

Consequences of the Violent Behaviour towards Donkeys in Kibirichia Ward, Meru Central Sub-County, Meru County, Kenya

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Abstract: *The study sought to evaluate the consequences of the violent behaviour towards donkeys by their handlers'. There has been minimal reduction of this vice despite legal enforcements. The study was carried out in Kibirichia Ward of Meru Central Sub-County using the descriptive survey design. In addition to focus group discussions structured interview schedule was used to collect data from a sample size of 76. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer programme was used for analysis of quantitative data using descriptive statistics to derive Chi square and cross tabulations. The major consequences resulting from the violence include denial of employment as donkey handler, high veterinary costs, disapproval of the violent behavior by the community, and being arrested. The study findings indicate there is need to reduce violence subjected to donkeys so as to minimize its negative consequences on the affected donkey handlers, donkey themselves as well as the community at large. Insistence of humane treatment as a pre-condition for employment is effective. Incorporation of the findings in policy development by Livestock Department will enhance extension package targeting reduction of violence to donkeys by their handlers.*

Keywords: *Donkeys, Kibirichia Ward, Meru Sub-County, consequences of violent behavior towards donkeys, donkey handlers*

I. Introduction

Donkeys play a crucial role in supporting the livelihoods of their handlers in Kibirichia Ward through transportation of goods at a fee. Despite the economic returns accruing from the transportation charges, the donkey users in Kibirichia Ward subject these donkeys to torture through beatings, overloading, fast driving and negligence (KENDAT, 2006). The animal welfare organizations working in Kibirichia and its environs have made minimal progress in inculcating attitudinal change to donkey handlers to adopt humane treatment.

Therefore this research evaluated the consequences of the violent behaviour towards donkeys by some of their handlers. According to Flynn (2000), there is need to address animal abuse, because it will help to achieve a less violent society. Violence towards animals is related to interpersonal violence and it is connected or may be a marker of family violence. A wounded donkey definitely losses some level of efficiency in its ability to provide draught power.

There is a thin difference between violence and cruelty to animals; the two terms are used interchangeably. Violence can be defined as physical force exerted for the purpose of violating, damaging, or abusing (American Heritage Publishing Company, 2010).The term "cruelty" is widely used in relation to animals as compared to violence. So according to Emma and Hackett (2007) the definition of what constitutes "cruelty" varies both in terms of what is acceptable in the treatment of animals generally and the type of animal. According to Ascione (1993) animal maltreatment is defined as socially unacceptable behaviour that intentionally causes unnecessary pain, suffering, or distress to and/ or death of an animal. It excludes practices that may cause harm to animals yet are socially condoned such as certain agricultural and veterinary practices.

The legal perception of cruelty as stated in "The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act" of The Kenyan Constitution Chapter 360 extends beyond the acts of beating, kicking, ill-treating, overriding, speeding, overloading, torturing, infuriating or terrifying an animal to issues of unacceptable housing, confinement, conveyance, feeding and also abandonment, drug administration, surgical operation and disposal procedures that cause unnecessary suffering to the animal (The Constitution of Kenya, 2010). The offence has a stipulated maximum penalty of three thousand shillings or a term of imprisonment not exceeding six months or both if confirmed guilty.

In a broad sense therefore animal cruelty encompasses a range of behaviours harmful to the animals' right from negligence to malicious killing. It can either be intentional or through acts of unintentional negligence. Intentional cruelty happens when a person knowingly deprives an animal of food, water, shelter, veterinary care or is involved in malicious torturing, maiming, mutilating or killing and also causing suffering to

an animal. When the sole objective of causing suffering to an animal is pleasure derivation, then that suffices to be termed as cruelty (Rowan 1999 in DeRosa and Vanase, 2002).

Sometimes animals are exposed to unintended suffering while being used to satisfy planned economic undertakings. In order to differentiate between planned torture and unintended suffering, Rowan (1999) as quoted in DeRosa and Vanase (2002) has classified animal maltreatment into four distinct definitions namely; cruelty, abuse, neglect and use. If the suffering occurs during a behavioral response training programme or in order to succumb to the individual's dominance then that constitutes an abuse.

