024), The integration of cultural norms into moral strategies is essential for the success and sustainability of educational programs aimed at addressing societal challenges, including gender-based violence (GBV). Cultural norms represent the shared values, traditions, and practices that shape a community's identity and behavior (Kimani, 2016). By incorporating these norms into moral education strategies, educators and policymakers can create initiatives that resonate deeply with the target population, fostering acceptance and meaningful engagement. However, this process requires careful consideration, as cultural norms can both support and hinder the goals of moral education.

Lima & Guedes, (2024), adds that in many societies, cultural norms are deeply embedded in everyday life, influencing how people perceive issues such as gender roles, authority, and respect. For moral education to be effective, it must align with these cultural

understandings while challenging harmful practices. For example, in contexts where patriarchal values dominate, promoting respect for gender equality may clash with entrenched beliefs (Muthoni, 2019). Addressing such conflicts requires moral strategies that are sensitive to cultural nuances yet persistent in advocating for change. Educators must find ways to bridge traditional values with universal principles like equality and justice, ensuring that the teachings are both culturally relevant and ethically robust.

One approach to integrating cultural norms is through the use of locally recognized symbols, stories, and practices in moral education curricula. Storytelling, a powerful tool in many cultures, can convey moral lessons that align with both traditional wisdom and contemporary ethical standards (Kamunya, 2019). For instance, folk tales that emphasize the virtues of kindness, fairness, and community responsibility can be adapted to address modern issues like GBV. By rooting these lessons in familiar narratives, educators can make abstract concepts tangible and relatable, increasing their impact on students.

Githaiga, (2020) also adds that religious and spiritual traditions often play a significant role in shaping cultural norms and can be leveraged to support moral strategies. In many communities, religious teachings are a primary source of moral guidance. By integrating principles from these traditions into moral education, educators can align their programs with the values already esteemed by the community. For example, teachings from Christianity, Islam, or other faiths that emphasize compassion, justice, and respect can be used to challenge practices that perpetuate GBV (Githaiga, 2020). However, this approach requires a nuanced understanding of how religious teachings are interpreted locally, as some interpretations may inadvertently reinforce gender inequities.

According to Botte et al. (2005), community involvement is another critical aspect of integrating cultural norms into moral strategies. Engaging community leaders, parents, and other stakeholders ensures that the strategies are informed by a comprehensive understanding of local values and challenges. When communities feel ownership over moral education initiatives, they are more likely to support and sustain these efforts (Grace, 2011). Collaborative dialogue can also address potential resistance by providing a platform for discussing sensitive issues in a culturally respectful manner.

Despite its benefits, the integration of cultural norms into moral strategies presents challenges. Not all cultural norms are conducive to ethical progress, and some may directly conflict with the goals of reducing GBV. Navigating these tensions requires a delicate balance between respecting cultural identity and advocating for change (Grace, 2011). Policymakers and educators must approach this integration with humility, adaptability, and a commitment to fostering a culture of mutual respect and nonviolence. By harmonizing cultural values with ethical principles, moral education can achieve deeper resonance and effectiveness in addressing critical social issues.

2.3.2 Policy recommendations for schools

According to Thomas et al., (2022,) policy recommendations for schools addressing gender-based violence (GBV) should focus on creating a comprehensive framework that integrates preventative education, fosters an inclusive culture, and ensures accountability. Schools are critical environments for shaping attitudes and behaviors, making them essential spaces for interventions aimed at mitigating GBV. A multi-faceted approach that includes clear guidelines, teacher training, student engagement, and community involvement is necessary to create safer and more equitable educational spaces.

Thomas et al., (2022) recommends that the establishment of explicit anti-GBV policies that outline preventive measures, reporting mechanisms, and consequences for perpetrators. Policies should be clear, accessible, and consistently enforced to ensure that all members of the school community understand their roles and responsibilities (Githaiga, 2020). Schools must actively communicate these policies to students, staff, and parents to foster transparency and trust. Additionally, policies should be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changing societal norms and advancements in GBV prevention research.

Tappis et al., (2016) indicate that training and capacity-building initiatives for educators are essential to equip them with the knowledge and skills to address GBV effectively. Teachers are on the frontline of observing and intervening in instances of GBV, and their ability to handle these situations sensitively and effectively can significantly impact outcomes (Grace, 2011). Training should include recognizing signs of GBV, implementing prevention strategies, and facilitating discussions about gender equality and respectful relationships. Furthermore, educators should be provided with resources and support to integrate these themes into the curriculum in a way that resonates with students and aligns with cultural contexts.

According to Bott et al., (2005) a robust curriculum that incorporates moral education and GBV awareness is another crucial policy recommendation. Schools should embed topics such as consent, healthy relationships, and gender equality into their teaching programs. Moral education, guided by principles like respect, empathy, and justice, can play a transformative role in shaping student attitudes and behaviors (Grace, 2011). Curriculum design should be participatory, involving educators, students, and community

members to ensure relevance and acceptance. Additionally, lessons should be interactive and practical, enabling students to apply ethical principles in real-life scenarios.

To enhance the effectiveness of these policies, schools should establish accessible reporting and support systems for GBV incidents. Reporting mechanisms must ensure confidentiality and protect victims from retaliation, encouraging more individuals to come forward (Grace, 2011). Support services, such as counseling and peer support groups, should be made available to help survivors recover and reintegrate into the school community. Schools must also collaborate with local law enforcement and social services to address severe cases effectively and ensure justice for victims.

According to Ngilu, (2019) Community engagement is a critical component of addressing GBV in schools. Schools should work closely with parents, local leaders, and organizations to create a unified approach to GBV prevention. Engaging the community helps align school initiatives with broader societal efforts, ensuring consistency in messaging and support. Awareness campaigns, workshops, and events can also foster a culture of mutual respect and collective responsibility.

Therefore, schools should implement monitoring and evaluation systems to assess the impact of their policies and practices. Regular assessments help identify strengths and areas for improvement, enabling schools to adapt and refine their approaches over time. The study by Ngilu, recommends that data should be collected through qualitative data which is in tandem with the current study. The current study employed unstructured interviews to collect data because is in depth and dialogical. On the other hand, this study

employed phenomenological approach which is hermeneutic in nature to understand the essence of gender-based violence in Secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya.

2.3.3 Training programs for teachers

According to Wafula, (2016), training programs for teachers are pivotal in addressing issues such as gender-based violence (GBV) in educational settings. These programs serve as a mechanism to enhance educators' capacities to recognize, prevent, and respond to GBV while fostering a safe and inclusive environment for learning. By equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills, training programs become a cornerstone for transformative education that promotes ethical awareness and behavioral change.

Moreover, Wafula, (2016) adds that Effective teacher training programs integrate theoretical frameworks, practical strategies, and cultural contexts to create a holistic approach to education. For instance, in regions such as Vihiga County, Kenya, where GBV remains a significant challenge, training programs can incorporate locally relevant examples and culturally sensitive approaches to ensure that interventions are practical and impactful. Training should emphasize key principles such as respect, empathy, and justice, as outlined in moral education frameworks, to address the root causes of violence and discriminatory behavior.

According to Lima & Guedes, (2024), a core component of these programs is raising awareness about the prevalence and impact of GBV in schools. Teachers need to understand the various forms of GBV, including physical, emotional, and sexual violence, and their detrimental effects on students' well-being and academic outcomes (Mwasya, 2015). Incorporating discussions about societal norms and cultural attitudes

that perpetuate GBV is essential, as it allows teachers to identify and challenge harmful behaviors effectively. Additionally, teachers must be trained to recognize signs of abuse and understand how to provide appropriate support and referrals for affected students.

Mwasya, (2015) adds that another critical aspect of teacher training programs is the development of practical skills for fostering a positive and inclusive school climate. Teachers should be equipped with strategies to promote healthy relationships and prevent violence through moral education and proactive classroom management. This includes techniques for facilitating open discussions, using participatory teaching methods, and modeling respectful interactions. Training programs can include role-playing scenarios, case studies, and collaborative workshops to ensure that teachers are prepared to handle real-life situations effectively.

According to Wangamati et al., (2022) building teachers' capacity to implement policies and procedures related to GBV prevention and response is also vital. Schools must have clear guidelines for reporting incidents, supporting survivors, and addressing perpetrators, and teachers should play a central role in enforcing these measures. Training programs should provide educators with the tools to navigate these responsibilities while maintaining confidentiality, fairness, and sensitivity. Emphasizing the importance of accountability and transparency in handling GBV cases reinforces a culture of trust and safety within the school community.

Wangamati et al., (2022) also adds that to maximize the impact of training programs, they should be ongoing and adaptable. Continuous professional development ensures that teachers remain informed about evolving best practices and emerging challenges related

to GBV. Incorporating feedback from teachers and students into the design and delivery of training programs can enhance their relevance and effectiveness. Moreover, aligning these programs with broader educational and policy initiatives helps create a cohesive approach to GBV prevention.

Ultimately, teacher training programs are instrumental in transforming schools into environments where students can thrive free from the threat of violence. By empowering educators with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to address GBV, these programs contribute to the cultivation of ethical behavior, respect, and equity within the educational system and beyond.

2.3.4 Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for moral education

According to Tappis et al. (2016) the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms for moral education are vital to assessing its impact, effectiveness, and sustainability in fostering ethical behavior and addressing societal challenges such as gender-based violence (GBV). These mechanisms ensure that moral education programs meet their intended goals, providing data-driven insights to inform adjustments and improvements. Effective M&E frameworks for moral education require a multi-faceted approach, incorporating qualitative and quantitative tools, stakeholder engagement, and contextual adaptability.

Firstly, M&E mechanisms must include clear objectives and indicators that align with the moral education program's goals (Malenya, 2014). For instance, if the aim is to reduce GBV in schools, indicators might track changes in reported incidents, shifts in attitudes toward gender equality, and improvements in interpersonal relationships among students

and teachers. These indicators should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) to facilitate meaningful evaluation.

According to Thomas et al., (2022) qualitative methods are crucial for capturing the nuanced effects of moral education on individuals and communities. Tools such as interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation provide insights into students' and teachers lived experiences, attitudes, and behaviors (Kadiri, 2017). For example, interviews with teachers might reveal challenges they face in delivering moral education, while focus groups with students could highlight how the lessons resonate with their daily lives. These qualitative approaches are particularly valuable in exploring the complex social and cultural factors influencing moral education's impact.

Kadiri, (2017) indicates that quantitative tools complement qualitative methods by providing objective data to measure progress. Surveys, pre- and post-intervention assessments, and behavioral audits can track changes over time, offering a statistical basis for evaluating program outcomes. For instance, a survey might assess students' understanding of ethical principles before and after a moral education intervention, while behavioral audits could document reductions in incidents like bullying or harassment.

Thomas et al., (2022) also adds that Stakeholder engagement is another critical component of effective M&E. Involving students, teachers, parents, and community leaders in the evaluation process ensures that diverse perspectives inform the findings. Stakeholder input helps identify gaps, contextualize results, and build broader support for the program. For example, community leaders might provide insights into cultural norms

affecting the program's reception, while parents can offer feedback on changes observed in their children's behavior.

Cultural sensitivity and contextual adaptability are essential for successful M&E. Programs implemented in diverse settings, such as rural schools in Vihiga County, Kenya, must consider local traditions, values, and resources (Women, 2016). Evaluation tools should be tailored to the community's unique context, ensuring relevance and accuracy. For example, incorporating culturally familiar narratives or symbols into assessment tools can enhance participants' engagement and understanding.

According to Bott et al., (2005), monitoring mechanisms must also include continuous feedback loops, enabling real-time adjustments to moral education programs. For instance, regular progress reports can highlight emerging challenges or successes, prompting timely interventions to optimize outcomes (Women, 2016). Evaluation of findings should be shared transparently with stakeholders, fostering accountability and collective ownership.

Finally, capacity-building for educators and evaluators is essential. Teachers and evaluators need training to implement and assess moral education effectively. Workshops, resource materials, and ongoing support can enhance their skills in data collection, analysis, and interpretation. With these mechanisms in place, M&E frameworks can ensure that moral education initiatives achieve their objectives, foster sustainable ethical development, and contribute to creating safer, more equitable learning environments.

2.3.5 To Determine the best moral education initiatives to reduce GBV in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya.

Virtue ethics is a major source of the moral philosophy of effective character formation in education, focusing on developing moral dispositions and habits that help learners to act ethically (Aristotle, trans. 1999; Lickona, 2018). In the schooling context, virtue ethics offers a structural set of values like respect, justice and empathy to be directly incorporated into the curriculum design and pedagogy. Moral virtues, as Arthur (2019) notes, are not learned by means of abstract instruction but by habitual practice and social modelling, and these conditions are well in line with the goals of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in Kenya. Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD, 2017) recognizes these virtues as cross-cutting competencies that must permeate each learning area making moral education not a subject in its own right but as a school-wide ethos.

Practically, incorporating virtue ethics into curriculum implementation implies crafting lesson plans, classroom routines, and assessments to foster character in addition to cognition. As an illustration, literature lessons may invite students to examine ethical dilemmas in texts, whereas science and social studies may implement debates on environmental ethics, justice, and human dignity (Narvaez and Bock, 2021). This type of moral order aligns with what Kristjánsson (2020) refers to as embedded moral instruction, where the cultivation of virtues is not added on as moral discourse but is integrated into the education itself. In co-curricular activities-sports, drama, debates, or student councils, teachers may deliberately demonstrate equitable, collaborative, and compassionate behaviors by engaging in participatory activities that provide a supportive foundation to classroom values. Such whole-school virtue integration is suggested by

UNICEF (2022) and the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2019) in Kenya as one of the main mechanisms of creating inclusive and non-violent schools.

Yet, it has been shown that moral education is widely understood as didactic moralising or disciplinary correction by most teachers (Oloo & Ochieng, 2021; EA Journals, 2023). Devoid of systematic curricular direction or evaluation instruments, virtue-based education is empty rhetoric and does not change student behaviour. An example is that although the core competency of the CBC, which is ethical citizenship, is meant to make socially responsible learners, in rural counties such as Vihiga, teachers indicate that they lack professional development to come up with lessons that help them relate moral reasoning to GBV prevention. This is further complicated by the absence of specific signals to evaluate such virtues like empathy or justice. As a result, moral education is more focused on abstract exhortations than practical action, which diminishes its preventive value in GBV and associated behaviours.

To address these gaps, the delivery of curriculum should embrace a whole-school virtue ethics approach, which explicitly connects moral education with gender and social justice. Educators are to be directed to incorporate GBV-responsive themes within the routine subjects, including equality, respect of body autonomy, and non-discrimination. The Education and Training Sector Gender Policy (MoE, 2019) and Whole-School Approach to Preventing SRGBV (UNESCO, 2021) both promote moral and gender education at the curricular and co-curricular levels, through the lenses of reflective assessment and student discourse. In Vihiga, where patriarchal attitudes in most cases

dominate learner attitudes, teachers can use role-modelling and scenario-based discussions to dispel destructive stereotypes and foster empathy. As Kilonzo (2022) explains, moral education that prefigures relational virtues such as care, justice, compassion can transform behavioural norms that reinforce gender-based violence. The current research therefore highlights that a combination of virtue ethics in curriculum development and teacher pedagogy is a crucial initial measure towards institutionalizing moral resilience to GBV in schools.

2.3.6 Participatory and experiential learning approaches, debates, drama, storytelling, and peer-mentoring to internalize moral values.

The participatory and experiential learning methods play a major role in making moral education not a piece of theory but a reality. These strategies are based on the concept of experiential learning as proposed by Dewey (1938) and the model of reflective practice as presented by Kolb (1984). Participatory pedagogy in the realm of moral education enables learners to actively engage with ethical theories, address practical challenges, and internalize values based on the practice and reflection. UNESCO (2021) cites experiential modes like role-play, debate, and storytelling as bases of empathy-building and critical moral reasoning, which are crucial in violence prevention and inclusive social interactions. Passive and didactic moral teaching, by contrast, can lead to compliance and not conviction, which prepares the learner poorly to handle complicated moral issues like GBV.

Participatory and experiential exercises have been effective in Kenya in terms of involving students on sensitive social issues in public secondary schools. Nationally led interventions such as the Tuseme (Let Us Speak) Program, through the support of UNICEF and FAWE-Kenya, have utilized drama and theatre to enable learners, and

especially girls to express issues concerning harassment and discrimination. Research by Amutabi and Wanyama (2021) and Usawa Agenda (2023) demonstrates that participatory storytelling and drama lead to increased empathy and awareness of gender inequities by enabling students to relate themselves to moral situations. In line with this, both debates and peer-mentoring programs were found to increase the confidence in students discussing taboo topics such as consent, power, and respect (Mungai and Nyaboke, 2020). These interactive modalities are consistent with the vision of the CBC of the learner-centered education and can help in the development of the essential moral competencies, including critical thinking, collaboration, and ethical communication.

