

Harms to Community Food Security Resulting from Gender-Based Violence

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Abstract: While the right to food and community self-reliance underpin current knowledge and interpretation of community food security (CFS), the literature on CFS seldom accounts for the ways in which gender-based violence (GBV) disrupts and undermines CFS. In this review, we make the case that GBV in CFS contexts manifests as a continuum, involving different forms of violence that blend into and reinforce each other, fueling social degradation and undermining the capacity of community food system workers to prioritise and pursue CFS. We show that harms to CFS resulting from GBV manifest through (i) GBV-induced social degradation, (ii) erosion of moral and ethical values anchoring CFS, (iii) disruption of crucial food systems sustainability pathways to CFS, (iv) the challenges, behaviours and activities of community food system workers, and (v) the crippling of community-level on-farm and off-farm food value chains, which oftentimes disrupt food access, consumption and utilisation. We further outline that the diversion of CFS funds into GBV prevention services may reduce CFS-related economic outputs and that CFS efforts that are GBV-blind can undermine the agency of community food system workers, pushing them into decisions that undermine CFS. We conclude that there is a dearth of information on how to mainstream GBV-sensitivity into CFS plans, and it is unclear whether GBV-responsive CFS initiatives can enhance the legitimacy of CFS efforts in GBV-exposed settings. We suggest that the spectrum of what is considered “community” in relation to CFS be expanded; and that scholars and practitioners pay attention to the dynamics of GBV, focusing on how GBV occurring at individual and household levels spills over into communities to undermine CFS. Finally, since GBV is not only a human rights violation issue but also a catalyst for social degradation and food insecurity, we encourage refocusing CFS efforts to prioritise early detection and prevention of GBV across specific community-level, on-farm and off-farm food value chains in order to better enhance community ties and foster food security.

Keywords: community food security; gender-based violence; food system workers; rights to food; food systems sustainability; social degradation; human rights abuse; food value chains; food citizens



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1. Introduction

In this article, we explore how gender-based violence (GBV) harms community food security (CFS). Previous research (e.g., [1,2]) focuses on the interplay between GBV and individual or household food security, limiting the range of new insights that we can gain beyond the family level. CFS provides a context to pursue food security at the community level where community residents self-organise, work as food growers and distributors, and act as conduits of knowledge and experiences in support of community food self-sufficiency [3]. In stretching beyond individual and household levels, we adopt a mono-directional viewpoint approach to advance new understandings of how GBV disrupts and undermines CFS. We contend that GBV experienced within intimate relationships, families and the food systems can spill over across communities in ways that can undermine community bonds, fuel social degradation and disrupt CFS.

CFS is an evolving concept that provides a context for realising food security in an equitable and sustainable manner at the community level [4]. It targets communities of individuals and households and addresses their food needs by increasing their access to fresher, locally grown and more nutritious food supplies. It exists when all community residents can access a safe, nutritionally desirable and adequate diet through an equitable food system that fosters their health security and self-reliance [5]. Although CFS is a desirable state enabled by multiple interacting factors—including equity, solidarity, social justice, agency, democratic decision-making and food system sustainability—we posit that GBV can weaken the paths to food security at the community level by transforming active community food system workers and nutrition service providers into passive food consumers or psychologically traumatised, hungry and malnourished citizens.

GBV is an umbrella term for many forms of physical, sexual, economic and psychological violence targeted at individuals on the basis of socially ascribed gender differences [6]. It is rooted in discriminatory, exploitative and coercive gender norms, and constitutes one of the most extreme manifestations of human rights violations [7,8]. In addition, it manifests as a local and dynamic driver of power imbalances in community food systems [9], leading to social isolation and economic deprivation [10], and reinforcing the variable forms of human rights abuses that can disrupt and undermine access to affordable, culturally appropriate and nutrient-dense food. GBV occurs in many food-producing communities in the Global South, and because it is shrouded in impunity, it serves as a tool to disempower, control, subjugate and exploit vulnerable citizens of particular genders—such as female farm workers or male food vendors [11,12]. By manifesting as an accelerant of localised processes of gender disempowerment, GBV undermines social justice, including community compassion and social care. In doing so, it erodes the moral and ethical values that underpin CFS, disrupting the food systems and social structures that foster CFS.