Challenges in providing the necessary requirements either due to knowledge shortfall or economic incapacitation will lead to negligence. Sometimes in the process of using the animals for food, economic or psychological needs some suffering is bound to occur. In such situations usually an attempt to minimize the suffering is done. The study focused on cruelty in its broadest sense so long as acts of omission and commission were intentional and caused distress or suffering to the donkey.

The prevalence level of violence to donkeys by their handlers in Kibirichia Ward is high as evidenced by frequent encounters of many donkeys with inflicted wounds and injuries on their bodies. Apart from contravening the law prohibiting violence to the animals, the optimal economic returns arising from usage of donkeys for transportation is compromised. However, there was scanty academic research that has been done to conceptualize the consequences of this violence. Hence the study sought to fill this gap through generation of the relevant knowledge with a view of providing possible remedies.

The objective of the study was to evaluate the consequences of violent behaviour towards donkeys by their handlers in Kibirichia Ward. This objective was translated into research question; 'What are the consequences of violent behaviour towards donkeys by their handlers in Kibirichia Ward?'

II. Violence In Usage Of Donkeys

Donkeys contribute to the livelihoods of the pastoral communities through provision of transport as draught animals. Among the traders in Ethiopia it is valued as a low transport investment business venture that has minimal entry requirements (Starkey, 1995).

Even in difficult terrains that are impossible for other modes of transport it sails through with minimal efforts. Donkey's usage is not only restricted to rural settings only but in the densely populated cities in Egypt they are used by Zabbalin rubbish collectors in Cairo and other cities (Fahmy, 1997). According to Mutharia (1995) among the Maasai women in Kajiado there is a belief that necessitates cutting off the edge of a young donkey's ear and tie it round the child's neck to prevent diseases. Since this surgical procedure is done in a traditional set up it contributes to donkeys' suffering through injuries and pain. Donkey usage in the lucrative tourism sector is still largely confined within Lamu through donkey sporting competitions dubbed as Lamu Dugong Festival (Hans, 2009). This is an annual cultural celebration held in May that honours donkey as their main mode of transport and also spread awareness to conserve dugong which is an endangered animal species in that locality. Since the design of the streets in Lamu is too narrow for the cars, donkey transport is the preference. Popularizing this activity in the study area can possibly allow for diversification and enhance earnings associated with tourism. Some of the livelihoods of people in Limuru, Turkana, Samburu, Maasai, Ukambani and Mwea are also partially supported by donkeys to varied extents through transportation of goods (KENDAT, 2006).

According to Aluya and Lopez (1991) in a study conducted in Mexico it was found that donkeys generally suffer a lot of abuse and negligence from their owners and users. They attributed the poor welfare to human poverty, lack of education and social problems like alcoholism. Moreover, a study conducted in Morocco by Bakkoury and Belemlish (1991) showed lack of experience in handling donkeys as key to the poor treatment accorded to them.

But exploitation of donkeys' full potential is hindered by poor management broadly covering nutrition, diseases, housing and mistreatment (Mohammed, 1991 in Fernando, 2004). All these either directly or indirectly contribute to planned or accidental abuse. Through this study it was possible to investigate how the communities in the study area use their donkeys and how this is linked to violence they are subjected to and the possible consequences.

Documentation by Kellert and Felthous (1985) has indicated that the need to exercise dominance, to eliminate presumably undesirable characteristics and control the animal to perform the desired duties may result into unintentional suffering. Violence to animals may also arise out of the desire to shock people for amusement, retaliate against another person and acts of non-specific sadism. Tallichet et al (2005) have also indicated displacement of hostility from a person to an animal, and expression of aggression as also feasible motivations that can as well be satisfactorily extended to explain the violence subjected to donkeys.