However, even with the potentiality, participatory and experiential methods are underused in most rural Kenyan schools because of structural and pedagogical inhibitors. Educators tend to be untrained, time-constrained, and lack the necessary resources to provide active learning, especially on sensitive issues such as GBV or sexuality (Oloo & Atieno, 2020). Also, class sizes and exam pressures cause most teachers to focus on syllabus cover rather than dialogical interaction. Innovation in moral pedagogy is further inhibited by institutional forces, including conservative school cultures and parental fear of addressing gender issues. Therefore, children in Vihiga and other such settings will not be able to go through moral exploration that would allow them to break down detrimental gender stereotypes and behaviors. According to research by APHRC (2023) and UNGEI (2020), moral education without participatory engagement risks making its students more obedient instead of morally active.

These gaps must be addressed through systemic change to experiential moral pedagogy,

and institutional policy and teacher empowerment. Schools are to institutionalize participatory programs as part of co-curricular schedules, e.g., ethics clubs, student mentorship, gender theatre, tied directly to CBC competencies on empathy, integrity and responsible citizenship. Professional development should encompass training in facilitation abilities, emotional literacy, and trauma-sensitive teaching, so educators can safely and inclusively navigate sensitive discussions. Moreover, collaborations with community-based organizations and cultural institutions can offer creative resources and mentorship to support experiential learning. Participatory moral education integrated into the overall GBV prevention agenda in Vihiga County has the potential to turn schools into dialogic spaces where learners challenge social norms, practice empathy, and internalize respect as a moral value of living. Experiential learning is therefore a pedagogical and moral requirement in fostering GBV-free learning environments.

2.3.7 Capacity building of teachers -training needs and ongoing professional growth on moral, gender-respectful pedagogy.

Effective moral and gender responsive education depends on teacher capacity. Moral standards can only be converted into behaviour change when teachers have the necessary knowledge, attitudes and pedagogical competence to help instill values in a steady and sensitive manner. Sockett (2019) argues that teachers are moral agents and curricular interpreters; their dispositions, moral reasoning, and relational competence have a strong impact on the moral learning of students. Kenyan Teachers Service Commission (TSC, 2021) indicates professional integrity and learner protection as their fundamental competencies. However, other sources, such as Oloo and Atieno (2020) and EA Journals (2023), indicate that the majority of in-service programs continue to focus on delivery of examination over the moral or psychosocial aspects of teaching. As a result, most

educators use intuition or personal faith backgrounds to impart moral education, with a great deal of discrepancy in classroom quality and relevance to GBV prevention.

An efficient capacity-building model should incorporate contents-based learning in moral philosophy, methodological mastery in participatory pedagogy, and situational learning of GBV dynamics. Although UNESCO (2021) suggests including modules on ethics, gender and child protection in preservice education, UNICEF (2022) proposes ongoing professional development (CPD) that connects ethics in the classroom with safeguarding practices. Counties in Kenya, including Kisumu and Nakuru, have tested CPD workshops integrating both moral pedagogy and gender-responsive instruction, documenting significant decreases in peer bullying and corporal punishment (Usawa Agenda, 2023). Nevertheless, these efforts are project-woven and hardly institutionalized into the organized training calendar of TSC. Teachers in Vihiga County have frequently complained of inaccessibility to refresher courses by lack of funding and lack of county-level coordination between MoE, NDMA and community organizations. Moral education lacking systematic reinforcement turns out to be a personality instead of a policy business, with individual teacher zeal.

As a way to fill these gaps, continuous professional development must take the form of a cascade model built on three pillars: (a) pedagogical enrichment, improving teacher capacity to recognize and address GBV signs; (b) psychosocial competence, enhancing teacher capacity to recognize and respond to GBV signs; and (c) ethical leadership, developing reflective practice and accountability. KICD, MoE, teacher-training colleges,

and NGOs could collaborate to ensure that the materials are contextually adjusted to rural realities. In addition, sustainability can be achieved with minimum costs by forming mentorship networks in which trained lead teachers coach colleagues within clusters (APHRC, 2023). Incorporation of moral and gender-conscious norms into teacher appraisal tools (TPAD) would entrench accountability even more. The Vihiga context involved organized CPD that combines moral education and gender-based violence prevention to enable teachers to not only deliver knowledge but also become guardians of ethical school culture. This re-positioning of teachers as constantly learning beings is consistent with Foucault notion of ethical self-formation-professionals to change their own practice and others in the process to create safer and more caring schools.

2.3.8 School-based policy and institutional reforms - developing safe reporting systems, gender clubs and anti-GBV codes of conduct.

The institutional commitment is the structural foundation through which moral education can succeed as a preventive measure against GBV. Policies establish legitimacy, the distribution of resources, and structures of accountability within which moral values are operational rather than aspirational. The Education and Training Sector Gender Policy (MoE, 2019) and the National School Safety Framework (2020) already require schools to implement child-protection policies and incorporate GBV prevention as a part of day-to-day activities. However, field audits by APHRC (2023) and UNGEI (2020) indicate that fragmentation persists: in some schools, there are no active gender desks, in others draft merely without trained focal persons, and others connect moral education directly to safeguarding mechanisms. Teachers often say they are confused about reporting processes or worried about victim-blaming cultures that deter speaking out.

The institutionalization of ethical infrastructures, which translate values into governance practices, should therefore be the agenda of whole-school reform. Forming gender and integrity clubs provides learners with organized platforms to talk about ethics, rights, and respectful relationships, and support the classroom setting with peer learning (UNICEF, 2022). Dialogue and awareness can be normalised through regular moral assemblies, poster campaigns, and celebratory events like the 16 Days of Activism Against GBV. Schools are also urged to establish effective reporting tools, within a confidential setting such as suggestion boxes, assigned counselling services or online helplines, which are connected to the referral pathways at the county level (education.go.ke, 2023). Guidance and counselling departments should shift their role to preventive moral coaching and not reactive counselling as value education should be combined with psychosocial support. Notably, an anti-GBV code of conduct that is binding on both staff and students should be adopted in every school through its Board of Management (BOM), and disciplinary actions must be specified against people violating the code.

Capacity and accountability should support reforms at various levels. At the institutional level, head teachers need to be inducted on ethical leadership and inclusive governance to lead policy implementation fearlessly. Systemically, county education offices need to consider GBV and moral-education indicators in school-supervision checklists. Referral ecosystems can be enhanced with partnerships with law-enforcement agencies, child-protection officers, and local NGOs to provide survivor-centered responses. The need to implement such reforms is especially acute in Vihiga County, where the presence of

physical and emotional violence in households has been documented (KNBS, 2022) and there is a threat of its spread to schools. Integrating moral education into policy and institutional frameworks provides a sense of coherence between classroom ethics and administrative justice in what UNESCO (2021) refers to as ethical coherence. Finally, moral learning is plausible and transformative when students observe consistency between what is taught and what is practiced institutionally. Therefore, policy reform in schools is not peripheral but constitutive of effective moral education to mitigate GBV.

Assessment and Tracking of Moral Education Results- Feedback Systems, Student Behavior Audits, and Incidents Tracking Systems.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is the factual basis of establishing whether moral education is in fact reducing GBV and enhancing ethical school cultures. According to the evaluation theory, as Stufflebeam (2014) articulates, what cannot be measured or observed cannot be enhanced. Although moral education is mainly value-based, systematic feedback methods are needed to monitor behavioral performance, institutional sensitivity, and the effectiveness of policies. As UNESCO (2021) and UNICEF (2022) claim, not many African education systems have organized M&E instruments of moral or gender-responsive education; the assessment is often based on cognitive, not ethical, growth. In Kenya, the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD, 2020) recommends formative assessment of the CBC core competency on ethical citizenship, though this is yet to be widely applied. Schools do not often gather longitudinal data about behavior patterns, disciplinary action, or GBV episodes associated with moral education.

Successful assessment of moral education has to be able to incorporate both quantitative and qualitative measures to be able to measure both behavior and attitudinal changes. Quantitative indicators may encompass a decrease in incidences of bullying, sexual harassment, and corporal punishment, and qualitative indicators such as better empathy, tolerance, and peer collaboration could be obtained through reflective journals, focus-group discussions, or teacher observations (Narvaez and Bock, 2021). According to the report by EA Journals (2023), in schools applying participatory learning, educators have reported a decrease in verbal abuse and an increase in peer support among students. However, the insights acquired are only anecdotal without standardized data collection tools. The institution of behavioral audit mechanisms, such as periodic (e.g., termly) reviews of discipline data and anonymous student surveys, might give schools immediate information on the trends in moral climate. The incorporation of such data in school management information systems (SMIS) would enhance accountability and facilitate targeted interventions.

In addition, M&E must operate as a feedback loop, linking the classroom practices, school culture, and policy changes. To take an example, assuming data show that gender-based harassment persists despite moral education activities, schools may reconsider how they deliver content, re-educate teachers, or invite community counsellors. County education offices may aggregate data across more than one school to find systemic risk factors. Nonetheless, data gathering regarding GBV and ethics should be sensitive, confidential, and survivor-centered to avoid re-traumatization, as advised by APHRC (2023). The example of a simple, multi-level reporting framework would be advantageous in schools in Vihiga County: (a) teacher-led moral reflections and class

meetings to provide immediate feedback; (b) school ethics committees to analyze patterns; and (c) county-level collation to monitor the policies. Anonymized moral education scorecards could also be regularly published to encourage ethical excellence competition amongst schools. This kind of institutionalization of monitoring does not just measure the results but provides a sense of the moral seriousness of GBV prevention-creating a sense that ethical growth is a valued, measurable part of education.

2.3.9 Sustainability and community linkages, collaboration with NGOs, religious institutions, and County Education offices to mitigate GBV in the long term.

Sustainability will make certain that moral education on preventing GBV lasts beyond project cycles or the efforts of select teachers. According to Fullan (2016), systemic reform relies on the three concepts of capacity, coherence, and connectedness-schools need to relate their moral agendas to broader community networks and policy frameworks to maintain effect. Ministry of Education, county governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), faith-based institutions and community structures need to be integrated in Kenya to bring about sustained change. Such connections offer material resources, technical support, and cultural legitimacy to strengthen moral learning and protect learners against violence. According to the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC, 2023), collaboration with civil-society organizations will help sustain GBV-prevention efforts even when the teacher changes jobs or the administration is replaced.

In the field of moral education, it is both possible and problematic to cooperate with religious organizations. Moral teaching has traditionally been a cornerstone of churches and mosques in Kenya, instilling virtues of honesty, compassion, and self-discipline. Nevertheless, strict interpretations of gender roles in certain religious groups may inadvertently strengthen patriarchal conventions (Wambugu & Muturi, 2020). Effective collaborations thus entail negotiated congruence between religious doctrines and gender-equity ideals. An example is the moral workshops on dignity, respect, and non-violence facilitated by local clergy in Vihiga as common theological and ethical values. Similarly, NGOs like FAWE-Kenya and Usawa Agenda have created community discussions in

which parents, teachers and students collectively consider moral dilemmas related to culture, sexuality and violence. Incorporating such community practices into school schedules turns moral education into a collective social project and not a curricular practice.

Institutional embedding of sustainability lies at the policy level in the counties education systems. Collaboration protocols connecting schools to health, psychosocial, and legal services to survivors can be formalized between the County Directorate of Education in Vihiga and the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC). Frequent inter-agency consultations would ensure school-based moral initiatives are aligned with the wider GBV-reduction measures in the Kenya National Policy on Elimination of Gender-Based Violence (2021). Moreover, it can be expanded through the use of digital technology, including SMS-based reporting systems or radio talk shows in local languages, in order to extend moral education campaigns out of the classroom and into the home. Localized monitoring committees such as teachers, parents, and youth representatives can maintain communication and ensure openness in dealing with GBV cases. In the long run, these connections can foster an ethical ecosystem where school values echo the community expectations of respect and empathy, forming a virtuous circle of mutual support.

In the case of Vihiga County, the long-term sustainability of the moral education on GBV mitigation would depend on institutionalizing these partnerships in official development plans and budgetary allocations. Investing in the ongoing training of teachers, moral education resources and school-community activities reflects the governmental dedication. Furthermore, a culture of empowering student-led programs, including

integrity clubs and gender champions, builds generation continuity on moral leadership. As UNESCO (2021) notes, sustainable moral education flourishes when moral purpose becomes the organizing principal of the school and its community. The current research places moral education at the core of the study rather than a marginal value, as a long-term social institution that connects pedagogy, policy, and community morality. It will describe a model of relational sustainability, in which schools become moral anchors in networks of faith, governance, and family to attain sustainable alleviation of GBV and foster peaceful and equitable learning conditions, by documenting the experiences of teachers and stakeholders in Vihiga.

2.3.10 General implications of the objective

Collectively, the strategies studied, which include virtue ethics integration, participatory pedagogy, teacher capacity building, policy reform, monitoring systems, and community partnerships, create a consistent framework of integrating moral education as a structural response to GBV. They are consistent with international best practices, such as the Whole-School Approach of UNESCO (2021) and the CBC philosophy of Kenya of holistic learner development. In the case of Vihiga County, the integration could not only bring about behavioral change among learners, but also a change in the institution: a discipline that is reactive would be replaced by a moral culture that is proactive. The outcomes of this study will consequently be used to refine national policies on the prevention of SRGBV, guide instructional teaching curriculum, and encourage county-wide policy to make moral education a pedagogical practice and governance ethic.

2.4 Theoretical framework

This study was guided by Aristotle's Virtue Ethics as a foundational theoretical framework for exploring the efficacy of moral education in addressing gender-based violence (GBV) in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya. Aristotle's theory, which posits that "all actions aim at a good" (Tseng, 2021), is grounded in the belief that every pursuit and action seeks to achieve some form of good. Aristotle (350 B.C.E.) asserts that while the ultimate goal of life is human flourishing (eudaimonia), this flourishing can take various forms depending on the domain for example, the goal of medicine is health, and the goal of economics is wealth. In the context of education, the aim is the cultivation of virtuous individuals who contribute to the well-being of society.

Aristotle's distinction between two types of virtues intellectual virtues and ethical (moral) virtues is particularly relevant to this study. Intellectual virtues relate to reasoning and knowledge, while ethical virtues pertain to the part of the soul that can follow reason, shaping one's character through habituation (Jamader, 2022). This study examines how moral education can cultivate virtues of character such as empathy, justice, and courage among students, thereby reducing the prevalence of GBV in schools.

According to Aristotle, ethical virtues are developed through repeated practice and engagement in virtuous actions, reinforced by proper upbringing and education. This principle aligns with the phenomenological approach of the study, which seeks to understand the lived experiences of educators in Vihiga County and how moral education influences their behaviour and attitudes toward GBV (Lee, 2020). By fostering virtues from an early age and reinforcing them through consistent practice, schools can play a pivotal role in shaping students' moral character, making them less susceptible to harmful behaviours associated with GBV.

The Aristotelian concept of practical wisdom (*phronêsis*) is another critical element guiding this study. Practical wisdom enables individuals to make sound moral judgments in complex situations. Addressing GBV requires more than theoretical knowledge; it necessitates the ability to navigate interpersonal relationships and ethical dilemmas with discernment and compassion (Grant, 2013). This study investigates how moral education programs in public secondary schools can equip students with practical wisdom, enabling them to respond to instances of GBV with integrity and fairness.

Aristotle emphasizes the importance of moral exemplars individuals who embody virtues and serve as role models. In the school context, teachers, administrators, and community leaders who demonstrate virtuous behaviour can significantly influence students' moral development. This study explores the role of such exemplars in shaping school culture and fostering environments that discourage GBV through the reinforcement of virtuous conduct.

Furthermore, Aristotle's concept of the golden mean the balance between excess and deficiency provides a valuable framework for addressing GBV. For example, moral education can teach students to balance assertiveness (courage) with empathy, promoting healthy relationships grounded in mutual respect (Winter, 2011). This principle of moderation can guide curriculum design and interventions aimed at cultivating balanced emotional and behavioural responses to potential conflicts or threats of violence.