Achieving CFS may be difficult in locations where GBV leads to widening economic losses, restricted access to food and nutrition services and a reduction in agricultural productivity (see [13]). As such, we argue that the more prevalent GBV is in a community, the more citizens' rights and entitlement to adequate and quality food may be threatened. Relatedly, if funds reserved for CFS activities are diverted to tackle GBV, this can reinforce conditions where community assets become insufficient to support positive actions across community food value chains. As such, the more GBV there is in a community—and if active community food system workers are more exposed to it and community resources are depleted—the more difficult it will be to achieve CFS. Taken all together, we posit that failing to decouple CFS from GBV risks might undermine progress towards achieving equitable food supplies and access, as well as the health security, wellbeing and self-reliance of community residents.

This article explores the harms to CFS posed by GBV in a unidirectional manner through the synthesis of peer-reviewed literature, grey literature sources and relevant documents related to GBV, agri-food systems and CFS. In other words, our review did not examine how food insecurity at the community level fuels GBV. The article proceeds as follows. Immediately after this introduction, we review the definitions and concepts of CFS, showing how CFS is portrayed as an anti-hunger and community development strategy, and outline a few distinctive characteristics of CFS (Section 2). We then present a unique interpretation of how GBV harms CFS (Section 3), focusing on the CFS consequences of GBV-induced social degradation. This is followed by a review of CFS outcomes resulting from GBV influences on (i) community food system workers (as victims), (ii) community food value chains, and (iii) the food security dimensions. Finally, the conclusion (Section 4) outlines the key contributions of the study, summarising the ways in which GBV undermines CFS and how to advance the legitimacy of CFS efforts.

2. Understanding Community Food Security

2.1. Definitions and CFS-Related Moral and Ethical Issues

CFS is an extension of the food security concept. It stretches beyond the oft-cited and widely known dimensions of ‘availability’, ‘accessibility’, ‘utilisation’ and ‘stability’ that policy makers and scholars use to describe food security. It is portrayed and understood in a variety of ways in the literature. Here, we highlight two oft-cited definitions of CFS:

CFS is a state where all individuals in a community have “access to culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate food through local nonemergency sources at all times” [14] (p. 1)

“It is a situation in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximises community self-reliance, social justice and democratic decision-making” [15] (p. 37)

Taken all together, CFS aims to develop a capacity for food production and distribution at the community level using community resources; it responds to community farm, food and nutrition issues, and aims to increase the self-reliance of all community residents in providing for and meeting their own food needs. Progress towards CFS is noticeable when low-income citizens climb up to the level of food access and utilisation (in terms of quantity and quality) enjoyed by higher-income residents.

CFS evolved from debates on rights to food, human health and community empowerment. Previous research [5,16] reveals that CFS addresses and incorporates issues relating to (i) equity (communal rights to nutritious and culturally appropriate food), (ii) social justice (everyone deserving a fair share of economic, political and social opportunities and privileges arising from CFS), (iii) agency (collective ownership, control and management of the food environment and food security processes), (iv) democratic decision-making (partnership in shaping diverse, just and sustainable food system choices) and (v) sustainability (responsibly producing, supplying and consuming safe and nutritious food in ways that simultaneously protect and enhance the natural environment and quality of life now and into the future). These issues are at the core of CFS and constitute some of the critical food security dimensions identified in [17]. Local CFS initiatives distinguish themselves from household and individual food security efforts by their attention to these issues [15].

Below, we briefly discuss ‘social justice’, ‘democratic decision-making’ and ‘sustainability’ in relation to CFS and as a basis to demonstrate the harm GBV poses.

First, social justice amplifies trust, reciprocity and social cohesion, which are critical for CFS. GBV can negatively affect all of these. Whereas GBV erodes dignity, social justice and the right to food [18]; CFS fosters social justice. More broadly, CFS emphasises food justice and considers the ways in which gender and economic inequalities pervade food system practises and processes at the community level, from production to trade and food consumption. CFS also considers the injustice of food rationing, hunger and malnutrition, and the inadequacy of wages and the working conditions of workers whose livelihoods depend on the food system—including contract farmers, workers in community foodbanks, food processors and food safety and nutrition service workers. By fostering social justice, CFS addresses the psychological needs for compassion, empathy and care amongst workers. In contrast, GBV engenders social trauma, shock and animosity, which over time can undermine the efforts to establish community ties [19]. GBV thrives when there is a diminished capacity to communicate empathy, and when communities lack the ability to provide care for the people in need of support [20].