III. Consequences of Violence To Donkeys In The Community

Animal abusers have been categorized as a risk prone and vulnerable group to crime (McVie, 2007). Ascione (1999) as quoted by McVie (2007) has claimed that abusing animals may lead to further violence as it desensitizes the perpetrators and reduces their ability to empathize with victims, humans inclusive. In addition cruelty to animals is legally unacceptable as stated in "The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act" Chapter 360 of The Laws of Kenya. Those found in violation of the act are punished through jail term or fine or both. Donkeys exposed to serious maltreatment resulting in injuries become less efficient in provision of draught power and this translates to reduced returns. The current study also explored the other negative effects associated with this violence in the community.

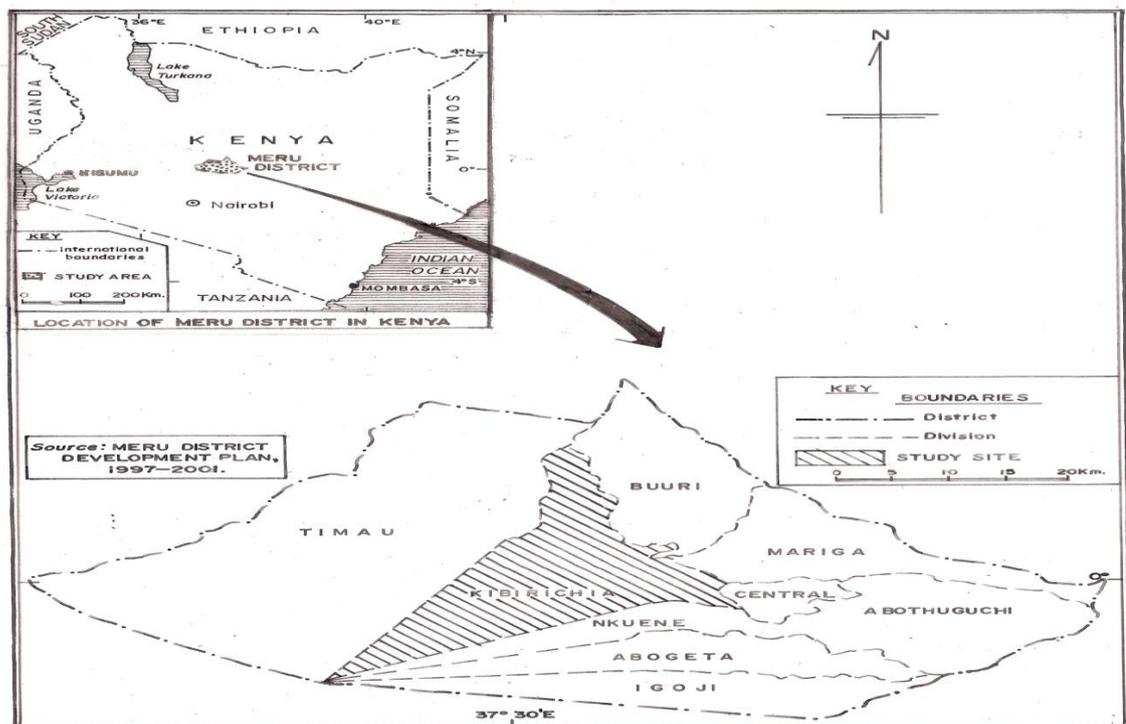
IV. Materials And Methods

A qualitative research descriptive survey method was used to gather information on consequences of violent behaviour towards donkeys by their handler under natural settings. The selected sample of donkey handlers were subjected to both interview schedule and focus group discussions by the researcher. Kothari (2006) supports the use of descriptive surveys in situations where no treatment or manipulation is given. Through the survey it was possible to get the perceptions, attitudes, and behavior patterns of the respondents useful for making inferences (Borg, 1992).