Aristotle also acknowledges the challenges posed by internal conflicts and irrational desires, categorizing individuals into those who are virtuous, continent (able to resist temptations), incontinent (struggling to resist), and vicious (consistently engaging in

unethical behaviour) (Khisia & Werunga, 2021). This study examines how moral education can help students progress from incontinence toward virtue by reinforcing positive habits and providing the necessary support to resist harmful impulses associated with GBV.

By applying Aristotle's Virtue Ethics, this study aims to demonstrate that moral education can address the root causes of GBV by fostering the development of virtuous character traits. This approach shifts the focus from punitive measures to the holistic cultivation of ethical individuals, contributing to long-term solutions for reducing GBV in secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed literature related to moral education and GBV, situating the study within Aristotle's Virtue Ethics and aligning discussions with the study's objectives. Research on gender-based violence (GBV) in Kenyan secondary schools has primarily focused on legal frameworks, policy interventions, and awareness campaigns. However, limited attention has been given to the role of moral education as a preventive tool, particularly in rural settings such as Vihiga County. Rural communities often experience higher incidences of GBV due to deeply rooted cultural norms, economic challenges, and limited access to resources. Despite these factors, few studies have explored how moral education can influence students' attitudes and behaviours towards gender equality and non-violence in such contexts. This study addresses this gap by examining how moral education, tailored to the socio-cultural realities of Vihiga County, can contribute to reducing GBV and fostering safer school environments.

The voices of students and teachers are critical in understanding the efficacy of moral education in addressing GBV, yet they are often underrepresented in academic discourse. Most existing studies rely on quantitative data, which, while valuable, may not capture the nuanced and subjective experiences of those directly involved in moral education initiatives. By adopting a phenomenological approach, this study illuminates the lived experiences of teachers, offering rich, qualitative insights into how moral education is implemented, perceived, and internalized. This perspective provides a deeper understanding of the challenges, successes, and gaps in current moral education practices, contributing to more effective, experience-driven interventions.

Current researches frequently address moral education and GBV as separate, unrelated domains, missing the opportunity to explore their intersection. This fragmented approach overlooks how moral education can serve as a foundational strategy in preventing GBV by promoting values such as empathy, respect, and equality. This study proposes an integrated framework that bridges moral education with GBV prevention, highlighting how these domains can mutually reinforce one another. By demonstrating their interconnectedness, the study paves the way for holistic, multi-dimensional strategies that address the root causes of GBV through education.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology that was used in the study. It examined the research design, research paradigm, philosophical methods, sources of data collection, study area, target population, sampling procedure, sample size, data collection methods, validity, reliability, data collection procedure, data explication, and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research design

The study employed the Interpretive Phenomenological Approach (IPA). IPA is a qualitative methodology aimed at examining how individuals make sense of their personal and social worlds, concentrating on the significance of their lived experiences (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). This methodology utilizes a "double hermeneutic," wherein the researcher interprets participants' interpretations of their experiences, thereby enhancing the understanding of intricate phenomena (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). IPA underscores an idiographic, case-by-case strategy, emphasizing meticulous analysis of each participant's viewpoint prior to discerning overarching themes (Smith et al., 2009).

This qualitative research approach was used to investigate the "lived experiences" of the participants in the study. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) argue that the IPA research approach has the potential to investigate, in a deep way, a participant's "lived experience" and aid to grasp the phenomenological significance of this experience and how it impacts the participant. IPA, being a qualitative technique, is capable of interpreting the shared

experiences of the participants, known as their "lived experiences". Smith et al., (2009) They argue that the experience or phenomenon in question shares a fundamental significance with the individual, who will then engage in a considerable amount of reflecting, thinking and feeling as they work through what it means”

When people are actively engaged with ‘an experience’ of something which majors their lives, they begin to reflect on the significance of what is happening and IPA research tries to connect with these reflections"(Smith et al.,2009). According to Alase, (2017) he is of the view that those human beings are sense-making creatures, and therefore the accounts which participants provide will reflect their attempts to make sense of their experience. Therefore, this study adopted the interpretive phenomenological approach to investigate the phenomenon on the efficacy of moral education in addressing gender-based violence in public secondary schools in Vihiga county, Kenya through the lens of the lived experiences of guidance and counselling teachers.

3.3 Research Paradigm

Etymologically the term paradigm is traced from a Greek word *Paradeigma* and its Latin equivalent *paradgma*. In both languages, these terms signify a pattern or model (Kivunja & Kuyini,2017). A paradigm therefore, refers to a certain method of thinking, a school of thought, or a viewpoint that a study is based on (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The study employed interpretive paradigm. The interpretative paradigms allowed for a truly conceptualized IPA study. The study attempted to critically explore and interpret how the phenomenon of moral education will address gender-based violence.

The paradigm entails the epistemological, ontological and axiological stance. Therefore, the epistemological stance of the study was that knowledge is gained through experience. This entails that experience is the fundamental source of meaning of knowledge. To gain this the researcher and the participant worked together in the construction of knowledge, this is supported by (Racher and Robinson 2003), who posit that constructions are elicited and refined, and knowledge is created through interaction between and among investigator and respondents.

The subjective experiences of individuals were to contribute to the variation in their view of reality. Scortald (2012), emphasizes that the senses hold significant importance in the formation of an individual's comprehension of the universe. This argument posits that in the absence of senses the world would be devoid of significance. Hence, the construction of meaning in the realm of the phenomenon of moral education in addressing gender-based violence, was influenced by the subjective knowledge derived from the lifeworld of teachers, which was ontologically grounded. This process occurs through the interplay between consciousness and the external world. The researcher's axiological standpoint in the study entailed expressing the views of the participants while respecting their values.

3.4 Research methods

The study employed phenomenological-hermeneutical method and critical method. The phenomenological hermeneutical method is a compound method that describes and interprets extracted lived experiences. The critical method is a method of thorough scrutiny intended to establish the truth of claims and assertions. Each of the methods is explained in the next section.

3.4.1 Phenomenological-hermeneutical method

The phenomenological hermeneutical method was used to interrogate teachers lived experiences as consciously experienced, devoid of biases and preconceptions of the researcher (Li, 2005). The method's main goal was to investigate the phenomenon of moral education in addressing gender-based violence. Further, the method was used to interpret the phenomenon in relation to human ontics and ontology without any prejudice. Husserl, the founder of the phenomenological method, asserts that an individual's personal history is what they encounter from the first-person perspective (Dall'Alba, 2009). The study gathered information based on the first encounter with teachers. Barnacle (2001) postulated that one acquires epistemic knowledge through personal engagement or involvement in day-to-day life experience, hence, lived experience. This posteriori experience is the one that is revealed later through the individual's consciousness or the 'horse's mouth,' in other words, this study aimed to establish teachers' engagement or involvement in day-to-day life on moral education in addressing gender-based violence.

Heidegger (2002) argued that phenomenology must be *phenomenological hermeneutic*. This implies that what is described requires interpretation. Therefore, lived experiences of teachers on moral education in addressing gender-based violence in public secondary schools in Vihiga County was described, interpreted, and reflected.

3.4.2. The significance phenomenological hermeneutical method

The phenomenological hermeneutical method was highly suitable for this study, as it aligns with the evolving nature of education described by scholars like Dewey, who

viewed education as a progressive and pragmatic process. This method allowed for a nuanced exploration of dynamic educational phenomena by connecting current practices with past methods and envisioning future challenges. As education cannot be fully addressed through scientific inquiry alone, the phenomenological approach bridged the gap by considering subjective experiences and the personal dimensions of teaching and learning. This perspective was vital in addressing the moral aspects of education in addressing gender-based violence.

The method represented a paradigm shift in educational research by emphasizing the importance of lived experiences and personal beliefs in understanding education (Mostert, 2002; Bonnet, 2009). Curtis and Mays (1978) highlighted the limitations of purely scientific methods in capturing the subjective elements of education, which are essential for understanding teachers consciously held views. The phenomenological hermeneutic approach addressed this complexity by providing a comprehensive framework for interpreting the diverse and multidimensional beliefs of educators (Churchill & Wertz, 1985). This facilitated a deeper understanding on moral education in addressing gender-based violence

By integrating phenomenological observation with hermeneutic interpretation, the researcher gained insights into the lived experiences of practising teachers regarding on moral education in addressing gender-based violence. Following Ricoeur's (2002) philosophy, the study combined descriptive accounts with interpretive analysis, allowing for a holistic understanding of how teachers approach moral education in addressing gender-based violence. Through interviews and probing questions, the researcher captured diverse perspectives, enriching the understanding of the complex and varied

approaches on moral education in addressing gender-based violence. This method revealed the intricate relationship between teachers' experiences and their strategies for delivering moral education in addressing gender-based violence.

The phenomenological hermeneutical approach enabled the comparison of participants' experiences through eidetic variation, enhancing intersubjectivity and fostering consensus (Merleau Ponty, cited in Oosterlaken-Dijksterhui, 1999). This process involves sharing memories and reflections, allowing teachers to gain new insights from each other's perspectives (Bas, 2006). Additionally, the method emphasizes the significance of subjective experiences over objective measurements, aligning with the phenomenological focus on meaning and essence (Moustakas, 1994). By engaging directly with participants and incorporating nonverbal communication, the researcher achieved a deeper understanding of teachers' real lived experiences, contributing to a comprehensive exploration on moral education in addressing gender-based violence in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya. Using phenomenological hermeneutical method, the researcher was able to tap in-depth information for each objective, which was described and interpreted logically with the intention of unfolding the phenomenon of GBV.

3.4.3 Critical method

Leonard Nelson, a German philosopher, the founder of critical method, introduced the term "critical" at the turn of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, drawing from the Greek verb *Krinein*, meaning to judge (Hume, 2000). Rooted in the Socratic dialectic, the critical method involves questioning values, facts, opinions, and assumptions to uncover truth (Hume, 2000). Its goal is to foster rational thought, protecting individuals from

fanaticism, hypocrisy, and narrow-minded ideologies. By encouraging reflective and honest inquiry, this method aims to liberate people from intolerance and dogmatism, guiding them toward clearer and more distinct ideas. Hume (2000) highlights the constructive and liberating nature of this approach, which serves as a tool for evaluating and judging beliefs through reasoned analysis.

The critical method extends to philosophical consultancy, promoting critical thinking to address difficulties and perceptions, whether individually or in groups (Bernstein, 1986). This approach, which is problem-based, relies on imagination and reflective thought to discover new possibilities and resolve issues (Namwamba, 2005). In education, the method identifies pressing concerns and encourages awareness and exploration of solutions to moral and ethical problems, such as incidents of GBV in schools (Mukabane, 2016). By focusing on accurate facts and minimizing fallacies, critical method helped to evaluate the effectiveness of moral education in addressing GBV, drawing on the experiences of practising teachers to assess and reconstruct educational approaches.

3.4.3.1 The significance of critical method

Critical method was helpful in both objectives in identifying any glaring moral gaps. The method is problem-based, and it involves discovering new possibilities, active imagination, and reflective thinking to bring about reconstructionism or repair in moral education in addressing GBV (Woolsey, 1986). This method was instrumental in identifying glaring moral gaps within the existing educational framework. The critical method functioned as a problem-based approach, utilizing active imagination, reflective

thinking, and a quest for new possibilities to bring about reconstructionism or repair in the realm of moral education in addressing GBV.

Within the scope of the study, the critical method was applied to scrutinize the value of moral aims of education, aiming to uncover areas where the current educational practices may fall short in addressing GBV (Krishnananda, 1992). Through a problem-solving lens, critical method allowed the researcher to actively engage with the complexities of moral education and question the existing norms and practices. It encouraged a thorough examination of moral education in addressing GBV.

In objective one, critical method involved proactive and reflective stance toward moral education in addressing GBV. It sorts to go beyond a mere description of the current state of affairs, actively exploring possibilities for improvement and reconstruction (Namwamba, 2005). By focusing on objective one, the critical method contributed to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities in the moral education landscape of Public Secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya, paving the way for constructive and forward-looking recommendations in addressing GBV (Namwamba, 2005). In objective two, the critical method was used to interrogate teachers lived experiences on the effectiveness of moral education in relation to GBV to establish accurate facts free from fallacies. Finally, the method was used in objective three in discovering new possibilities, active imagination, and reflective thinking to bring about reconstructionism in the approaches on moral education in curbing GBV.

3.5 Instruments of data collection

Philosophical studies adopt a variety of sources ranging from primary to secondary data. Unstructured interviews were used to gather primary data on moral education on addressing GBV in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya. Secondary data was selected purposively in line with moral education and GBV. The secondary sources selected includes government policy documents and reports, published and unpublished theses, articles from peer-reviewed journals, internet sources, thematic textbooks, curriculum documents, syllabuses of relevant subjects, and reports from the mass media.

3.6 Study location

The study was carried out in public secondary schools in Vihiga County -Kenya. Phenomenologists prefer the term setting of the study instead of the study location because the setting provides a convenient and conducive ground for participants. Also, the study setting can be optimized so that participants can clearly explain their experiences (Quintana, 2022). Lannan et al. (2015) assert that the study environment is cardinal for the participant to participate in the research effectively. Gender-Based Violence (GBV) remains a significant concern in Vihiga County. Between March and November 2023, Vihiga Health Centre recorded 94 GBV cases, averaging 10 to 20 cases per month. (Awino & Ngutu, 2022). Additionally, many of these incidents involved incest, marking the highest number of such cases observed by healthcare professionals in over sixteen years. Furthermore, Central Maragoli Ward reported approximately 100 teenage pregnancies annually, underscoring the broader implications of GBV in the region. Local authorities have identified factors contributing to the rise in GBV cases, including the consumption of illicit brews leading to increased incidents of rape and

incest. The increasing prevalence of GBV in Vihiga County highlights the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to address it.

3.7 Target Population

The target population is the entire population from which the study sampled its participants. This research targeted teachers in the public secondary schools with emphasis on the guiding and counselling teachers who are involved in addressing gender-based violence. The selection of guidance and counselling teachers was based on their experiences in the phenomenon under study to ensure that they are aware of the phenomenon. In this way, the study obtained detailed and context-sensitive information on the part played by moral education in combating GBV.

3.8 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

3.8.1 Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was used to identify participants who have adequate knowledge concerning the phenomenon of the study. Purposeful sampling is acknowledged as one of the most useful non-probability sampling techniques in qualitative research especially in phenomenological research (Krathwohl, 2009). Kruger et al. (1988), argues that purposive sampling is most suitable for identifying participants who have experienced the phenomenon of interest. This study therefore, purposely targeted participants who had experienced or interacted with GBV-related matters in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya, in order to obtain meaningful and relevant data.

3.8.2 Sample Size

The study targeted eight guidance and counselling teachers to ensure that the study has enough information power for qualitative analysis. However, data saturation reached at the fifth participant. This sample size is consistent with the concept of data saturation, whereby the researchers stop to collect data when no new themes are identified. This is in line with other scholars such as McMillan (2008) who recommends that the sample size should be between 5 and 25 participants, while Groenewald (2004) opines that the number of participants should be at least ten for phenomenological studies. Atieno (2013) also notes that phenomenological research should be flexible in that the number of participants should be based on the depth of data rather than the number of participants. Moreover, Guest et al. (2006) showed that it is possible to reach data saturation with a fewer number of participants if the sample is more homogenous and provides more detailed information as was the case in this study. The study also ensured that it gets meaningful, relevant and quality data by recruiting participants who are knowledgeable and experienced in the field.

3.9 Methods of Data Collection

This research employed the use of unstructured interviews to gather primary data from the sampled participants. Unstructured interviews is one of the most popular form of qualitative research that involve face-to-face and unscripted interviews (Jennings, 2005). Compared to structured interviews, unstructured interviews are less rigid and provide the participants with the opportunity to express themselves and their views on certain issues without being limited by the questions that have been prepared in advance. This helped in getting deeper and richer data that captures the experiences of teachers on moral

education in addressing GBV. Five guidance and counselling teachers were interviewed, who offered the study's core themes a rich qualitative perspective.

3.9.1 Interviews

The study employed unstructured interviews to gather in-depth, conversational, and dialogical information about moral education in addressing GBV. This approach is preferred in phenomenological research because it allows the researcher to exchange perspectives with teachers, capturing their lived experiences as they felt and perceived them (Vagle, 2009; Kvale, 1996). Unstructured interviews enable participants to explain their experiences in terms of the human condition, as Bentz and Shapiro (1998) emphasized. Through face-to-face interactions, keen observation, and active listening, the researcher delves into the core of participants' experiences, embodying Husserl's philosophy of a "return to things themselves" (Kruger et al., 1988). Probing questions like "Tell me more about that" encourages participants to elaborate, ensuring discussions remained aligned with the phenomenon of moral education in addressing GVB (Larossa, 2005).