Second, democratic decision-making in CFS contexts presupposes that all community residents or workers involved in local CFS projects are accorded the right to participate and be heard in decisions that affect the production, availability, cost, storage, safety, quality, marketing and nutritional attributes of their food. GBV, in contrast, seldom fosters collective decision-making. GBV victims are unable to contribute to decisions on food systems planning in many communities [21]; exposure and vulnerability to GBV means that victims lack confidence in their capacities to contribute to local food processes [22]. Ref. [23] stresses that victims often acquire an orientation that works against the good of

the community, meaning that victims are often unwilling to go beyond their self-interest to promote the well-being of the community or to recognise the value of mutual support and interdependence.

Third, CFS is concerned with sustainability issues, i.e., the viability of the natural resources that support community food production and the overall vibrancy of the food systems. In addition to emphasising sustainable community farming practises, CFS is concerned with nature-sensitive food marketing channels, especially in relation to community detachment from fossil fuel use in long-distance transportation of foodstuff [24]. CFS considers how local food producers and consumers interact at the community level and how this might help decrease the distance that food must travel before it reaches the consumer [25]. In contrast, GBV amplifies sustainability problems—it undermines the path to sustainability see [26]. It reduces victims' potentials, capabilities and well-being, as well as their ability to support crucial food systems sustainability pathways to CFS.

2.2. CFS as an Anti-Hunger and a Community Development Strategy

CFS is an anti-hunger and community development strategy that provides primacy to community agri-food value chains as the domain for combining and using community assets and infrastructure in building self-sufficient food systems capable of supporting sustainable access to affordable, culturally appropriate and nutrient-dense food [16]. It prioritises the food security needs of low-income community residents, who do not have enough of the food they need to live an active, healthy life, by bringing them access to the level of food quantity and quality enjoyed by higher-income community residents [5].

Community assets and resources, such as worker-owned farmland and food cooperatives, community-owned foodbanks, locally owned credit unions for the elderly, the expertise of community residents, community food financing, food storage facilities, transportation and nutrition services, and food and nutrition safety norms and practises, can help achieve food availability, improve access to safe and quality food and foster food stability locally. By diversifying and combining assets, CFS enables the participation of residents in anti-hunger activities (e.g., those led by local food councils), promoting the health and wellbeing of citizens and enabling wider community development [25].

Operationally, CFS anti-hunger and community development outcomes manifest in situations where, for example, there are (i) adequately staffed and well-funded food and nutrition service outlets (e.g., community foodbanks, school breakfast and launch hubs, family food markets, and foodstuff distribution outlets for the elderly and low-income residents), (ii) communal farmland base that supports food production, (iii) nutrition services that facilitate healthy food choices and minimise diet-related health problems, and (iv) good governance of the local food environment to foster the continued buoyancy of the local food economy and its capacity to generate collective assets and additional wealth for the community to care for its residents.

2.3. Dissecting Exactly What CFS Looks Like

Figure 1 shows example indicators specifying a few distinctive characteristics for determining what CFS really looks like. For true CFS, the community is the scale of interest, the unit of analysis and the indispensable domain for unravelling solutions to citizens' food problems [25]. Although CFS offers a context for pursuing food security at a community scale, a definitional dilemma exists about the concept of 'community' in CFS studies. When defined spatially and culturally, 'community' can imply a clearly delineated neighbourhood or administrative unit consisting of households and individuals who may be involved in different food chain activities, such as community-supported food hubs and farmer-consumer markets, in order to improve their food access. Apparently, true CFS may look like a bounded geographic territory inhabited by a group of people who share common values and cultures and who possess the resources they need to secure a nutritious diet that is considered sufficient and desirable [5].



Figure 1. Six example metrics for determining what a food secure community looks like (compiled from [24]).

It is unclear whether CFS represents an integrated measure of individual and household food security in a specific geographic area. However, viewing food security directly in a community context recognises the critical role that community food systems must play to ensure food security for individuals and households in a community [27]. Moreover, CFS is comprehensive in its integration of food systems and food value chains and the connections these have with community residents, community resources and the values of place and space [3]. Yet, it is arguable to assume that data on household food security can serve as baseline indicators for ascertaining CFS status. To our knowledge, no empirical evidence exists to date to affirm this.

3. How Does Gender-Based Violence Harm Community Food Security?

Here, we address how GBV harms CFS by focusing on the CFS consequences of GBV-induced social degradation. This is followed by a review of harms to CFS resulting from GBV influences on community food system workers (as victims), community food value chains, and GBV effects across specific food security dimensions. Table 2 outlines the various ways in which harms to CFS resulting from GBV manifest.