The study was conducted in Kibirichia Ward of Meru Central Sub-County. The Ward enjoys adequate and reliable rainfall which is also supplemented with several group owned self-help water projects. Poor road network coupled with the hilly and stony topography limits efficient vehicle transport service to the main roads hence ferrying of farm produce (cabbage, Irish potatoes, green maize cobs, carrots etc.) from the fields to the local markets or collection points is done through donkey driven carts and or on donkey backs (District Agricultural Officer henceforth abbreviated DAO, 2008). A proportion of the produce is transported over 10km to the main vibrant market at Gakoromone in Meru town.

Apart from transportation of agricultural goods, donkeys are also used for fetching of firewood from the neighboring Mt. Kenya forest and transportation of manure to the farms. Therefore this mode of transport is economically crucial in linkage of agricultural produce and other goods to the markets.

Apparently out of the three wards comprising the Sub-County; namely Kibirichia, Abothuguchi and Central Wards, Kibirichia Ward donkey population was recorded as 1165 in 312 households reflecting the highest concentration and majority have physical injuries on their bodies (DLPO, 2009). These injuries result from the beatings they are subjected to during transportation of goods by their handlers. The study was confined to Kibirichia Ward due to the higher prevalence of donkeys with injuries in comparison to the others.



III.

Figure 2: Meru County Map showing Kibirichia Ward

Source: Meru District Development Plan (1997-2001)

Since some donkey handlers maybe humane and others violent, deliberate efforts were made to pick the ones whose donkeys had wounds inflicted on them. These formed the accessible population from which a sample was realistically drawn to participate in the study.

The methodological triangulation approach in this study involved the use of two different units of analysis, namely focus groups and a donkey handler. According to Orodho (2009) the unit of analysis in focus group interviews is the groups themselves. Therefore in this study the different sets of focus groups of donkey handlers within Kibirichia Ward formed one unit of analysis while the other was the donkey handler who mostly uses the donkey during transportation of goods from each of those households with donkeys within the Ward. Their responses enriched this study by providing the data required on factors influencing violence to donkeys.

The study used methodological triangulation involving purposive and probability sampling methods. As noted by Bryman (2008) a multimethod approach captures a more complete and holistic findings through overcoming the weaknesses and biases associated with a single method. Morgan (1998) has highlighted that purposively selected focus group participants generate in-depth understanding and insight when the culture and belief system influences the behaviours of individuals. Membership of each group should preferably be between 6 to 8 carefully recruited participants. Such a number is large enough to produce a variety of perspectives and is easily manageable. The donkey handlers selected through a local contact as much as possible shared similarities in age, social status, gender and levels of education to enhance compatibility and encourage discussion.

Krueger (1994) has documented that multiple sessions of different sets of focus groups should be conducted until a clear pattern emerges and subsequent groups produce repetitious information. This is normally achievable with three to four groups. In this study the two different sets of focus groups included men less than 35 years and those men above 35 years. Homogeneity in all the other aspects was observed. Since there are no women donkey handlers the two other planned focus groups for them could not be realized.

The probability sampling method was done through systematic random sampling procedure (Bouma and Atkinson, 1995). This was through listing all the 312 households with donkeys to get the sampling frame and subjecting the list to sampling by picking every fourth member. Special attention was paid to keenly observe whether the donkey for the handler picked had injuries and wounds. Those whose donkeys did not have were replaced with those whose donkeys had injuries still from within the sampling frame by repeatedly picking the subsequent fourth member with the predetermined qualities. It was assumed those injuries had been inflicted by the handler and tactful efforts to confirm this were employed. Those earlier on involved in focus group discussions were replaced. This interval was derived from dividing target population by the sample size. The starting point was blindly selected using table of random numbers (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). The study used the Coefficient of Variation Method to calculate the sample size from the households. According to Nassiuma (2000) coefficient of variation of at most 30% and standard error of 3% are usually acceptable. Therefore the sample size was calculated as;

$$n = \frac{NC^2}{C^2 + (N-1)e^2}$$

Where:

n = the desired sample size

N = the population size

C = Coefficient of Variation at 30%.

e = the acceptable error margin at 3%

Hence;

$$n = \frac{312(0.30)^2}{(0.30)^2 + (312-1)(0.03)^2}$$

$$n = 75.91$$

Therefore when approximated;

$$n = 76$$

The minimum sample was therefore 76 donkey handlers.