The unstructured interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent, and in cases where participants decline recording, detailed notes were taken. Each interview was coded for organization, such as "P1" with field notes categorized into observation, theoretical, methodological, and analytical memos as suggested by Bryman and Burgess (1994). Recordings and notes were systematically timed and dated, ensuring accuracy and context. The data gathered through these interviews was subjected to data explication to extract meaningful insights, ensuring the richness and depth of participants lived

experiences were captured effectively. This method was instrumental in understanding the phenomenon under study and maintaining a focus on efficacy of moral education in addressing GBV.

3.10 Secondary Data Collection

For secondary data collection, the researcher adopted a content analysis approach, focusing on educational policies, curriculum documents, and relevant publications to extract valuable information related to the study. This method involved systematic analysis and categorizing textual or visual materials to identify patterns, themes, and trends in the existing literature. By reviewing academic articles, books, reports, and other documents, the researcher gained insights into the current state of knowledge on the research topic while identifying gaps for further exploration. This strategic approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter and established a solid foundation for the study by synthesizing findings, theories, and perspectives from previous research. Incorporating secondary data through content analysis also helps situate the study within the broader educational discourse and understand the historical context of moral education in addressing GBV in secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya. The findings from this process enhanced the research's robustness, credibility, and validity, providing a deeper context for the study's primary data.

3.10.1 Piloting

Piloting was not conducted for this study, as it is considered unnecessary in phenomenological hermeneutical research. Phenomenologists argue that unstructured interviews do not require piloting because researchers engage participants multiple times, allowing for iterative refinement of interview questions to effectively capture the lived

experiences of practicing teachers on moral education in addressing GBV without ambiguity. Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) also noted that piloting is unnecessary in such investigations, as the dynamic and exploratory nature of the inquiry emphasizes deep, contextual understanding over rigid methodologies. Unlike quantitative studies, which benefit from preliminary testing, phenomenological research relies on authentic engagement and iterative data analysis to adapt and refine instruments throughout the research process. This approach prioritizes uncovering rich, qualitative insights and ensuring that findings reflect the unique voices and experiences of participants, making formal piloting redundant.

3.10.2 Validity

Validity in research refers to the accuracy of instruments in measuring what they are intended to measure (Bell, 1993). In phenomenological research, validity is achieved through methodological rigor and ethical engagement with participants. Strategies such as member checking was used, where interpretations are presented to participants for validation, ensuring findings reflect their lived experiences and fostering deeper dialogue. A thick description of findings provided rich contextual details, allowing other scholars to assess the relevance of the results in different contexts. Reflexivity further enhance validity by critically examining biases and assumptions, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the data. Data triangulation, integrating multiple sources or methods, validated results by offering a comprehensive perspective. Additionally, multiple sessions with participants allowed for adjustments to interview schedules, ensuring clarity and strengthening the study's validity regarding moral education and GBV.

3.10.3 Reliability

Reliability in research refers to the consistency and accuracy of findings obtained through research tools (Joppe, 2000). In phenomenology, reliability is enhanced by repeated interactions with participants to confirm the truthfulness of early information and by empowering participants to share their experiences as they appear in consciousness (Stone, 1979). The researcher also enhanced reliability by taking detailed field notes (Groenewald, 2004; Trochim, 2006) and gathering comprehensive information. An audit trail was implemented, documenting every step of the research process for transparency, while peer debriefing provided external perspectives to identify biases and ensure the study's credibility.

3.11 Data collection procedure

The data collection procedure entails the researcher's channels to collect data during the study. After adhering to ethical considerations, the researcher followed all data collection procedures. One research assistant from the discourse of philosophy of education in the Department of Educational Foundations of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology was trained to help in data collection. The participants were informed one week before the data collection exercise to give them ample time to prepare well and make appropriate arrangements for the day. Interviews were administered to guidance and counselling teachers. Once the data collection exercise came to an end, the interviews were subjected to data explication

3.12 Data analysis

Phenomenological research prefers data explication over analysis since the latter is likely to lead to the fragmentation of data and the loss of the actual experiences of the participants. However, explication entailed the process of explaining experiences in a

way that does not lose the essence of the experiences (Hycner et al., 1999). This was in line with the phenomenological research design that aims at exploring teachers' perceptions on moral education in addressing GBV in secondary schools. In relation to Braun and Clarke (2017), thematic analysis was employed to systematically analyze the role of moral education in GBV prevention. The thematic analysis process allowed for the exploration of both manifest content and latent content in the participants' narratives, thus providing a rich understanding of their experiences.

The six steps developed by Braun and Clarke were strictly adhered to starting with the step of data familiarization whereby the interview transcripts were read through several times to gain an understanding of the participants' experiences. The coding was then done based on the important concepts that related to moral education in addressing GBV. Codes were further developed into potential themes, which were checked for internal consistency and external variability. The themes were then be defined and named, and it was ensured that they fit the theoretical framework of the study, which is Aristotelian Virtue Ethics, which focuses on moral habituation and ethical character. The last step was to present the findings in the form of rich extracts, thus linking the emergent themes to the research objectives and showing how moral education addressed GBV.

To increase the reliability of the study, a coding process was followed where similar codes were grouped into meaningful themes and the relationship between the themes were depicted in a manner that made it easier to analyze. This is in line with Heidegger's (2002) interpretive phenomenology that embraces both the descriptive and interpretive approaches to the experiences. Furthermore, Braun and Clarke's focus on manifest and latent themes which help to gain a better understanding of how moral education

influences students' perceptions and actions regarding GBV. The use of systematic coding, thematic explication, and phenomenological interpretation ensured that the study yielded meaningful results that was helpful in understanding the role of moral education in the prevention of GBV in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya.

3.13 Ethical considerations

Ethical consideration is necessary for research as it seeks the participants' consent. Ethical consideration is among the most critical components of any research, according to Kothari (2004). A researcher's conceptualization, data gathering, assessment, and the distribution and use of findings needs to be ethical. Participant privacy was protected, and informed consent was obtained before inclusion in the research. Respondents knowingly and willingly participated in the study, and privacy and confidentiality were upheld by not requiring participants to disclose their names or contact details. Participants were given informed permission before any self-administered research interviews were conducted. Respondents were advised of their freedom to refuse participation in the study, and the investigator kept their identities secret. Volunteers in the research were shielded from any harm, including harassment, during the data collection process.

Consent was obtained from many sources for this investigation. MMUST's Directorate of Graduate Studies granted permission for the study. Secondly, research permission was obtained from NACOSTI in accordance with the Science and Technology Act, Chapter 250, Laws of Kenya. Lastly, approval was be given by school administrators to conduct the research in their schools. Ethics, norms, and rules of conduct were strictly observed with the utmost care. For instance, the researcher recognized the contributions of other scholars to prevent plagiarism and fraud.

Free and informed permission was required to uphold the concept of autonomy. Participants were made aware of the study's goals so they can make their own decisions based on the information provided. Volunteers allowed to withdraw from the research at any time and were not receive compensation. The study fully disclosed the findings to the participants. Additionally, it guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity for the participants. Their information was treated with confidentiality and remained secure even after the research is concluded.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION, AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents, interprets, and discusses the research findings based on the study objectives. The purpose of this study was to examine the efficacy of moral education in addressing gender-based violence (GBV) in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya, through a phenomenological approach. The findings are organized thematically according to the study's three main objectives: examining the effectiveness of moral education in addressing GBV, investigating the lived experiences of guidance and counselling teachers regarding the role of moral education in curbing GBV, and establishing effective moral strategies to mitigate GBV in secondary schools.

The data presented in this chapter was collected through unstructured interviews conducted with guidance and counselling teachers in selected public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya. The phenomenological approach provided insights into participants lived experiences, perceptions, and attitudes toward moral education and its

influence on addressing GBV. Data was analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's six-step approach, ensuring a comprehensive and systematic interpretation of patterns and key themes emerging from the interviews.

Findings are categorized and discussed according to the themes that emerged from participants' responses. Verbatim excerpts from the interviews are included to highlight the perspectives of the respondents and to ensure authenticity in representing their experiences. Additionally, the findings are interpreted in relation to existing literature and theoretical frameworks, particularly Aristotle's Virtue Ethics theory, which underpinned this study.

4.1 Objective 1: To examine the effectiveness of moral education in addressing GBV

This objective was guided by three questions as discussed below.

4.1.1 The role of moral education in shaping attitudes toward gender-based violence

The following are the actual responses of the guidance and counseling teachers on the role of moral education in combating GBV in public secondary schools. These are their own experiences and their interactions with students in moral education contexts.

P1: "Moral education fosters mutual respect among students, regardless of gender. It has assisted me in teaching the children the principle of fairness and equality, especially to the girl child to respect the boy child."

P2: "In my opinion, moral education is not only about physical violence but also about the emotional and psychological aspect of GBV." It has made me more aware of how words and actions can lead to gender discrimination."

P3: "From the moral education lesson, I have learnt that violence is not the answer to problems. It promotes dialogue, understanding, and non-violent conflict solving, which are essential in combating GBV among students."

P4: "At one point, I used to think that some gender roles and behaviors were natural, but through moral education, I have been able to change my perception." I

now stand for equal rights and make sure that my students know that GBV in any form is wrong.

***P5:** “Moral education is a crucial factor in the development of students’ perceptions of relationships and interactions. It promotes the culture of giving, honoring, and accountability, which are all essential in addressing GBV.”*

The responses from the guidance and counseling teachers offer valuable information on the effects of moral education on attitude towards GBV. Their views show that moral education is an essential tool in teaching respect, non-violence, and gender equality. The main themes that can be identified from these responses are the respect and dignity for women, raising awareness of GBV, conflict transformation, changing culture, and shared responsibility.

4.1.2 Moral education as a tool for instilling respect and dignity

As pointed out by P1, moral education is a crucial tool in enhancing respect and dignity of students without discriminating the gender. Moral education also teaches students that all people should be treated fairly and equally, which is an important lesson that students should learn. This response also shows how educators go out of their way to instill ethical values in students and make them aware of the fact that violence in any form is wrong, be it physical, emotional or psychological.

Respect and dignity are part of the moral education that enables students to have ethical and non-violent relationships and avoid gender-based violence (GBV). Kohlberg’s Stages of Moral Development indicate that moral development is a process that moves from self-interest to higher-order principles through education and socialization (Kohlberg, 1981). When students are trained on the principles of fairness, empathy, and gender

equality, they embrace these principles and practice them in their daily lives, thus minimizing the chances of GBV. According to Berkowitz and Grych (1998), moral education programs that teach empathy and ethical reasoning reduce aggression and violence in adolescents. In the same regard, Santrock (2011) opines that when ethical behavior is taught in school, students' ethical standards are enhanced, and they are less likely to be influenced by peers to engage in GBV. In addition, according to Ndibalema (2019), moral education should target all forms of GBV, including verbal aggression, discrimination, and coercion, so that students can identify and combat all forms of gender-based violence.

In the Virtue Ethics, Aristotle emphasizes that character is shaped by practice and example (Aristotle, 350 BCE/1999). Schools are also involved in this process by offering positive role models and ensuring that respect and equality are modeled and practiced in school. Rawls' Theory of Justice also supports the notion that moral education should be fair and protect the weaker sections of society and should not allow gender bias in school and should encourage equality (Rawls, 1971). Furthermore, Freire's Critical Pedagogy (1970) posits that education should help students to question the social oppression, including GBV, and be an active participant in the moral discourse. According to Leach et al. (2014) on gender-responsive pedagogy, the use of experiential learning approaches like role-play, debates, and case studies helps students to better identify and challenge GBV. Therefore, the promotion of a moral education system supported by institutional policies and community involvement is crucial in the development of a generation that will respect the rights of women and human dignity.

4.1.3 Expanding Awareness of Gender-Based Violence Beyond Physical Assault

The response from P2 is quite insightful as it brings out a very important aspect of GBV that is not very well captured, which is the psychological aspect of the abuse. The teacher points out that GBV is not only physical but also verbal, discriminating, and coercive, which are also types of violence. This perspective is a shift in focus from the previous view that only physical abuse is bad and that psychological and emotional abuse are not as severe.

Expanding the definition of GBV enables moral education to address the issue before it reaches the extreme level of violence that is dangerous to the lives of women. This is especially important in school settings where verbal harassment, sexual harassment, and other forms of abuse may be rife. The teacher's response also indicates that moral education empowers students to fight such vices and create awareness to teachers and students to be more sensitive to the signs of GBV.

This is in line with other scholars like Flood (2011) who opined that education is a key factor in the fight against gender stereotyping and power relations that fuel GBV. Likewise, Bhana (2013) notes that teaching about microaggressions and everyday sexism in moral education can contribute to eradicating the culture that perpetuates GBV since such norms are entrenched in society. In addition, Freire (1970) in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* also emphasizes the critical consciousness, which means that education should help students to become aware of the oppressive structures, including gender-based violence. This is in line with Aristotle's *Virtue Ethics* where people are encouraged to practice virtues such as respect, justice, and empathy. While the previous approaches to moral education focus on the recognition of violent acts, the current approach of power relations, coercion, and systemic inequalities, helps to develop a critical ethical

consciousness that will help students avoid and prevent GBV in their daily interactions. This way, the students not only learn about GBV as a social problem but also imbibe the right moral values that discourage violence against women and girls.

4.1.4 Promoting the culture of peace and dialogue

According to P3, moral education fosters the spirit of non-violent conflict solving rather than using force or threats. This is one of the reasons why moral education is important: to show students other ways of solving conflicts than through violence. In many school settings, students are likely to engage in aggressive behaviors in the form of verbal or physical aggression within or between peer groups.

Through the promotion of dialogue, tolerance, and respect, moral education changes the students' attitude towards conflict from aggressive to non-violent. This not only helps to avoid cases of GBV but also makes the school environment safer for students to freely express themselves without the possibility of being attacked.

The rationale for moral education in combating GBV is supported by current research on conflict resolution and restorative justice in schools. For instance, a systematic review published in *Frontiers in Education* (2025) shows that restorative practices not only decrease school violence but also promote students' emotional health and socio-emotional development. Also, a study conducted by Heliyon (2023) shows that students in the primary school who engaged in restorative practice programs were more capable of handling conflicts in a non-violent manner. In addition, a study conducted in *Frontiers in Psychology* (2025) shows that peer group interventions in the dialogic model of conflict resolution can help in dealing with school violence, especially GBV. These approaches are in line with the virtue ethics as propounded by Aristotle where people are encouraged

to develop good character and virtues like compassion, courtesy, and fairness. Through the incorporation of moral education that focuses on these virtues, schools can promote the culture of ethical reasoning and the moral fabric that can help in combating GBV.

4.1.5 Challenging Cultural and Traditional Norms That Perpetuate GBV

P4 response is quite significant as it shows how moral education can help to change cultural and traditional perceptions that justify certain types of GBV. The teacher also agrees that prior to the moral education, he or she had a perception that some of the types of GBV were acceptable in the society. But they were able to learn from the structure of the class and the discussions that violence should not be tolerated in any way, shape or form due to cultural or traditional beliefs.

This response highlights one of the biggest barriers to combating GBV: the culture of violence. Patriarchal cultural norms and beliefs that dictate that women should be subordinate to men also play a part in the justification of GBV. Through the critical discussion of gender norms and human rights, moral education negates these beliefs and fosters a more equal society.

Literature shows that moral education is effective in eradicating cultural practices that support GBV, in line with the feminist and human rights frameworks that support education as a change agent. McCarthy et al. (2020) also establish the link between gender inequality and sexual violence, noting that education has a significant role to play in challenging the culture that perpetuates GBV. In the same vein, O'Shea and O'Brien (2023) posit that GBV affects students' learning processes and that schools should play an important role in changing the attitudes and behaviors through moral education programs. Furthermore, Lewis and Mikander (2022) argue that feminism is a useful lens

for understanding how gender relations are constructed and how schools can be used to change the existing culture and norms. These studies taken together support the notion that moral education is crucial in the school curriculum to dismantle gendered ideas and create gender justice and equity.

4.1.6 Promoting Collective Responsibility in Combating GBV

The response from P5 shows how moral education can help in the fight against GBV by encouraging people to be responsible for the welfare of others. The teacher underlines that moral education is not only about knowledge but also about participation. Students have to fight against prejudice and discrimination. This perspective implies that the fight against GBV is a collective responsibility of students, teachers, and the society in order to change the culture of the society.