Table 1. An overview of the ways in which GBV-related harms to community food security manifest.

CFS Core Domains	Description: GBV Entry Point	Impact on CFS
Community bond enabling community self-reliance	GBV-related social degradation is fueled by rape, sexual molestation, and verbal abuse in open places such as farm settlements and marketplaces—these destroy community bonds and reinforce GBV, especially in conflict zones.	Protracted GBV and retaliatory attacks against perpetrators deplete social capital, create legacies of distrust and disrupt the cultural and community ties that hold the food value chains together—all of these ultimately undermine CFS efforts.

Table 1. Cont.

Table 2. An overview of the ways in which GBV-related harms to community food security manifest.

CFS Core Domains	Description: GBV Entry Point	Impact on CFS
Community food systems—the workers here make up a large percentage of the global labour force (see Table 3)	GBV manifesting through unwanted sexual advances, exploitation in the workplace, verbal abuse, unhealthy working conditions and low wages impact community food system workers negatively. Labour abuse and modern slavery, e.g., via gender pay gaps and casualisation of female workers (cutting off holiday and maternity pay).	GBV threatens CFS when community food system workers (who are supposed to be active food citizens) become GBV victims. Victims are vulnerable to economic deprivation, social isolation and psychological trauma, which means they are unable to prioritise CFS activities, which in turn can disproportionately reduce their contributions to CFS goals. GBV-blind CFS efforts exacerbate gender inequality and undermine the agency of workers, pushing them into decisions that undermine CFS.
Food security dimensions and food value chains	Verbal, physical and emotional abuse used to compel workers to meet production deadlines demotivates workers and leads to losses across the food chain. Discriminatory gender beliefs and laws embolden GBV perpetrators.	GBV cripples local capacity for on-farm and off-farm food value chain activities, including capacities to provide for the food needs in communities. The reduction in food production and distribution at the community level makes food affordability and access difficult, undermining food utilisation and stability, and crippling CFS efforts. Economic deprivation, social isolation and emotional trauma associated with GBV at the community level disrupt food access, consumption, utilisation and stability.
Moral and ethical elements anchoring CFS: Social justice, rights to food, agency, democratic decision-making, sustainability	GBV acts against the moral and ethical elements central to CFS, e.g., by eroding equity, justice, and agency; undermining democratic decision-making processes; weakening sustainability efforts.	GBV fuels the injustice of food rationing, hunger and malnutrition, as well as the inadequacy of wages and the working conditions of workers whose livelihoods depend on the food system. GBV depletes compassion, empathy, and care needed to pursue CFS by engendering trauma, shock, self-interest and animosity. GBV disrupts crucial food systems sustainability pathways to CFS (see [26]).
Diversion or depletion of CFS funds	Community funds have multiple purposes; a fund committed to tackling GBV may foster social protection for victims, but it can also deplete community funds for CFS.	Adequately staffed and well-funded food and nutrition service outlets are necessary to achieve CFS, but if funds reserved for CFS activities are diverted to tackle GBV, this can reinforce conditions where community assets become insufficient to support positive actions across the community food value chains.

3.1. GBV-Related Social Degradation Harms CFS

Communities working towards CFS tend to cohabit [16], while those exposed to and affected by GBV tend to divide [26]. GBV in the CFS context can be viewed as a continuum, involving different forms of violence that blend into and reinforce each other, contributing to different forms of social degradation. For example, persistent sexual harassment leads to gang rape, which in turn breeds retaliatory attacks against perpetrators, fueling a break in community ties and the eventual depletion of social capital. GBV can cause an entire community's residents to experience anger, fear, animosity and division, reducing opportunities to establish community bonds and increasing wider social degradation. The impacts of gang rape perpetrated in community farm settlements, or verbal abuse directed

at women in the marketplace, or even sexually assaulting young girls working to promote food assistance programmes, can be incredibly deep, traumatising and long-lasting. These can fuel loss of confidence and loss of control over one's life, leaving legacies of regret, shame and distrust. Further, GBV happening at the individual and household levels can have wider social degradation effect at the community level in ways that negatively affect CFS, particularly affecting low-income, less educated food actors and stakeholders.