The study used an interview schedule with predetermined open and close ended questions. A tape recorder and guiding questions were employed during focus group discussions. First section had demographic information of the respondents while the other had questions that focused on the research problem. Secondary data had been obtained from various sources including journals, annual reports, library material and internet. As noted by van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) piloting was necessary so as to test the adequacy of the research instruments and identify any logistical problems that might occur to allow for advance planning. One focus group involving males participated in the focus group discussion while fifteen donkey handlers were subjected to interview schedules for piloting purposes.

The choice of focus group discussion method was guided by the need to gain an in-depth knowledge on the donkey handlers' beliefs and cultures that influenced their feelings, attitudes and behaviour in relation to violence to donkeys (Rabiee, 2004). In order to achieve reasonable homogeneity in terms of gender, age, education, ethnic and social class as recommended by Krueger (1994), the researcher engaged a local person well informed about these qualities to assist in the recruitment of participants. In conducting each focus group discussion, the researcher while using guiding questions lead the discussion, kept the conversation flowing and took a few notes to remember comments that he wanted to use later as suggested by Morgan and Krueger (1998).

The assistant moderator took comprehensive notes, operated the tape recorder, handled the environmental conditions and logistics, responded to unexpected interruptions, observed non-verbal interactions and kept track of time. An oral presentation summarizing the main issues by the recorder allowed for arrival at a consensus and generated any extra information earlier on omitted. Two focus groups on the same topic were conducted with donkey handlers below and above 35 years so as to understand the perspectives of different groups of people. In order to complement the above method structured interviewing was done. As highlighted by Kumar (1999) this method was necessitated by uncertainties in literacy levels and it also allowed for easy comparability of data. In addition any ambiguities were clarified and in-depth inquiries of personal feelings, opinions or perceptions were easily captured.

The face to face interaction with the researcher enhanced bonding, thus minimizing temptations' for dishonest responses. It also assisted in capturing the facial expressions of the donkey handlers, thus enhancing clarity of some issues. The interview schedule was first pre-tested on similar respondents in the neighbouring Timau Ward (outside the study area) to test its effectiveness to the proposed study before actual administration. Timau was chosen because it shared the same inhabitants (Ameru) with Kibirichia and it also had some donkeys with injuries on their bodies. Donkeys were also used for similar purposes like in Kibirichia. Depending on the responses given questions that required further clarity were addressed accordingly. The researcher also had a chance to experience the challenges likely to be encountered in the actual study, thus allowing for advance planning.

The analysis of the data from the focus group discussion was done concurrently during data collection using the framework analysis suggested by Krueger (1994). Therefore skilful facilitation of the discussion by the researcher was observed to generate rich data that was complimented with observation notes and the transcribed recorded information. This information allowed for coding and highlighting the comments of the topics discussed, followed by summarizing the data in a compilation sheet. By using the study objectives, systematic comparison between groups on all topics was done and the major findings for different study populations put in one sheet and the reporting done in the narrative.

The data collected through interview schedule was edited, coded and analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The analysis output was summarized in form of tables and figures to facilitate drawing of conclusions of the sample and subsequent recommendations. Various forms of descriptive statistics were employed for analysis of each objective.

Frequency distribution tables were useful in measuring patterns of similarities and differences in people's responses. In order to establish the consequences of violence to donkeys' percentage scores were applied.

V. Results And Discussions

IV. 5.1 Consequences of Violent Behaviour towards Donkeys by their Handlers

Violence to donkeys has its own consequences both to the handler and the animal.