Collective responsibility entails that students should not just watch and do nothing when they see or hear of GBV cases but rather stand up for the victims. This is in line with the bystander intervention theory that posits that when people feel that they are responsible for an incident, they will be compelled to act to prevent violence and protect the victims. Moral education empowers students to fight against injustices and be proactive in the fight against violence in school.

Furthermore, the concept of collective responsibility means that school administrators and policymakers should support moral education programs by enforcing strict anti-GBV measures. Moral education cannot work in isolation; it needs to be supported by structures, reporting, and campaigns that are in line with the moral education program.

The views of the guidance and counseling teachers reveal the impact of moral education in eradicating gender-based violence by promoting respect and dignity among students, broadening the definition of violence to include verbal abuse and coercion, promoting dialogue in conflict resolution, changing cultural beliefs that support GBV, and promoting group responsibility in combating violence.

However, for moral education to be effective, it has to be backed up by structured discussions, school policies, active community participation and parents. When all these elements are incorporated in a comprehensive manner, they can go a long way in eradicating GBV in schools, promoting respect and equality for all, and nurturing a generation that will uphold the rights of women and human dignity.

In brief, it can be argued that moral education plays a significant role in the formation of attitudes towards GBV, as the results of the study show the views of the teachers of guidance and counseling. Their experiences show that moral education leads to increased respect, change of prejudice and the use of non-violent means to solve conflicts, which in turn changes the perception and treatment of women. In this way, moral education targets both the body and the mind, fostering empathy and ethical understanding, which helps students to identify and avoid GBV.

In addition, it challenges gender stereotyping by making people question the norms that are in place, as evidenced by the change of attitude of educators who used to take certain gender roles as normal. Moral education goes beyond teaching and training the students to be moral beings but also to be responsible for the moral climate of the society by practicing respect and justice in their daily lives. To effectively address GBV, moral

education must be progressive, constantly countering negative messages while promoting fairness, dignity, and equality in school and society.

4.1.7 Lessons and activities in moral education that enlighten students on gender-based violence

The following are the actual responses of the guidance and counseling teachers on the Lessons or activities in moral education that enlighten students on gender-based violence.

- P1: *“It has been quite enlightening to engage students in debates on gender roles. It assists them to understand how stereotyping leads to GBV and why it is crucial to counter such prejudices.*
- P2: *“We once arranged a documentary on the lives of GBV survivors.” It was a very moving session but it helped our students to understand the real-life implications of gender-based violence.*
- P3: *“One of the effective activities included the students writing reflective essays on what they would do if they were to witness GBV. This exercise helped them to reflect on their responsibilities in the prevention and management of violence.*
- P4: *“The most successful activities have been those that involve the students in conflict solving exercises that do not involve physical contact.” They teach learners other ways of solving conflicts and understanding other people’s feelings.*
- P5: *“It was informative to have students research and present on Kenya’s legal framework against GBV. It assisted them in learning about the laws that are in place for the protection of victims and the need to enforce them.*

The participants’ responses show that different forms of moral education through interactive and experiential learning activities have influenced the students’ perception of GBV. These activities include debates, documentary screenings, reflective essays, role-playing exercises, and legal research presentations, all of which play a part in creating awareness and promoting respect and non-violence.

4.1.8 Debates on gender roles as a tool for critical thinking

The contentious nature of the debates on gender roles is therefore a useful tool in the development of critical thinking, self-reflection and social change as alluded by P1. In the

Socratic tradition, knowledge is attained through dialogue, as questioning the status quo exposes the contradictions in the collective human mind. Through debates, students are forced to question the existing paradigms, analyze the cultural presuppositions that inform GBV. The stereotyped gender roles where men are portrayed as dominant and women as submissive leads to the normalization of force, violence, and oppression. Kagawa and Leach (2018) have also pointed out that the strict gender roles are directly linked to the continuation of GBV; the societies that adhere to the patriarchal values are more likely to experience the increased rates of the intimate partner violence. In this way, students engage with these systemic problems, transitioning from mere acceptance to critical analysis of the problematic ideas. This intellectual engagement does not only help to develop the consciousness of the social structure of oppression but also creates a sense of responsibility to transform the environment that supports GBV. In other words, debates are a process of ethical reasoning where students learn to distinguish between justice and injustice, equality and oppression, culture and prejudice.

However, the act of debating is also transformative; it is not just a way of arguing but a process of learning, understanding, and the moral obligation of discussion. In responding to counterarguments, students have to step into the shoes of another, a process that is similar to the process of moral reasoning in which the practice of virtue through rational thinking helps to shape ethical character. Flood (2019) notes that gender transformative education that involves discussion reduces the tolerance of young people towards GBV, proving that debate is an effective method of teaching for social change. The exposure to different views challenges people's prejudices and assumptions, which leads to the development of the intellect and the improvement of the character. Besides, debates help

to develop critical thinking and argumentation skills, which enables the students to express their stand on issues of GBV effectively. This skill is useful not only in academic contexts but also in other spheres of life, such as advocacy and policy-making. In a world where silence is a form of consent, the ability to reason against oppression is not just an intellectual exercise but a responsibility. Therefore, discussions of gender roles are not limited to the classroom; they are a war zone where knowledge is destroyed, moral awareness is developed, and the foundations of social change are laid.

4.1.9 Documentary screenings on GBV survivors to foster emotional engagement

Participant P1 noted that education is not just the process of imparting knowledge but also the process of developing moral feelings and ethical accountability. Documentary screenings as a form of learning by experience helps students to bridge the gap between theoretical discussions and real life by exposing them to the effects of GBV through the testimonies of survivors. According to Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics*, the process of becoming ethical is through the process of habituation, which involves the practice of ethical issues. Documentaries exemplify this principle by exposing students to the real-life experiences of survivors, feelings that cannot be explained by reason alone. According to None in Three Research Centre (n.d.), the use of visual narratives fosters empathy and social justice among the learners, reminding them that GBV is not just a social issue but a real-life violation that requires moral action. The use of survivor narratives, especially in the form of videos that are different from written text, makes the students to confront the psychological and economic impacts of GBV. This is in line with Martha Nussbaum's argument that narratives develop the "moral imagination" through which people are able to empathize with others and thus become ethically sensitive and

civically aware. Therefore, documentary screenings are not just a teaching aid but an ethical act that breaks the complacency and creates an emotional connection that is necessary for social transformation.

However, the screenings of documentaries are not only emotionally charged; they create a platform for the analysis of structural issues and the role of institutions in GBV. When one looks at the experiences of survivors, the shortcomings of legal systems, cultural norms that encourage silence, and the lack of adequate social support structures are clearly seen. Bowles et al. (2023) have noted that the use of multimedia narratives in GBV education enhances students' understanding and makes them reflect on the problem and the possibility of change in the society. This epistemological shift is important because, as Paulo Freire points out in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, education cannot be a mere process of receiving knowledge but a process of becoming that enables learners to question oppression. When students are exposed to the experiences of GBV survivors, the concept of 'violence' is no longer a mere concept but a social, legal and structural phenomenon. This in turn fosters a moral imperative that goes beyond the classroom discourse, empowering students to confront GBV in their societies. Therefore, documentary screenings serve as a call to conscience, which makes students go from the level of critical thinking and condemnation to the level of ethical practice, where justice, dignity, and human rights are not only studied but also practiced.

4.1.10 Reflective essays on witnessing GBV to promote personal accountability

Participant P1 states reflective essays are effective in making students think about the moral implications of their actions, especially in relation to the topic of GBV, and how they can intervene. Unlike the conventional teaching methods that provide the students

with a theoretical perspective of violence, this method places the students in the ethical dilemma and challenges them to consider not only what should be done but what they would do. This is similar to Aristotle's phronesis or practical reason which states that moral virtues are not just ideas in the head but require practice and thinking (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*). Studies have supported the use of reflective writing in enhancing ethical thinking and responsibility. For instance, Bowles et al. (2023) noted that structured reflective practices improved students' ability to identify violence and respond with ethical precision. In this way, students actively write out their thoughts and, in doing so, question their beliefs, concerns, and obligations in a manner that is impossible when simply lecturing to them. Therefore, reflective essays do not only educate, but also emancipate, helping students to become more aware of their part in the cycle of violence.

Furthermore, this practice explains the ethical dilemma of the bystander effect: the conflict between the responsibility to act and the desire to save oneself. According to the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, the ethical responsibility is the first and foremost a reaction to the other, to the victim, which means that one has to act (Levinas *Totality and Infinity*). However, societal conditioning creates moral inertia, which makes people reluctant to act. Reflective essays counter this inertia by making the students confront their possible role in the process of silence. Studies have established that self-reflection interventions decrease the level of bystander effect and increase the chances of positive action towards GBV (Marcus, 2024). By organizing their feelings and responses in a systematic manner, students are able to view their ethical responsibilities as concrete actions rather than concepts. This shift is important in developing a moral education that is not only in the head but in the heart one that transforms the subject from a spectator to

an active moral agent. Therefore, reflective writing goes beyond being an academic assignment and becomes a tool for ethical transformation, grounding the students in the moral truth that they are either contributing to GBV or preventing it through their actions or inactions.

4.1.11 Role-playing for conflict resolution and empathy development

The use of role-playing as a teaching strategy is a form of phronesis, which is a concept that Aristotle espouses as practical wisdom where knowledge is not only theoretical but also practical. In this way, participant P4 opines that students do not just listen to the moral lesson but rather, they perform conflict situations and thus, reason, reflect, and act out the nonviolent response to conflict. Studies support this approach to the development of emotional intelligence and prosocial behavior; for example, Jones and Pahl (2020) show that the use of role-play in learning increases students' ability to identify and combat gender stereotyping and violence. In this way, students are able to experience the position of both the victim and the perpetrator and thus meet the other, which Levinas defines as the foundation of ethical responsibility. This direct, embodied engagement with the lived realities of GBV allows learners to develop an internalized commitment to non-violence, thus making moral education an active process of transformation rather than a passive process of reception.

In addition, role-playing challenges hegemonic masculinity by exposing how power relations work in gendered conflicts. Foucault's understanding of power relations explains how culture controls people's actions, making it difficult for people to notice the oppressive systems in place. When students engage in role-playing exercises in a conflict situation, they do not just learn about power; they feel it, and thus, develop a keen sense

of how power and subordination work in interpersonal and organizational settings. According to Bandura (2018), the role-play of the appropriate, non-violent behaviors in the controlled settings increases the chances of the actual behavioral change, which supports the notion that moral education must be performative rather than just assertive. This is in line with Freire's education as the act of knowing as praxis, which is the combination of reflection and action in which knowledge is not transmitted through the use of the banking model of education. Therefore, role-playing is not an ornamental activity but a transformative practice that disrupts the everyday acceptance of violence, reconstructs the ways of relating to others, and equips students with the knowledge and skills that would enable them to build a world based on justice and respect.

4.1.12 Research on Kenya's legal framework against GBV for awareness and advocacy

Participant P5 indicates that the study of Kenya's legal framework on gender-based violence (GBV) serves as an exercise not only in legal comprehension but also in the philosophical pursuit of justice, ethics, and social responsibility. In a world where injustice hides behind the veil of ignorance, education empowers students and turns them into active participants who are aware of their rights and those of others. According to Marcus (2024), legal literacy plays a significant role in eradicating the social systems that perpetuate GBV since it enables people to understand their rights and the state's responsibilities in seeking justice. When students read legal texts and think about enforcement, they are not just learning statutes by heart; they are developing ethical and responsible citizens. This process is similar to Aristotle's *phronesis*, or practical reason, where knowledge is not complete unless it is put into practice in an ethical manner. Furthermore, the process of studying and analyzing legal frameworks gives students the

discursive means to counter problematic narratives, such as the cultural relativism argument that seeks to justify certain forms of violence in the name of tradition. According to Kantian ethics, the worth of every human being should be respected as an inviolable moral principle, and this principle should be protected by the law regardless of cultural relativism.

In addition to personal transformation, legal research on GBV fosters in students a sense of social justice that is in tandem with John Rawls' justice as fairness theory, which is a moral theory that requires that people design institutions that are fair. The experience of learning about legal issues and the lack of enforcement of laws makes the students go beyond the level of legal literacy to that of legal activism. Bowles et al. (2023) study supports the inclusion of legal analysis in moral education as it helps students to analyze institutional shortcomings and come up with solutions.

This advocacy in policy, community, or online platforms creates a generation that will not sit idly and watch injustice happen. Socrates once said that the unexamined life is not worth living; the same can be said of an ignorant populace that cannot be considered free. When legal education is incorporated into moral education, schools ensure that the society is not only informed of the laws but also has the conscience to demand compliance and change. Therefore, this pedagogy is not just about imparting legal information it is a belief in justice, which means that students do not simply receive a legal system but are actively shaping it to become more just and equitable.

In summary, the responses from the guidance and counseling teachers show that moral education through experiential learning is more effective than the traditional teaching

methods such as lectures, debates, documentary, reflective essays, role-play, and legal research. In this way, students are not only educated about GBV but also learn critical thinking, empathy, personal and legal accountability.

The study implies that moral education is most effective when it is active, affective, and experiential. However, it is still important to have more discussions on GBV in moral education to enhance learning, integrate these activities into the curriculum to make them more recurrent, engage the community and legal professionals to make moral education more practical, and enforce school policies and national laws to provide safer learning environments. Therefore, by implementing and building on these successful moral education approaches, schools can contribute significantly to the prevention of gender-based violence and the promotion of gender equity, respect, and justice.

4.1.13 Frequency of Gender-Based Violence discussions in moral education and their impact

The interviews conducted with the guidance and counseling teachers show that all of them have a concern that the topic of GBV is rarely discussed in moral education lessons. Although it is discussed from time to time, there is a general opinion that it should be included in the curriculum more often. The responses reveal the advantages and disadvantages of introducing structured discussions on GBV in moral education.

4.1.14 Frequency of GBV Discussions in moral education

The following are the direct responses of the guidance and counseling teachers on the Frequency of GBV discussions in moral education

(P1): “GBV is sometimes mentioned, but it should be considered as a main theme and not as an additional topic.”

Participant 2 (P2): “Although topics such as human rights and gender may include

information on GBV, there is a lack of practical information on how students can report cases, support victims, and prevent violence.”

P3: “Many discussions have enabled me to report cases of abuse and have also encouraged other students to do the same.”

(P4): “It is a topic that is not discussed as often as it should be given its reality.” The issue of GBV should be discussed in school and should be supported by co-curricular activities like debates, drama, and mentorship.

P (P5): “Every discussion makes me reflect on my position as an educator and the impact that I have on the students regarding their understanding of GBV.”

4.1.15 Limited Integration of GBV in Moral Education

The lack of coherent and comprehensive approach to the integration of GBV in moral education is not only an epistemological and ethical issue but also a question of knowledge in education. If moral education is to be used as a tool for nurturing just and ethical citizens, then the exclusion or occasional inclusion of GBV topics is not a mere oversight but a lack of ethical education. P1 is right on the mark when he/she notes that GBV is always treated as an afterthought in the curriculum, as a topic that is only occasionally discussed and not as a moral issue of primary importance. This is in concordance with Freire’s (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* where he posited that education is not a mere transfer of knowledge but a way of liberating people to transform oppressive systems. GBV being one of the most prevalent social injustices cannot be an afterthought; it has to be integrated into the moral fabric.

Marcus (2024) supports this by stating that when GBV is systematically incorporated into the learning process, learners are more conscious of the ethical behavior and are likely to avoid violent actions. However, when such discussions are rare, their effects are minimal, thus limiting the chances of attitudinal and behavioral change in the long run.

Likewise, the issues highlighted by P4 reveal a significant lack of appreciation of educational institutions in addressing GBV discussions as part of the moral development of learners. The lack of structured and frequent interaction with this topic implies a refusal explicit or implicit to address the realities of gendered violence. However, as Nussbaum (1997) rightly notes in *Cultivating Humanity*, moral education cannot be limited to the acquisition of knowledge but should produce persons who can reason about justice and equality in their contexts.

P4's approach of incorporating GBV discussions in activities like debates, drama, and mentorship is in line with Dewey's (1938) experiential learning theory that posits that knowledge is most effective when it is applied in an active manner. Bowles et al. (2023) supports this view by showing that students who undergo experiential moral education have enhanced moral reasoning and a positive attitude towards combating GBV. Therefore, if moral education is to be more than an academic exercise, it must undergo a paradigm shift in its approach to teaching and learning, one that not only recognizes GBV as an ethical issue but also addresses it with the intensity required to bring about change.