Soldiers in conflict zones who rape women in public or force men at gunpoint to watch the rape of female family members often connect their perpetration of GBV to fueling deep-rooted social degradation [28]. GBV perpetrators in places such as the Sahel and Lake Chad sought to control and suppress women and community food systems by deliberately disrupting community ties that held the food value chains together [29]. The ripple effect from GBV can undermine sociocultural values—for example, rape victims who become pregnant could take steps to have abortions in communities where such an act violates religious and cultural norms. Weakened cultural and community ties resulting from GBV-related social degradation constitute a major concern and can manifest in ways that undermine CFS efforts.

Table 3. The community food system workers, their roles, and situations exposing them to GBV.

Community Food System Workers	Roles and Responsibilities	Situations That Might Expose Them to GBV
Community nutritionists and educators	They provide nutrition education, support production and access to nutritionally appropriate food, and promote food safety.	Performance and reward structures linked to workers' productivity can be abused to create room for unwanted sexual harassment, exploitation, and verbal abuse when decision-making rests with an individual manager or supervisor.
Food/agricultural researchers and grassroots food activists	Many work with food producers, helping to foster environmentally-sound food production practises. They identify the environmental costs of food production systems and the socio-political dynamics associated with the control of food production systems, including social costs created by food systems. Grassroots activists advocate for efficient production, distribution and marketing mechanisms that favour low-income citizens who are most likely to face GBV attacks and food insecurity.	Food workers in remote communities with limited access to places to receive support services or limited job options are less likely to report GBV attacks or leave their jobs when they experience harassment.
Anti-hunger and community development actors and stakeholders—encompassing the vast network of workers in farmers' markets, foodbanks, soup kitchens, shelters, and local pantries, as well as grower cooperatives and managers of farmer-consumer networks	They support community initiatives that reduce hunger, malnutrition and poverty. Many participate in community food systems planning and decision-making, building social ties that foster safer and more functional local environments for low-income people to access the food they need.	Community food assistance campaigns in isolated locations and sites that are spread over large areas can create room for human rights abuses where the risks of detection may be low.
Community food policy council members	They address and promote local food policy issues relating to equity, justice, health, affordability and sustainability, ensuring that CFS serves as a vehicle for improving food security at the individual and household levels.	Actors involved in community food policy design may face seasonal deadlines that put council members under intense pressure, increasing the risk that council leaders will abuse positions of trust in ways that undermine equity and social justice in order to meet deadlines.

3.2. *The Case of Community Food System Workers as Victims of GBV*

The interplay between GBV and CFS is substantially mediated through the challenges community food system workers face, including their behaviours and activities, especially in GBV exposed communities. Globally, community food system workers contribute substantially to CFS (see Table 3). Accounting for one-third of the global workforce, they work across the food value chain as cultivators, producers, processors, traders, distributors and nutrition educators [30]. They (i) support community food assistance programmes and the viability of community agricultural production and distribution channels; they (ii) strengthen access to affordable retail stores and farmers' markets, helping citizens access a variety of healthy food items; they (iii) serve as emergency food providers in humanitarian settings. Women make up almost half of the community food system workers globally and as much as 70% in sub-Saharan Africa and southeast Asia [31]. They are important food citizens, helping to bring our food from the farm to the table. Although their roles and responsibilities vary widely within and between communities, they face a multitude of social injustices, such as unhealthy working conditions and low wages, that intersect with GBV concerns.

They are usually structurally disadvantaged in many developing countries where gender inequality and power imbalances around access to resources, services and decision-making are deeply entrenched [21]. Entrenched power imbalances mean that certain workers are accorded fewer rights and compelled to occupy less powerful positions. Crucially, power is required to manage and deliver CFS. However, those with power can reinforce GBV in multiple ways, such as through the promotion of inequitable gender norms and regimes of injustice and subjugation. Workers who become victims of GBV are often powerless, with women and girls (who often occupy casual labourer roles with low pay compared to the male workers) constituting a large cohort of victims in many communities with enshrined male-controlled resource structures [32].

GBV threatens CFS when community food system workers (who are supposed to be active food citizens) become GBV victims. Exposure to GBV could mean that victims lack access to financial, food business development and extension services and inputs [33]. Exposure can also mean that victims are vulnerable to economic deprivation, social isolation, human rights abuses, and emotional and psychological trauma. All of these can reinforce food insecurity and poverty, which in turn can hugely undermine victims' ability to prioritise CFS activities, and disproportionately reduce their contributions to CFS goals. Furthermore, community food system workers—as victims of GBV—can undermine CFS if they drop out of food-related training programmes and are unable to access community food system production factors (e.g., new agricultural innovations and tools, soil-enriching seeds and fertiliser supplies).