Table 5.1: Consequences of violent behavior towards donkeys by their handlers

Consequences	Agree		Don't know		Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
People who mistreat donkeys are arrested	62	81.6	1	1.3	13	17.1
People convicted of violence to donkeys are penalized by courts	59	77.6	13	17.1	4	5.3
Other members of the community are opposed to mistreatment of donkeys	64	84.2	2	2.6	10	13.2
Children who observe the mistreatment of donkeys may practice the same in the future	40	52.6	7	9.2	29	38.2
Violence to donkeys may lead to high unnecessary veterinary expenses	66	86.8	2	2.6	8	10.5
Donkeys subjected to violence give less income than those well treated	63	82.9	1	1.3	12	15.8
People known to be violent to donkeys are denied jobs as donkey handlers	70	92.1	2	2.6	4	5.3

Source: Field data, 2010

5.2 Arrest and Conviction

According to Table 5.1, the respondents indicated that handlers found mistreating the donkeys were arrested (81.6%) and if convicted they were penalized by courts (77.6%). The jail term is up to a maximum of six months or a fine not exceeding three thousand shillings or both. In the FGD the participants revealed despite their inadequacy in understanding the whole legal process they have localized punitive measures.

One respondent observed, "We have mandated the chief to confiscate one tyre or the yoke for two weeks for anybody found mistreating donkey. I cannot employ a person who beats donkeys!" Looking at this statement it can be deduced that some donkey handlers are in support of any deterrent measures imposed to check on violence. Legal enforcements appear distorted judging by the remarks made by another respondent:

"Occasionally the police confiscate the cart and have it confined in the police station for up to two weeks. The donkey handler may also be locked in for a day or two. But I have not heard of anybody taken to court. The mzungu (implying the Executive Director of KSPCA) who used to come around was very rough. She could even cane you if your donkey had injuries. But we don't see her these days"

The finality of any illegality should end up in court. These statements portray some incompleteness of the legal process, thus undermining the punitive measures stipulated by law. Although these penalties are meant to discourage the violence, they are also likely to lead to reduced income within the household. The findings portray some compliance with the legal provisions on cruelty to animals. According to the "The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act" Chapter 360 of The Laws of Kenya (The Constitution of Kenya, 2010) cruelty to animals is punishable through jail term, fine or both. However confiscation of the tyre or on spot beating is localized punitive remedy.

5.3 Opposition of Mistreatment of Donkeys by other Community Members

The beneficiaries of donkey services are both the donkey handlers/owners, their clients as well as the employees of the few organizations promoting donkey welfare. In order to assess whether the other community members were against violence to donkeys the respondents responses were sought. Those against were a reasonable figure (84.2%). This confirms the findings that the Ameru culture condemns violence to donkeys and as a Christian community their religious beliefs discouraged the violence as well. The results also support the observations of Ascione (1993). He asserts that animal maltreatment is socially unacceptable and communities must acknowledge it endangers everyone since there is a strong link between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence. Consequently violence to donkeys creates uncomfortable psychological scenario for majority of community members.

5.4 Socialization of Children into Violence

As part of the community the children are bound to observe the treatments accorded donkeys within the homesteads. The study revealed that majority of the respondents believes that children who observe the mistreatment of donkeys may practice the same in the future (52.6%). Within the household set ups donkeys form part of the domestic animals children are exposed to as they grow. Opportunities to observe, compare and adopt the various treatments subjected to each are therefore inevitable. This confirms Bandura's projection that children continuously exposed to aggressive behavior may later on portray the same behavior while in seclusion (Bandura, 1977). But the effectiveness of modeling is also dependent on the rewards or punishments attached to the behavior. Moreover, Hodges (2007) asserts that when children abuse animals they are most likely repeating what they learnt at home. The current study shows that socialization of children into being violent to donkeys has various possible implications.

Apart from risking legal prosecutions, they would also not enjoy the benefits attached to donkey keeping. In addition such children are vulnerable to crime as noted by McVie (2007) and they eventually get desensitized such that their empathy even to humans is reduced according to Ascione as quoted by McVie (2007). More often, frequent exposure to a certain situation makes that person to eventually become comfortable with it. Consequently, participation in or viewing acts of repeated cruelty towards animals desensitizes both the perpetrator and the spectator.