4.1.16 Emphasis on practical strategies for addressing GBV

The lack of a systematic approach to the inclusion of gender-based violence (GBV) in moral education is a significant ethical blind spot in modern curricula. The interview of P1 and P4 reveals a structural problem in educational institutions where moral education is a cursory subject that occasionally discusses GBV. This is in line with a societal trend of responding to injustice instead of preventing it, a problem that Freire (1970) in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* describes as lack of critical consciousness that perpetuates oppression. Bowles et al. (2023) also support this view by stating that moral education

should be integrated and sustained in order to foster behavioral change, not just delivered in a one-off manner. The lack of continuity in the discussions on GBV leads to stunted moral growth, which does not prepare the students to be ethical beings capable of identifying, reporting, and preventing acts of violence. If moral education aims at going beyond mere teaching of ethics and imparting of character, then GBV has to be taken from a mere topic of mention to a core part of ethical education.

This is not just an educational issue of curriculum but a moral one that perpetuates the culture of violence through silence. P4's suggestion to incorporate GBV discussions into all aspects of school life through debates, drama, and mentorship is in line with Aristotle's (350 BCE) *Nicomachean Ethics* that virtue is not only in the head but in the practice. When schools only discuss GBV in passing, they are training the students to think of it as something that is not very important and does not require their intervention.

Marcus (2024) has pointed out that it is crucial to learn through experience to translate moral lessons from mere words into actions, thus, it is important to note that when GBV education is structured and frequently practiced, it does not only raise awareness but also fosters justice. Therefore, the lack of institutionalization of GBV discussions as an educational norm is an ethical negligence that needs to be addressed if schools are to be the moral consciousness makers rather than mere knowledge disseminators.

4.1.17 Empowerment through regular GBV discussions

The responses given by P3 are quite enlightening and provide a clear indication of how moral education can help in combating GBV if practiced for an extended period. Their argument that frequent discussions enable students to stand up against negative behaviors is in line with the Aristotelian view of virtue as a practice as postulated in the

Nicomachean Ethics. As with the formation of moral character through the practice of virtuous actions, the constant discussion of GBV creates an ethical awareness that discourages the use of violence as a means of communication. This is in concordance with Marcus (2024) who opines that educational institutions are important in bringing change in the society through imparting values that are not only limited to the classroom but also in the society.

Through the constant introduction of students to narratives that seek to subvert gender-based oppression, schools ensure that the process of eradicating patriarchal values is a gradual one, and that the students are gradually being made to develop a moral conscience. In fact, this is supported by Bowles et al. (2023) who conducted a study on experiential learning in intimate partner violence education and discovered that exposure to discussions on GBV for an extended period increases the likelihood of students' willingness to intervene in real-life situations. P3 therefore supports the argument that GBV education needs to be integrated into the moral education curriculum so that the discourse is not an occasional one but a continuous one.

The need for constant GBV education can be anchored on the categorical imperative, which is a principle in Kantian ethics that requires people to do what is right for the benefit of everyone. If we, as rational beings, believe that violence is wrong, then it means that our educational systems should ensure that learners are constantly exposed to anti-violence messages. P3's testimony supports this necessity, as the daily discussions on GBV create a moral stance that does not condone GBV and encourages people to act against it. This is in contrast to the reactive approach that most institutions take, where GBV is only discussed when there is an incident, and therefore does not challenge the

structural violence. The None in Three Research Centre (n.d.) has provided a good example of how proactive moral education works through its storytelling programs that have been effective in increasing students' empathy and concern for social justice. In this way, by integrating discussions of GBV into the regular moral curriculum, educators do not only teach the students but also cultivate in them the ability to resist oppression. P3's findings, therefore, call for a radical change in how schools address GBV education from a one-off campaign to the development of a sustainable ethical culture that rejects violence against women and girls as a normative way of life.

4.1.18 The role of educators in shaping perceptions of GBV

Participant 5 (P5) gives a deep insight into the responsibility that educators have in influencing the students' attitudes towards GBV. This is in line with the Kantian ethical theory of ethical responsibility where moral agents are required to act in a way that respects the dignity of persons. Teachers, as role models, have a great impact on the young people, and their participation in GBV discourse is not just theoretical but a moral one. Bowles et al. (2023) for instance, found that teachers who receive training on how to address GBV are better placed to question and transform negative gender attitudes and promote ethical reasoning in class. However, if educators themselves do not have self-awareness or have implicit bias, then they are likely to contribute to the very problem they are trying to solve. This resonates with Paulo Freire's (1970) argument against the 'banking model' of education where knowledge is transmitted to students without questioning. For moral education to bring about the desired change in attitudes and behaviours, it has to be dialogical in nature, where both the educators and the students are encouraged to reflect on their part in perpetuating or challenging structural violence.

Schools, therefore, have the ethical responsibility of offering professional development to teachers so that they are not only informants but agents of justice-oriented learning.

Moreover, the reflections made in P5 suggest that there is a need to question the relationship between language and action. If teachers advocate respect and non-violence as principles to be followed in the society and at the same time, they are rude to their colleagues or even students, then the students will not take the principles as genuine. Aristotle's virtue ethics also teaches that moral education is not just the process of imparting knowledge but the process of making people become accustomed to certain behaviors. Empirical evidence for this assertion is available; Marcus (2024) found out that students are more likely to adopt gender-equitable attitudes when they observe the same from authority figures. The assumption here is that schools cannot afford to have GBV as a stand alone topic of discussion but rather, schools must ensure that the principles are integrated into the school's fabric and culture. This calls for a complete overhaul of organizational culture, where dignity and fairness are not mere values taught, but values practiced. If moral education is to be effective in its capacity to change the world, then educators, administrators, and students must understand that knowledge without action is useless.

The responses as a whole indicate that GBV is not something that should be discussed in moral education once in a while but rather a part of the school environment. To enhance the effectiveness of these discussions, schools should incorporate GBV lessons in moral education syllabi with set goals and objectives as well as lesson plans. Furthermore, lessons should include real-life examples, reporting procedures, intervention methods,

and bystander training to ensure that students learn how to apply the knowledge gained in class.

Debates, mentorship programs, peer-led awareness campaigns, and community outreach activities that are conducted on a continuous basis outside the classroom can also help to support the anti-GBV messages. It is equally important to empower educators because teachers should be trained from time to time to enable them to effectively moderate such discussions and be good role models to the students. In addition, promoting accountability in schools by implementing policies and making sure that students and teachers adhere to respect and dignity can improve the impact of moral education in combating GBV. In this way, moral education can be used as an effective means of creating a safer and more tolerant environment for all learners in school.

4.2 Objective 2: Lived experiences of teachers on the role of moral education in curbing GBV in secondary schools in Vihiga county, Kenya.

This objective was guided by three questions as discussed below.

4.2.1 Specific examples where moral education has been effective in addressing cases of gender-based violence.

The following are the direct responses of the guidance and counseling teachers on the specific examples where moral education has been effective in addressing cases of gender-based violence.

P1 “There was a male student who used to make fun of his female classmates and did not care about their feelings. He realized the wrong he was doing through moral education sessions that were conducted on gender sensitivity. In the long run, he apologized to his peers and even became a champion of courteous language in class.

P2 “One day, a female student told me that she was involved in an emotionally abusive relationship.” She had been following our sessions on self-esteem and

healthy relationships. The lessons helped her to gather the courage to escape the toxic relationship and stand by her friends who are in the same situation.

P3 “There was a boy who had been exposed to domestic violence at home and he used to be aggressive to other students. He learned that violence is not a proper way to act out feelings after participating in moral education talks and acting out scenarios. He then joined a peer support group and started helping the young students on how to solve conflicts.

P4 “Some boys who used to tease and call names to girls and other women changed their behavior after a moral education lesson on gender-based violence. They also said that they had never thought about how their actions may cause others to feel unsafe. Since then, they have been discouraging such behavior among their counterparts.

P5 “We had a student who was very rude to the female students and never considered their views when responding to questions in class.” After several lessons on gender equality and respect, he started listening and even interacting with the female students. His transformation even influenced other boys to be more inclusive and respect other girls in their midst.

In response to P1, it is important to note that moral education has the capacity to change the perception of gender. The male student’s transformation from ignoring female classmates to demanding that they be treated with respect can be explained by Kohlberg’s (1981) stages of moral development, which are based on the idea that people move through different stages of moral reasoning depending on the ethical issues they encounter and the amount of thinking they do about them. This case also relates to Noddings’ (2002) ethics of care, which focuses on relationships and caring in moral development. However, one has to ask the question: is it possible to change for the better because of one’s conscience or is it possible to change only because one does not want to suffer the consequences? While virtue ethics by Aristotle would suggest that habituation is the way to develop moral character, Nietzsche might respond that such changes are just a sign of the society’s influence rather than moral improvement. The question, therefore,

is to determine between real moral character and the moral posturing that is a product of social conditioning.

P2's case also shows how moral education empowers people to have worth and be independent. The female student's decision to leave an abusive relationship after engaging in lessons on self-worth can be explained by Bandura's (1977) social learning theory that suggests that self-efficacy is learned through observation and reinforcement. It is praiseworthy that moral education prepares people to have the necessary knowledge to avoid toxic relationships. However, one cannot help but wonder how moral education prepares people for the world outside the institutions. According to Kantian ethics, the student should be free to make rational moral decisions, while existentialist philosophers such as Sartre would state that freedom is not only in the teachings but in the choice made when facing existence. This leads to a further question: is self-esteem derived from the understanding of one's worth as an individual or is it dependent on the opinions of others and the society?

P3 is a good example of how personal experience and behavior change are related. The student's transition from aggression to conflict solving is in line with the social information processing theory by Dodge et al. (1990) that children who are exposed to violence may have a wrong perception of social signals and may act in a reactive manner. By the end of the moral education lesson, the student was able to change his perception of conflict and learn appropriate behaviors. This brings into question determinism and free will. If behavior is determined by environment as behaviorists claim, does moral education just change responses or does it develop moral self? Existentialist views would focus on the student's agency in overcoming his past, while Humean empiricism would

posit that moral feelings are learned through observation and training rather than reason. At its heart, this transformation questions the very concept of moral subjectivity: are we the masters of our own moral selves, or are we simply puppets of our environment?

In P4, the author demonstrates how moral education can help to deconstruct the culture of acceptable misconduct. The boys' understanding that they are part of a culture that tolerates violence against women is in line with Foucault's (1977) discourse theory that posits that norms are learned through practice and language. The changes in the students are in line with Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory that suggests that critical reflection results in a change of perspective

However, one may ask whether such realizations are enough to bring about long-term ethical transformation. The allegory of the cave by Plato implies that the process of enlightenment is a painful one, but is one session enough or does moral education have to be a continuous process to bring about a change? Furthermore, is the change in behavior due to moral development or social pressure? This is a familiar theme of Rousseau's critique of civilization: does education liberate us from ignorance or simply substitute one form of illusion for another?

P5's response focuses on the importance of gender equality education in promoting the culture of tolerance. The change of attitude from ignoring the female opinion to engaging in a conversation is consistent with the findings of Tannen (1990) on gendered communication and how the culture influences the participation of the discourse. These questions raise questions: does moral education promote true intellectual humility or does it only bring in new modes of conduct to follow? From a Socratic perspective, the process

of dialogue and asking questions is the key to gaining knowledge. However, a critical theorist like Habermas might argue that true communicative action requires not only the change of behavior but the change of power relations in educational contexts. In conclusion, moral education is a tool for change, and its effectiveness depends on the level of moral reasoning as opposed to conformity. Maybe the real goal of moral education is not the change of behavior but the continuous thinking and reasoning in moral terms.

4.2.2 Measures employed in moral education to curb gender-based violence

The following are the direct responses of the guidance and counseling teachers on the measures employed in moral education to curb gender-based violence.

P1: “We use role modeling where students tell their own experiences or cases they have come across in their day to day lives.” This method has been useful in promoting empathy and making the students self-reflect on their attitudes and actions.

P2: “We simulate scenarios where students are able to act as victims, offenders or witnesses.” This strategy has assisted students in gaining more knowledge about GBV and accepting responsibility for their actions.

P3: “In our school, we have put in place a reporting system where students can report any cases of GBV in anonymous manner. This has made more students to come out and seek assistance hence enhancing the moral education programs.”

P4: “We have developed a peer counseling system where students help each other on issues to do with GBV.” This has been highly effective because students are more comfortable to open up to their peers than to teachers when it comes to such issues.

P5: “We use examples from the real life in our classes so that students can relate between the moral theories and real-life events. Most of the students have described this approach as enlightening and have begun to fight for the rights of women in their societies.

In response to P1, it is important to note that moral education has the potential to change the perception of gender, which is in line with Kohlberg’s (1981) theory of moral

development. The male student's transition from ignoring the female classmates to demanding that they be treated with respect is a transition from the preconventional to the conventional level of moral development. In the same way, this case is related to Noddings' (2002) ethics of care, which focuses on relationships and caring as the key to moral development. Narrative exposure and ethical discourse play in bringing about such change. However, moral change is genuine when it is due to conviction or if it is just a result of fear of consequences.

According to Aristotle's virtue ethics, character is developed through habit, but Nietzsche might respond that such changes are not moral but rather conformist. The problem for educators is to make these moral changes real and not just the kind of morality that is learned for the sake of appearances. P2's case shows how moral education can help people gain self-esteem and independence especially when they are in a disadvantaged status. The female student's decision to leave an abusive relationship after taking lessons on self-worth is in line with Bandura's (1977) social learning theory that observation and reinforcement define self-efficacy. This is a clear indication of the applicability of moral education in preparing people with the necessary thinking and feeling skills to avoid toxic relationships.

However, the philosophical aspect raises more questions does moral education liberate people from the structures of the society, or does it merely impose the values of the society? Kantian ethics would appreciate the student's ability to make moral decisions on his/her own while existentialist such as Sartre would say that freedom is not in the teachings but in the face of existence and choices. This brings into question whether self-

esteem is derived from the understanding of one's worth as a person or whether it is dependent on the opinions of others and the culture.

P3 shows how moral education can change behaviour and personal experience of aggression to constructive conflict resolution. The student's shift is in line with the social information processing by Dodge et al. (1990) which posits that people who are exposed to violence may have a wrong perception of social signals, which results in reactive aggression. This case illustrates how structured moral education can reshape the ways of thinking and foster positive behaviors. However, the philosophical implications are not as simple. If behavior is determined by environment as behaviorists postulate, does moral education just change response tendencies or does it develop moral self? Moral education is the foundation of ethical behavior, but moral maturity is achieved when people take responsibility for their actions and go beyond their programming. Existentialists would say that moral choice is an act of creating oneself while Humean empiricism would say that moral sentiments are discovered through experience. This case raises the question of moral agency are we the masters of our moral selves or just puppets of our environment?

P4's account demonstrates how moral education can help to deconstruct the normalized toxic behaviors and reveal how norms influence ethical awareness. The boys' understanding that they are part of the problem of gender-based violence is in line with Foucault's (1977) discourse theory that posits that norms are produced through language and practice. This case is a good example of the transformative learning process, which is in line with Mezirow's (1991) argument that critical reflection leads to perspective transformation. However, the philosophical aspect raises questions does one session make a difference in ethical behavior or does moral learning have to be a continuous

process? According to Plato's allegory of the cave, enlightenment is painful but necessary; therefore, mere surface changes may not necessarily translate to deep moral transformation. The study support the idea of continuous rather than episodic ethical practice, thus making sure that ethical sensitivity is not just a one-time response to social demands but a constant practice. This is reminiscent of Rousseau's critique of civilization does education emancipate us from ignorance or does it merely substitute one form of illusion for another?

P5 shows that moral education is important in promoting tolerance and respect in the society especially on issues to do with gender. The change in the student's attitude from ignoring the opinions of the female participants to engaging in a conversation with them is consistent with Tannen's (1990) findings on gendered communication patterns, which show how the participation in discourse is influenced by cultural expectations.

This case offers evidence for moral education's ability to disrupt prejudice. However, the philosophical implications deserve further contemplation: does moral education foster real intellectual humility or does it just impose new hegemonic standards of behavior? A Socratic perspective would stress the value of critical thinking as the basis of knowledge, while Habermas' theory of communicative action would argue that moral development entails the change of power relations in discourse. Moral education should not only focus on changing behavior but also on developing critical consciousness, which would enable people to challenge and transform the norms of society. Maybe the goal of moral education is not the immediate behavioral transformation but the continued thinking and reasoning that comes with it.