Moreover, CFS efforts (e.g., food assistance schemes) that are GBV-blind can heighten victims' burdens if victims are excluded from important benefits such as community protection and legal and food rights services. GBV-blind CFS initiatives have sometimes exacerbated gender inequalities and undermined community food system workers' voices, agency and access to services, pushing victims into decisions that undermined their ability to both meet their food security needs and contribute to CFS [31].

Recognising that the interplay between GBV and CFS is substantially mediated through the challenges, behaviours and activities of community food system workers offers a route to effectively respond to GBV problems in a CFS context and to protect vulnerable food system workers as agents of change on food matters. Although GBV interrupts CFS, this does not take away the ability of workers to self-organise and to resist GBV. Community food system workers in many regions are known to be involved in leading or participating in protests against GBV. They comprise 60–80% of mainstream local food NGO membership and even more in grassroots development organisations supporting hunger prevention and GBV prevention schemes [34]. Compared to specialist GBV actors, food system workers' networks hold stronger pro-communal food security values, and the workers themselves have strong communal instincts, social empathy and stronger

anti-GBV messaging [35]. By virtue of their close tie to food system activities, knowledge of growing and distributing food, positionality as active food citizens, and participation in CFS initiatives, workers are uniquely and differentially equipped to collectively resist GBV and support CFS efforts.

3.3. GBV, Community Food Value Chains and the Food Security Dimensions

Here, we explore specific activities within the community food value chains (production, processing, packaging, marketing and distribution) to understand how GBV undermines the food chains and the implications for critical CFS dimensions.

3.3.1. Food Production

One of the distinctive pathways through which GBV undermines CFS is through its impact on the viability of community agricultural production and food output. Where verbal, physical and emotional abuse is used to compel workers to meet production deadlines, victims can become demotivated. This can lead to losses in agricultural productivity for communities and reinforce cycles of hunger, malnutrition and violence.

Examples from around the world reveal that GBV negatively affects the health, wellbeing and productivity of victims, with a devastating impact on food production (see [32,36]). These negative consequences extend beyond food production within families to food production across communities. In Mexico, for example, researchers found that in situations where men control food production activities (as supervisors), women (who resist or stand up against their supervisors' sexual advances) are denied access to ride on buses to community farms [37]. Relatedly, evidence exists of sexual harassment and abuse of female seasonal farmworkers on grape and vegetable farms in Mexico by their male supervisors [31]. Sexual harassments in certain horticultural farm settlements in Ethiopia had meant that up to 86% of women were only able to work as casual laborers [20]. Ref. [38] echoed that a greater proportion of women workers across 20 flower farms in Ethiopia and Tanzania experienced sexual violence and harassment perpetrated by their male managers. Further, [39] observed that in Borno State, Nigeria, women who work in remote community farms face increasing GBV attacks in the form of abduction, physical abuse, rape and death. Female casual workers working in shrimp farms in Bangladesh were reportedly forced to tolerate sexual harassment and violence to prevent losing their weekly wages and to keep their employment [31].

CFS prioritises food production. Health and psychological stability are needed to spur production. GBV threatens all of these by creating a sense of hopelessness, low self-esteem and mental ill-health. GBV victims are known to suffer from psychological trauma and physical injuries, conditions that can reduce capacity for on-farm and off-farm food-related activities, including capacities to provide for the food needs in their communities [19,23].

3.3.2. Food Processing and Packaging

In the processing and packaging phases of the community food value chain, GBV is pervasive, especially where men oversee work performance and remuneration. For instance, in a survey conducted with 100 female workers in community meatpacking plants in Iowa, United States, 86% of female workers reported experiencing sexual harassment or violence [40]. For fear of deportation, including shame and 'victim blaming', abuses are not usually reported to responsible authorities. Sexual harassment interfered with affected female workers' full and equal participation in meatpacking plants, impairing their physical and mental health and well-being, and leading to anxiety, a loss of motivation and even job loss. Table 4 outlines examples of locations where researchers found evidence of GBV effects on food processing and packaging.

Table 4. Examples of locations where researchers found evidence of GBV effects on food processing and packaging.