5.5 Increased Veterinary Costs Resulting from Violence

Engagement of donkey keeping or handling is solely to support livelihoods. Business ventures focus on profit maximization by reduction of costs. The study findings that violence may lead to high unnecessary veterinary costs (86.8%) imply the overall productivity of the donkey cart business posts reduced returns. Although an individual's direct expenditure on medication is minimal the FGD revealed they occasionally buy some basic medications to manage wounds as reported by one respondent's observation, "For wounds resulting from poor harnessing or beatings we sometimes buy sprays. But for deworming and other complicated treatments we wait for the donkey people (implying KENDAT) to organize a free deworming camp".

The implication by this statement is that the assisting organization incurs an increased medical bill resulting from violence to donkeys by their handlers. In addition the respondents gave the other consequences of violence to donkeys generated through open ended questions as shown in table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Other consequences of violence to donkeys

Consequences	Frequency	Percentage
Beatings from the community members	3	3.9
Confiscation of the cart	1	1.3
Death of the donkey	4	5.3
Loss of customers	19	25.0
Loss of employment	12	15.8
Low income generation	5	6.6
Poor health of the donkey	5	6.6

Source: Field data, 2010

As indicated in table 5.12 the respondents gave the other consequences to violence to donkeys as loss of customers (25%) leading to low income generation (6.6%), confiscation of the donkey cart (1.3%) and lose of employment (15.8%). The respondents also indicated that violence to donkeys may lead to poor health of the donkey (6.6%) leading to high unnecessary veterinary expenses and even death (5.3%). These results show how violence to donkeys impacts on the economic productivity of donkey handlers and donkey itself, thus affecting the overall income of some members of the community. People who are violent to donkeys may also receive beatings from the community (3.9%) especially from those who may be opposed to violence to donkeys.

V. Conclusions And Recommendations

Conclusions

A major attraction to the donkey handling occupation is the financial rewards associated with the donkey cart business. Donkeys subjected to violence are likely to yield less income to their handlers and employment denial for those labeled as violent to donkeys.

Since violence towards donkeys is illegal, donkey handlers in Kibirichia Ward violating this law subject themselves to legal prosecution. If convicted the jail term is for a maximum of six months or three thousand shillings fine or both. Such court penalty imposed erodes economic wellbeing of the donkey handler in addition to disrupting other issues in a family set up. However, the knowledge of the legal penalties and the disapproval of donkey maltreatment by the larger society has either forced the behavior to be latent or discouraged others from perpetuating it.

As a result of socialization through observation some donkey handlers in Kibirichia Ward have modeled and adopted the violent behaviour towards donkeys. In addition socialization of children in an environment where violence to donkeys is rampant is likely to desensitize them and consequently reduce their ability to empathize. This may give rise to a future generation that is also inhumane to donkeys.

Recommendations

Since it has been revealed that violence to donkeys is a learned behaviour through socialization the children should be exposed to modeling which values humane treatment of donkeys. The roles played by elders in teaching children on donkey welfare should be formally recognized and strengthened. This can be done through inclusion of packages on donkey welfare in the National Livestock Policy for gradual dissemination through extension approaches to the donkey handlers and owners as well. They should also be more empowered to monitor and report cases of maltreatment to the relevant authorities. Since majority of donkey handlers have attained only basic education incorporating the same in the education system right from primary level is equally suitable to inculcate a strong passionate affection for donkeys.

Social ranking and occupation prestige of donkey handlers by the community outside the study area is quite low. This affects their self-esteem which might be translated into hostility towards donkeys. There is therefore the need for sociologist to promote donkey cart business as a respectable source of livelihood. This can be done through confidence building sessions through which clothing's like t-shirts or caps in praise of the business are distributed.

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