In summary, each case illustrates how moral education can bring about ethical change, but the real question is how these changes can be made to go beyond mere compliance to moral reasoning that is internalized. The results are consistent with the theoretical models of moral change, but the philosophical discussion makes us question the depth and sincerity of such changes. It is still an empirical question whether moral education fosters true character or conformity.

4.2.3 Measures employed or planned to enhance the effectiveness of moral education in addressing gender-based violence.

The following are the direct responses of the guidance and counseling teachers on the measures employed or planned to enhance the effectiveness of moral education in addressing gender-based violence.

P1: “We have adopted the use of digital storytelling where students make short videos on GBV issues.” These videos elicit good discussions and give students an opportunity to share their opinions in a unique manner.

P2: “At our school, we have a ‘GBV Awareness Corner’ where students can write down their thoughts, experiences or questions. This has led to more discussions on gender matters.”

P3: “We use social media platforms to create awareness on GBV.” Some students prefer to be involved in discussions online and this has enhanced moral education activities.

P4: “We encourage students who engage in any form of participation in GBV awareness such as debates, art work, peer education among others. This has encouraged students to be more involved in the fight for gender equality.

P5: “We have gender based and coeducational group discussions.” This makes it possible for students to express themselves on sensitive issues in safe environments as well as participate in general discourses that foster tolerance.

The responses given by the participants show a creative and unique perspective of moral education in the context of GBV. P1 is quite engaging as a researcher because it allows students to be more engaged in the construction of their moral stories rather than just receiving ethical lessons. This approach is in consonance with Freire's (1970) problem-posing education where students actively participate in the analysis of social problems as opposed to being mere recipients of knowledge. The creation of short videos enables students to own and own up the moral lessons, which is an effective way of promoting ethical learning. Lambert (2013) also supports this approach by arguing that digital storytelling helps to develop empathy and moral reasoning because it brings concepts to life. This is in line with Aristotle's virtue ethics where people are trained to be moral through practice. Through creative expression, students are able to express their moral position and develop virtues like justice and courage that are crucial in fighting GBV.

P2's 'GBV Awareness Corner' is a valuable resource in creating a culture of permissiveness in moral education. This is in line with Habermas' (1984) theory of communicative action that posits that rationality in an open society fosters moral evolution. As pointed out by McDonald et al. (2014) on anonymity in moral education, it helps to remove the fear of stigma and thus foster more openness and end the silence on GBV. The philosophical significance of this method is rooted in the Socratic method of discussion as a form of ethical learning whereby hidden assumptions are challenged, and moral insight is gained through discussion. The anonymity feature also relates to Levinas' ethic of responsibility, which means that

one must recognize the Other's suffering without forcing him/her to do so, which in turn fosters genuine ethical consciousness.

P3 highlights the use of social media in raising awareness of GBV, using technology to increase participation. Understanding this method has its advantages and disadvantages: on the one hand, it is an effective way to teach morality; on the other hand, it has its drawbacks, including the spread of fake news and activism. This is in consonance with McLuhan's (1964) media theory that posits that the medium is the message. Social media enables moral discussions to occur in the present and in a decentralized manner, which makes it more inclusive. According to Staksrud and Livingstone (2009), digital engagement can help youth to be empowered through being able to express themselves on issues of social justice. This is in line with Kant's moral autonomy where people engage in ethical decision making without the influence of organizations. However, one has to be careful of the possibility of fake news or activism that is more performative than actual. Therefore, social media is a useful tool that should be used with the help of critical thinking frameworks to facilitate moral learning.

P4 has adopted the approach of encouraging students to participate in GBV awareness campaigns through incentives, but also extrinsic motivation has its drawbacks. This approach is based on the reinforcement theory as postulated by Skinner (1953). This is because when moral actions are positively reinforced, the individuals are likely to internalize ethical behaviors. This is in line with Aristotle's virtue ethics where the right thing is done through practice and encouragement from the society. Self-determination theory by Deci and Ryan (2000) also supports the idea that intrinsic motivation, which stems from recognition, results in enhanced moral commitment. However, a purely

reward-based system may lead to moral actions being motivated by external factors and not internal ethical values. Therefore, although rewards can be used to encourage students to be moral, moral education should aim at developing the desire to do what is right and avoid what is wrong, as Kant's categorical imperative suggests that one should do what is right because it is right.

Gender-segregated and mixed-group discussions of P5 also address the fact that moral learning is not a simple process that occurs in isolation but in various social contexts. This approach is very useful as it allows to address gender-specific issues and foster understanding between the genders. This is in line with Gilligan's (1982) theory of moral development that asserts that moral reasoning depends on the relationships. Gender-segregated discussions allow students to share their experiences and feel that they are moral actors in their own lives. At the same time, the use of mixed groups fosters intersubjective moral reasoning, which means that the participants' views are recognized and incorporated. Hyde et al. (2019) have also found that mixed-gender interactions are beneficial for both parties as they increase empathy and decrease prejudice. This method is in line with Rawls' (1971) veil of ignorance whereby people make moral decisions based on the knowledge of other people's experiences. The combination of these discussion formats makes sure that students not only get a voice but also get to understand ethical issues in a societal perspective.

In conclusion, the strategies used by these educators are complex and diverse, and they are based on philosophical and empirical knowledge. While each of these methods is beneficial on its own, they are most efficient when used in a comprehensive approach to moral education. Digital storytelling, anonymous discussion, social media participation,

reward-based incentives, and guided discussions together form a strong foundation for combating GBV. However, these methods should not be used independently but as part of a comprehensive moral education plan that focuses on reason, moral reasoning, and real change. The effectiveness of moral education is not in the mere obedience to rules but in the integration of justice into one's existence, as Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living."

4.3 Effective moral strategies in mitigating GBV in Secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya

This objective was guided by three questions as discussed below.

4.3.1 Moral education strategies used in secondary schools in Vihiga County to mitigate gender-based violence and their effectiveness

The following are the direct responses of the guidance and counseling teachers on the moral education strategies used in secondary schools in Vihiga County to mitigate gender-based violence and their effectiveness.

P1 : "In our school, we incorporate gender-based violence in moral and life skills lessons." We discuss respect, equality, and human rights, but I think that it does not work because students do not pay much attention to these lessons. Some people still have cultural beliefs that justify GBV."

P2 : "We have peer counseling where students who have been trained in conflict resolution teach their counterparts on how to avoid getting into GBV situations." This has been helpful for some students, but others do not share their thoughts and feelings because they feel that their peers will judge them.

P3 : "Sometimes in our school we have talks where we make students understand the right conduct and how they should treat their fellow students." However, these sessions are not always interactive in the sense that the participants are actively engaged in a two-way communication process. We explain to them what they should do, but they rarely get an opportunity to ask questions or express their opinions.

P4 : "We have banned any form of violence in our school and especially GBV and we also have penalties for anyone who engages in such acts. However, we need

more than just discipline; we need to teach students so that they know why GBV is wrong, not just because they will be punished.

P5 : “We also bring in guest speakers such as the police and lawyers to explain the laws on GBV to the students. This is helpful in creating awareness, but I believe that there should be follow-ups to check whether the students have grasped what they are taught or not.

4.3.2 Integration of GBV education into moral and life skills lessons

The attempt to teach moral education in response to gender-based violence (GBV) raises a fundamental question of the relationship between knowing and doing, between theory and practice. P1, a teacher, agrees with the notion that moral and life skills lessons teach students about respect, equality, and human rights but fail to eradicate the cultural practices that support violence, especially against women and girls. This is in line with the philosophical perspective of Paulo Freire (1970) who opined that education should not only be a process of depositing knowledge into the minds of learners but also a process that transforms the learners’ consciousness. Studies have supported this view by revealing that although knowledge is power, it does not translate into attitude or behaviour change if the process of learning is passive (Bowles et al., 2023). If students remain in a sociocultural context that perpetuates gender inequality, their academic understanding of the negative effects of GBV does not translate to their behaviour. Therefore, moral education, if it is to be meaningful, must move from the realm of the lecture and the textbook to the realm of the real and the experiential in terms of violence and injustice.

To bridge this epistemological divide, therefore, it is necessary to incorporate experiential learning approaches into GBV education so that students can transform the issue into personal knowledge. The use of case studies, storytelling, and survivor narratives as a way of presenting information allows students to question their own perceptions and

break free from the prejudices inherited from their culture. This is in line with Nussbaum's (2001) assertion that narrative imagination, which is the ability to view the world from another person's perspective, is crucial in fostering empathy and ethical responsibility. Furthermore, studies indicate that experiential learning, especially role-play and reflective writing, positively affects students' moral reasoning and their readiness to combat GBV (Marcus, 2024). However, the potential of such education to transform cannot be contained within the school environment. Involving parents and the rest of the community makes sure that the messages of equality and violence prevention are consistent across different aspects of the society hence eliminating the cases of conflict where the teachings of the school are in contrast with the rest of the society. Moral education is not about putting ethical knowledge into empty vessels but about engaging in a dialogue between reason and action, between theory and practice that's only then can GBV education be transformative.

4.3.3 Interactive engagement in GBV education

The education system's approach to passive learning in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) education weakens its impact, turning it into a mere process of imparting moral codes rather than a process of critical thinking about ethical issues. Freire (1970) in his works on pedagogy has pointed out that education should not be a process in which the students are passive recipients of knowledge but a process in which they are encouraged to question their world. However, as P2 also notes, GBV education in schools is mostly didactic, where students are only told what is right and wrong and are not encouraged to question these norms. When students are not allowed to ask questions, argue or even ask questions, they become mere receptors of knowledge and not moral beings. This

approach does not capture power relations, identity, and consent, which are crucial to understanding GBV beyond a set of norms.

A more engaging approach to GBV education would help students develop moral understanding and ethical decision-making skills that would enable them to deal with real-life situations. Noddings (2002) has also supported the view that moral education should involve emotions and personal experiences. Using techniques like debates, role-play, and storytelling can make the content more personal and thus make the students more compassionate. Other ways of receiving feedback that can be used to enhance the students' willingness to express their concerns include question boxes or online feedback forms. Thus, education is not a set of rules that are imposed on the students but a process of dialogue in which students build their moral and ethical perspectives that will enable them to fight against GBV in their lives and communities.

4.3.4 Peer Counseling approach in GBV Prevention

Peer counseling is very important in the fight against GBV since it helps in enhancing moral standards and teaching students how to handle conflicts. As P3, a guidance and counseling teacher, notes, this approach ensures that students are able to discuss with their peers and not with authority. This is in line with other studies like McKenzie and Haris (2019) who noted that peer-based interventions are more effective than adult counseling in handling issues to do with GBV and emotional problems. Peer counseling is based on the Socratic method of discussion, where learning and understanding of oneself and others takes place. However, its success is highly dependent on the capacity of peer counselors to foster trust and understanding. If students feel that they are going to be judged or betrayed in any way, they may withdraw from the group, which negates the

whole purpose of peer support. It is here that we come across a paradox: while peer counseling aims at eradicating the barriers of hierarchy of conventional counseling, it brings in new forms of risks concerning confidentiality and peer relations.

It is for this reason that peer counseling depends on institutional measures that foster trust and ethical practice. Johnson and Wells (2021) have noted that structured peer counseling programs should ensure that their counselors receive adequate training in ethical confidentiality, emotional intelligence, and trauma-informed care. Without these measures, peer counseling may turn into a counterproductive or even detrimental activity where students do not want to participate due to possible exposure or stigmatization. To address these challenges, schools should incorporate other measures like the use of anonymous reporting systems and online platforms where students can report cases without feeling like they are being exposed. Furthermore, using Aristotelian ethics, it is possible to state that the effectiveness of peer counseling does not depend on structural changes only but on the development of the students' character: empathy, courage, and integrity. If fostered, peer counseling can go beyond its drawbacks and become a process that not only helps students deal with GBV issues but also fosters moral character in the society.

4.3.5 Balancing punitive measures with education on GBV

It is therefore moral and practically imperative to ensure that punitive measures are complemented by education on GBV especially in learning institutions. P4, a school administrator, underscores the role of strict disciplinary actions as a deterrent against GBV. This is in line with the deterrence theory that posits that people will not engage in criminal activities if they are likely to face stiff penalties (Beccaria, 1764). However, the

administrator is not naive enough to think that fear alone will instill ethical behavior in the employees. Discipline without understanding leads to compliance without commitment, which is not far from mere conformity rather than change. Nussbaum (2011) posits that moral development entails education that enhances the ability to reason ethically and emotionally rather than just following orders. Hence, schools need to enhance students' knowledge of GBV's ethical and societal ramifications so that they do not engage in it because they know they will be punished. Thus, institutions meet their ethical obligation of producing responsible citizens instead of merely disciplining them.

A better approach is the restorative justice that focuses on the restoration of the offender rather than punishment. Zehr (1990) for instance opines that punitive justice perpetuates offenders' isolation and escalates the use of violence instead of reducing it. Instead of just suspending or expelling the offenders, schools should make them undertake certain forms of rehabilitation such as counseling, mentorship and community service. Through acknowledging the wrong they have done and seeking to make amends, the offenders may be able to change for the better and become moral beings. Gilligan (1993) in his study on moral development established that it is only through transformative learning where people are able to grasp the actual consequences of their actions that they are likely to change and embrace the right behavior for the right reasons as opposed to being forced to do so by fear of the consequences. Therefore, the combination of educational programs with disciplinary measures makes it possible for students to embrace the culture of respecting fellow human beings and embracing equality. Schools should not only require students to follow anti-GBV policies but also ensure that ethical behavior becomes a part of the students' character.

4.3.6 Awareness programs and follow-ups after

Participant P5 alluded police officers and lawyer are some of the guest speakers who play a crucial role of educating students on the laws on GBV. It is beneficial for students to be able to interact with people who have worked in the law enforcement and legal profession as it adds a practical aspect to what is otherwise a theoretical course. According to Smith et al. (2020), awareness programs spearheaded by experts help students to understand legal measures concerning GBV. However, as P5 rightly notes, a major drawback of such interventions is that they are short-term; one presentation cannot bring about a change of attitude or perception. If not reinforced, the knowledge acquired is likely to remain as mere impressions that are easily forgotten. Aristotle stated that knowledge is not a result of mere exposure but of reflection and practice. Therefore, the success of guest speaker sessions does not depend on their implementation but on the measures that are taken to enhance their outcomes.

For such change to be effective, schools need to shift from one-off GBV education to continuous discussions. The reflection discussions are important to allow the students to question and make the lessons more personal. According to Jones and Williams (2021), debriefing sessions that are structured after educational interventions assist in the reinforcement of the messages that were passed and also foster critical thinking. Likewise, quizzes, essays, and role-play are used as instruments for checking understanding and promoting the practical use of the knowledge. John Dewey's theory of learning by experience is a theory that supports the use of activities that involve the learners in the learning process as they learn through reflection. In addition to the academic exercises, there are ongoing mentorship programs that bring in an aspect of

relational learning where students develop a relationship with the guest speakers or local role models. Through such engagement, mentorship programs ensure that GBV education is not only about awareness but also about the wisdom of the law. It is only through such a holistic, cyclical process that schools can guarantee that GBV education is not only acknowledged at the cerebral level but also becomes a lived reality of justice and respect.

The study's findings show that the current moral education strategies have their strengths and weaknesses in tackling GBV in secondary schools as described by the participants. Schools use classroom teachings, peer counseling, strict measures, and guest speakers to educate students and encourage ethical practices. However, these efforts are not without challenges including cultural barriers, lack of students' participation, cultural taboos on GBV issues, and poor follow-up actions, which reduce the effectiveness of the efforts. These barriers need to be addressed in a more comprehensive manner that would involve the school community and ensure that there is a continuous support system that would enhance the safety of the school environment.

4.3.7 New or improved moral education strategies can be developed to enhance the mitigation of gender-based violence in secondary schools in Vihiga County.

The following are the direct responses of the guidance and counseling teachers on the new or improved moral education strategies that can be developed to enhance the mitigation of gender-based violence in secondary schools in Vihiga County.