Activity: Food Processing and Packaging	Example Evidence of GBV Effects
Processing and packaging sections of the cut-flower and banana industries in Cameroon and Kenya	For the fear of pay cut or job losses, women would usually not report sexual exploitation from male supervisors [31]
Flower (export) industry in Ecuador	Ref. [41] echoed that nearly 55% of women reported experiencing various forms of GBV in Ecuador
Export tea and rubber industry in Sri Lanka	Evidence of unwanted sexual advances experienced by women is reported in [42]

In addition to unwanted sexual advances and exploitation, GBV victims also face labour abuse, including modern slavery and other forms of abuse (e.g., through denial of services, opportunities and resources), in community food processing and packaging activities. These manifest through gender pay gaps and present a barrier to victims' advancement in their jobs. For example, in the Kenya dairy value chain, [21] reveals that women are often presented fewer job opportunities compared to men in the dairy processing unit, a situation that undermines women's career progression. Further, women GBV victims involved in food processing activities seldom participate in wider community activities such as the distribution of packaged food to farmer markets [33]. Ref. [43] reports that women engaged in a USAID-funded food processing development project in Touba, Senegal, sometimes experienced domestic violence from their husbands due to the time spent outside the home producing instant fortified flours. The abuse and low-esteem experienced spill over into the community and undermine vital food processing and packaging activities that are required to support CFS.

3.3.3. Food Marketing and Distribution

The risk of GBV is high for women in casual, low-paid food marketing and distribution jobs. Exhibiting behaviours that conflict with societal norms in public marketplaces (e.g., women dressing inappropriately) or taking up roles that are traditionally ascribed to men (e.g., women transporting farm produce in big vans and trucks) can heighten the risks of GBV for women. Similarly, women can experience backlash in their communities when they participate in "male-dominated" food-related activities in the marketplace (e.g., community-run butcher shops offering safe, quality meat). Victims are usually unable to participate in important market activities that contribute to CFS, such as price negotiations, community food rallies, public sales of food, nutrition-enhancement campaigns, the hiring of labourers and food distribution [33,44]. Victims may be too psychologically damaged to participate in community food enterprises; many may withdraw from public spaces where decisions regarding income and expenditure are conducted [45]. Limited participation in savings and loan groups presents a barrier to victims' empowerment and engagement in income-generating activities [46].

Ref. [47] indicated that across communities in the Nigeria-Cameroon border areas, migrant female traders with no security often face increased sexual harassment and violence whenever they spend excessive time (more than 48 h) trading non-timber forest products. Similarly, when transporting agricultural goods and food items over long distances, the women risk exposure to GBV perpetrated by male drivers on transit, particularly when they travel through remote areas [31]. In Kenya, the intensification and commercialisation of dairy products have exposed women to GBV attacks: efficient performance in the dairy value chain requires regular access to extension and veterinary services, including technical information and finance, but women generally have less access to these compared to men. This means victims are only able to operate micro-businesses that are informal and less profitable; this can reduce their contribution to food marketing and distribution and more generally undermine CFS [21,48].

Taking all of this together, food production, processing, packaging, marketing and distribution flourish where there is access to CFS support structures and services. Having access rights to essential training services, for example, can enhance knowledge about the value chains [49]. However, entrenched discriminatory norms can mean that GBV victims (especially women) are confined to house chores and denied access to CFS services and the benefits of community support programmes [50]. For example, patriarchal norms that fuel GBV limit women's access to extension institutions in Bangladesh and contribute to food insecurity at the community level [22]. Rural women involved in livestock production in the district of Faisalabad, Pakistan, experienced limited access to livestock extension services as a result of increased exposure to GBV risks [51]. In many rural communities, GBV victims lack the capacity to challenge systems encouraging unequal power relations; where GBV disrupts food production, processing, packaging, marketing and distribution, the capacity to achieve CFS can be weakened [33].

3.3.4. Implications for Critical CFS Dimensions

GBV risks have implications for food availability, access, utilisation and stability at the community level. First, when GBV affects the mental health, resilience and productivity of essential workers involved in making food available to community residents, support for food availability to the wider community may be weakened, which in turn can affect CFS [1,19,52]. In contexts where women are hurt persistently, the hurt can spill over in ways that can disrupt productive activities across the food chain, leading to food and nutrition insecurity in communities [44]. Similarly, where discriminatory gender beliefs and laws embolden GBV perpetrators, food supplies can be disrupted by power imbalances, reinforcing discriminatory sociocultural norms and disrupting CFS efforts [6,53,54]. Past studies suggest that the more GBV there is in a community (especially if female victims of GBV play an important role in food production), the hungrier and malnourished the community residents are likely to become under persistent food scarcity [36,55].