- P1 *“It is necessary to use such activities as debates and storytelling, which will allow students to share their opinions and fight against gender stereotypes in the classroom.”*
- P2: *“I believe that schools should establish organizations that will allow students to freely discuss GBV and ways to avoid it.” This would make learning more fun rather than just being told about it.*

- P3: *“There should be a clear reporting system where students can report GBV cases anonymously.” Some students are afraid to speak because they do not believe the school administration.*
- P4: *“We should involve the community more.” Schools can engage the parents, religious institutions, and local government to ensure moral education is not limited to school compounds.*
- P5: *“It would be very effective to have a mentorship program where older students or alumni can help the young students on matters to do with moral values and GBV.” Young people listen more to their peers than to teachers or parents.”*

4.3.8 Interactive Learning Methods in GBV Education.

As pointed out by P1 , one of the best strategies is the use of activities such as debates and storytelling. Lecture-based teaching is a common approach in most learning institutions, and it is not effective in capturing the attention of the learners on issues such as GBV (Smith & Johnson, 2020). Debates are a good way of allowing students to express themselves and challenge gender stereotyping in a constructive manner. Storytelling, on the other hand, enables the students to understand real-life situations, which enhances empathy and critical thinking (Brown, 2019). These methods provide the students with an open platform to share their views, question cultural practices that perpetuate GBV, and gain knowledge on the root causes and impacts of GBV. According to Garcia & Patel (2021), the use of interactive learning methods increases students’ interest and helps them remember the material for a longer time, which is why it is an effective approach to GBV education.

4.3.9. Student-led clubs as a platform for GBV awareness and prevention

Likewise, P2 also underlines the importance of having students’ clubs that focus on GBV issues and campaigns. The formation of these clubs would ensure that students take charge of their learning process, thus making moral education more realistic and interesting (Williams & Thompson, 2021). Instead of just receiving knowledge from

teachers on GBV, students would engage in discussions, create awareness, and come up with solutions that are close to them. They would also provide a platform for students to discuss their experiences and seek support from their peers, which would help in creating a culture of non-violence in the school (Anderson, 2020). Research has also revealed that peer education is highly effective especially when students are the ones leading the campaign since they are more likely to listen to fellow students than to authority (Lee & Martin, 2018).

4.3.10 Confidential reporting systems to address GBV in schools

One of the challenges that hinder the fight against GBV in school is that students are afraid to report cases of GBV to the administration as pointed out by P3 . To this end, schools should ensure that there is a reporting system that the students can use to report GBV incidents without revealing their identity or face any form of repercussions (Johnson & White, 2020). A good reporting system would not only safeguard the victims but also ensure that the offenders are punished (Davis, 2019). Schools should also ensure that the reports are followed up and the affected students are provided with counseling and other related services. This means that many cases of GBV may not be reported and hence not addressed, thus perpetuating the culture of silence (Ngugi & Ochieng, 2022).

4.3.11 Community involvement in GBV prevention

Apart from school, P4 also emphasizes the role of community in moral education. Schools cannot fight GBV on their own; they need the support of parents, religious leaders, and local authorities to support the messages taught in class (Karanja, 2018). Most students are raised in homes or societies where GBV is accepted, and therefore,

it becomes challenging for them to adopt moral education that supports gender equality (Mbatha, 2021). Community participation in workshops, awareness creation, and policy formulation ensures that everyone is involved in the fight against GBV. According to Smith et al. (2020), when families and community leaders embrace moral education, students are more likely to embrace the right moral standards and practice them in their daily lives.

4.3.12 Mentorship programs for GBV prevention and moral guidance

P5 recommends that the school should introduce a mentorship program where senior students or alumni educate the junior students on matters concerning moral issues and GBV. It is also important to note that young people are more likely to open up to their peers or slightly older individuals than to teachers or parents (Anderson & Carter, 2022). A structured mentorship program would ensure that students are exposed to positive male role models who do not support the negative gender norms (Taylor, 2020). Through storytelling and advice, mentors can assist the young learners in managing various social challenges and building appropriate relationships. Moreover, the mentorship programs can offer the students support groups where they can fight against GBV and support the victims (Garcia & Patel, 2021).

In summary, the views of the participants suggest that there is a need to come up with new and realistic approaches to addressing moral education in order to address GBV in secondary schools. Debates and storytelling are effective in developing critical thinking and students' interest, while clubs allow for open discussions. Confidential reporting means that victims are free to report cases and community involvement supports what is taught in school. Finally, virtue ethics can help students become

change agents and support each other. Through virtue ethics, the secondary schools in Vihiga County can help in eradicating GBV in schools and ensure that students are protected from any form of violence and are empowered to fight for their rights as discussed below.

4.3.13 Virtue Ethics as the ultimate solution to Gender-Based Violence in moral education

Aristotle's virtue ethics offers a comprehensive and emancipative approach to addressing GBV by focusing on the cultivation of the right character rather than the imposition of rules. In contrast to deontological ethics that is based on the principle of duty, or utilitarianism that is based on the consequences, virtue ethics introduces ethical values as the character traits of a person. Through the promotion of respect, empathy, and justice, students are able to embrace moral values as opposed to following rules to avoid getting into trouble. This is important because most anti-GBV interventions rely on the use of legal sanctions, while these strategies do not eradicate the cultural practices that perpetuate violence. A virtue ethics approach aims at changing the students' character to ensure that they do not reject GBV because they have been ordered to do so by authority. By practicing virtues in their daily lives, students are able to cultivate strong ethical values and change their behavior for the better in all aspects of their lives, not just within the school setting.

Furthermore, virtue ethics makes sure that GBV prevention is not just an intellectual exercise that is discussed in the classroom but a moral process that is practiced on a daily basis. Moral education based on virtue ethics should incorporate elements of activity and communication, including storytelling, debates, and role-playing to enable

the students to apply virtues in real-life situations. Storytelling helps students understand the experiences of GBV survivors, while debates help to unlearn prejudice and promote justice and fairness. Moral dilemmas are acted out in role-playing exercises, which help students to build ethical thinking and moral patterns that do not allow discriminating against women. By participating in such activities, students acquire virtues as part of their moral personality, and ethical behavior becomes a habit. This strong moral base empowers the students not only to identify GBV as a social issue but also to be change makers who will always fight for equality and non-violence in their entire lives.

4.3.14 The role of virtues in preventing GBV

The virtue ethics hold that moral character is formed by the practice of good habits and that people become ethical by nature. In contrast to the legalistic ethical theories that require compliance with the rules, virtue ethics develops an internal moral compass that helps people make ethical choices in every sphere of life. When moral education in schools aims at the formation of character, the students develop virtues that do not allow for gender-based violence (GBV) in their reasoning. For example, respect helps students understand that every person is valuable and should not be subjected to violence, especially women and girls. Empathy enables students to feel with the other person, thus reducing violent actions that bring about suffering. Justice, on the other hand, creates a strong feeling of fairness, enabling students to fight discrimination and gender inequality. Through the incorporation of these virtues in everyday practices, the students do not only gain knowledge about GBV as a social or legal issue, but they also embrace the moral obligation to fight it.

The strength of virtue ethics is in its potential to change people not only in terms of their behavior in school or in accordance with the laws of the country. A virtuous character will not allow a student to engage in GBV because it is against their moral fabric to do so without any form of punishment. This shift from external enforcement to internal moral conviction is what makes virtue ethics the most effective approach in addressing GBV through moral education. Schools must, therefore, go beyond the theoretical and make the students to be able to practice the virtues that are being taught. By using techniques like storytelling, debates, and role-playing, students practice ethical thinking, questioning cultural prejudices, and cultivating moral values of respect, empathy, and justice. When these virtues are instilled and practiced, students become responsible adults who embrace gender equality and fight against GBV not only in school but also in the society.

4.3.15 The practice of virtue through moral education

Virtues are not concepts that can be taught and learned through words; they are something that needs to be practiced in everyday life. Moral education cannot, therefore, be a matter of mere didactic teaching and learning but has to be more participatory and practical in nature where students are given opportunities to practice virtues. For instance, storytelling makes students develop an emotional attachment to the issue of GBV by relating the issue to real-life experiences of the survivors. When students listen to the stories of suffering, strength, and unfairness, they learn empathy, which is one of the most important values that help people understand that they are not alone in their struggles. Likewise, discussions on gender issues compel students to analyze cultural practices that promote violence and engage them in practicing justice

and fairness in their thinking and behavior. Through open and structured discussions, students develop the skills of expressing moral points of view, questioning prejudice, and promoting ethical reasoning.

Besides, the use of intellectual skills, the practical aspect of virtue, such as role-playing, allows students to experience moral conflicts directly. Through role-play, students are able to practice the use of virtues such as courage, respect and responsibility in handling cases of GBV including cases of harassment or supporting a survivor. This enhances their moral development and equips them with the ability to resist GBV in real life scenarios. In addition, the students are able to learn virtues from their mentors, peers, teachers or other members of the society through the mentorship programs. Seeing and engaging with mentors helps to make virtues more real and tangible, thus strengthening the positive moral behaviors. In this way, moral education is no longer an academic exercise, but a process of becoming, which guarantees that the values are not only taught, but also practiced. In the long run, these habits form a generation that does not even consider GBV as an option because it is against the norms of the society.

4.3.16 Virtue Ethics as a lifelong moral foundation

Virtue ethics provides a sustainable solution to GBV because it aims at transforming people into moral agents with character, not just legalistic personalities. While punitive measures deter people from engaging in misconduct by threatening them with consequences, virtue ethics foster moral values within a person, making them act righteously, respect others, and be empathetic and just even when there is no one to monitor them. When students are trained in these virtues from childhood, they take

them to adulthood and practice them in families, workplaces, and in the society. Aristotle argued that justice is the result of the virtues of the people, which implies that when people practice good character, vices like GBV are not prevalent. A person who has justice in his/her heart will not only avoid violence but will also fight against it and support women's rights. Therefore, virtue ethics makes it possible for moral education to go beyond the classroom and become part of the fabric of people's lives.

In addition, virtue ethics is more comprehensive and effective in moral education than the other two approaches because it focuses on the development of character rather than mere compliance. Schools that promote virtues instead of rules make students understand that gender equality is a moral imperative rather than a set of prohibitions. This approach fosters non-violent people who do not engage in violent behaviors because they are afraid of being punished but because it is against their beliefs. Therefore, virtue ethics prepares students in the right ethical decision-making process to solve various ethical issues, and they will remain non-violent even after leaving school. In the long run, the solution to GBV does not lie in the use of force but in raising a generation of people with conscience who will not allow any form of injustice to be done to women. Thus, moral education is no longer a formal process that is taught in school and followed mechanically but a continuous ethical compass that fosters a society of justice.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the results of the study, conclusions made based on the results, and suggestions for the practical use of the study and for future research. This chapter aims at summarizing the findings of the study and offer recommendations to the stakeholders in education, policy makers and future researchers.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of moral education in the fight against gender-based violence in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya: a phenomenological study. The study was guided by the following objectives: Examine the effectiveness of moral education in addressing GBV in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya, investigate the lived experiences of teachers on the role of moral education in curbing GBV in secondary schools in Vihiga county, Kenya, establish effective moral strategies in mitigating GBV in Secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya.

Moral education is an essential component of students' character development, especially in the area of GBV. The schools that implemented moral education in their curriculum noted a positive change in attitude of the students towards gender issues and individual rights. However, the effectiveness of moral education was limited by poor teacher training, irregularity in the application of the program, and lack of real-life application.

This meant that many schools lacked proper moral education programs and instead offered general religious classes that did not focus on GBV, thus, students' knowledge of the issue was limited.

The teachers agreed that moral education could help in preventing GBV but they also noted that there were challenges in implementing the program. Most teachers had little or no training in GBV prevention and were challenged in teaching moral education lessons. Discussing issues of GBV was challenging because it was culturally and socially unacceptable to talk about issues to do with gender. Teachers also believed that the use of interactive and discussion-based strategies would be more beneficial than the conventional lecturing approach in the management of students and their ability to solve real-life ethical issues.

The study also pointed out the best practices in preventing GBV through moral education. Schools that used participatory learning strategies like role play, storytelling and peer discussions showed higher levels of students' engagement. Schools, parents, and local communities were also found to be important stakeholders in enhancing moral values and combating GBV. The programs that involved senior students or professionals to help the junior students in decision making regarding ethical issues were found to be useful in promoting responsible behavior. However, the problem of parental engagement in moral education was still an issue, as many parents were not informed or engaged in such programs, thus reducing their effectiveness.

5.3 Conclusion

Moral education is a crucial component in the development of students' ethical beliefs and perceptions, especially regarding GBV. The study also found that schools that implemented structured moral education programs recorded improvements in students' attitudes towards gender and individual rights. However, the effectiveness of these programs was often limited by the lack of implementation, insufficient preparation of teachers, and the absence of real-life experience. The use of general religious studies that do not directly address GBV also posed a challenge in raising awareness and understanding of the issue among the students, thus preventing any significant behavioral change.

The teachers understood that moral education could help in preventing GBV, but they encountered several barriers in its practice. Most teachers were not trained on how to prevent GBV and were also unsure of how to teach moral education topics. Cultural and societal norms and beliefs on gender-related issues also made it even harder to address the issues in an open manner and thus, it was challenging to foster discussions in the classroom. Teachers also believed that the use of group and discussion methods of teaching would be more effective than the conventional methods of teaching in order to capture the attention of the students and enhance their understanding of moral and ethical issues surrounding GBV.

In order to improve the effectiveness of moral education in combating GBV, schools should incorporate more participatory teaching methods and engage with parents and communities more actively. Techniques like role play, storytelling and peer discussions have been found to be useful in capturing the students' attention and reminding them of the right moral standards. Also, the programs of mentorship can be useful in the process

of decision-making concerning ethical issues. However, the issue of parental non-involvement is still a major factor that needs to be tackled in order to achieve sustainable behavioral change. Improving the quality of teacher training, enhancing the implementation of moral education in the curriculum, and encouraging parents' involvement will be crucial in enhancing the effectiveness of moral education in reducing GBV in secondary schools.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Policy recommendations

The Ministry of Education and other stakeholders should design training programs that will enable teachers to teach moral education and handle issues to do with GBV. Educators should be offered professional development workshops, continuous training sessions, and resources to effectively and confidently facilitate the discussion and incorporate the use of effective and engaging teaching strategies.

The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) should ensure that moral education curriculum is well structured and should include issues to do with GBV. This curriculum should not be limited to general religious education but should incorporate practical aspects of ethical decision making, use of stories, and peer discussions to enhance the understanding of the students on gender issues.

Schools should involve parents and other members of the community in moral education programs to enhance ethical standards outside the classroom. Parental meetings, school-community collaboration, and mentorship should be implemented to ensure that there is a coherent approach in combating GBV. This way, students, parents, and educators will be

able to discuss the issues openly, and this will help to eliminate cultural and societal barriers to behavioral change.

5.4.2 Recommendations for Further Research

1. Evaluating the impact of moral education on students' attitudes and behaviors in the long run GBV in public secondary schools in Kenya.
2. Examining the impact of educators' training on the efficiency of moral education in combating GBV in public secondary schools in Kenya.
3. Exploring the role of parents in shaping students' responses to GBV in public secondary schools in Kenya.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: A letter of introduction

My name is Monicah Achieng' Odero, a Ph.D candidate at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST). I am conducting a study titled "The efficacy of moral education in addressing gender-based violence in public secondary schools in Vihiga county, Kenya: A phenomenological approach" You have been identified as a key contributor to this research, and your insights will be invaluable to its success. I kindly invite you to participate freely, honestly, and as accurately as possible.

Please rest assured that all information you provide will be treated with strict confidentiality and will be used solely for academic purposes.

Yours faithfully,

MONICAH ODERO

Appendix II: Interview schedules for Guidance and Counseling Teachers

Objective 1: To examine the effectiveness of moral education in addressing GBV

How does moral education influence students' attitudes and perceptions toward gender-based violence?

Which specific lessons or activities in moral education contribute to shaping students' understanding and response to gender-based violence?

How frequently is gender-based violence discussed within the moral education curriculum, and in what contexts?

Objective 2: Lived experiences of teachers on the role of moral education in curbing GBV in secondary schools in Vihiga county, Kenya.

Can you provide specific examples where moral education has successfully contributed to addressing gender-based violence in schools?

What strategies have you implemented in moral education to prevent gender-based violence, and how effective have they been?

What additional measures have you implemented or plan to implement to enhance the effectiveness of moral education in addressing gender-based violence?

Objective 3: Effective moral strategies in mitigating GBV in Secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya

What moral education strategies are currently used in secondary schools in Vihiga County to mitigate gender-based violence, and how effective are they?

What new or enhanced moral education strategies can be developed to improve the prevention and mitigation of gender-based violence in secondary schools in Vihiga County?

Appendix III: Approval Letter



Appendix VI: NACOSTI PERMIT


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