Second, because GBV is rooted in systemic gender discrimination, the effect can manifest in situations where victims are unable to support community access to food. If retail stores and farmer's market spaces are destroyed because of communal fights triggered by GBV, accessing food may become difficult for victims. Generally, by disrupting farmer's markets, supermarkets, farm gardens, food transportation and community-based food storage and processing enterprises, GBV can create situations where community residents are unable to access enough food that they like to eat, that is safe and culturally acceptable, and that helps them attain a healthy life. This undermines CFS. Discriminatory gender practises manifested through GBV, and that prevent certain genders from accessing or purchasing food, slow down progress towards achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) related to 'zero hunger' (SDG 2) and 'gender equality' (SDG 5), and ultimately undermine the achievement of CFS.

Third, GBV can negatively affect the nutritional status of victims, especially their ability to make good use of the food they access, e.g., when perpetrators use GBV as a tool to assert control over access to community food banks. Economic deprivation, social isolation and emotional trauma associated with GBV can make food consumption and utilisation impossible or disrupt related food utilisation practises (e.g., victims can be too traumatised to prepare meals, adopt appropriate nutrition behaviours, maintain hygiene standards or maximise care opportunities in the community). At the same time, GBV can create conditions where knowledge about food and nutrition or food utilisation, including nutrition education and other related services, become difficult to access.

4. Conclusions

The right to food and community self-reliance underpin the current interpretation of community food security (CFS). Action towards CFS prioritises community food system workers as active food citizens, emphasising the importance of social justice, democratic decision-making and sustainability in the pursuit of food security goals at the community

level. Yet, knowledge and interpretation of CFS does not currently account for the ways in which GBV impedes efforts towards CFS. Recognizing how GBV harms CFS can provide insights on ways to effectively respond to GBV problems in CFS contexts, including ways to protect vulnerable community food system workers from threats posed by GBV.

In this review, we show that harms to CFS (resulting from GBV) manifest through:

- GBV-induced social degradation (breeding distrust, animosity, and division);
- The erosion of moral and ethical values (such as the right to food, agency and sustainability) anchoring CFS;
- The challenges, behaviours and activities of community food system workers; and
- The crippling of community-level on-farm and off-farm food value chain activities, which in turn disrupt food access, consumption and utilisation.

Although this new understanding is relevant for mainstreaming GBV-sensitivity into CFS plans, we posit that the interplay between GBV and CFS is substantially mediated through the challenges (e.g., low wages, casualisation of female workers and poor working conditions), behaviours (e.g., male supervisors abusing positions of trust) and activities (e.g., seeking psychosocial support as supposed to actively growing food for community residents) of community food system workers. The exposure and vulnerability of community food system workers to GBV create situations where food availability is hampered, and where community residents are unable to access the quantity of food that they like to eat, that is safe and culturally acceptable, which helps them to attain a healthy life.

We argue that CFS efforts (e.g., food assistance programmes) that are GBV-blind can exacerbate gender inequality and undermine the agency of community food system workers, pushing them into decisions that undermine CFS. At the same time, by creating a large cohort of psychologically traumatised food workers needing community support, GBV depletes community resources, hampering the operation of community food enterprises such as supermarkets, farmer's markets, food gardens, food transportation, community-based food processing ventures and urban farms. Diverting funds reserved for CFS activities to GBV prevention services increases community expenses and reduces CFS-related economic outputs.

Although GBV can vary across communities according to how men and women community food system workers are treated (as well as according to the level of communal conflicts, availability of early warning and food emergency response support services, and whether there are human rights and security regulatory frameworks), preventing GBV in CFS contexts requires community-based, multi-pronged approaches that account for the moral and ethical values of social justice, equity and entitlement rights. In particular, GBV response services that integrate GBV early warning systems and CFS anticipatory actions are necessary to build community resilience and minimise harm to CFS resulting from GBV.

Similarly, because women are more exposed to GBV than men, leveraging the full engagement and leadership of women-led organisations in ways that bring together GBV and CFS actors (e.g., to strengthen opportunities for female entrepreneurship and empowerment) can help facilitate GBV prevention. In places where GBV and CFS actors collaborate and work together, women's access to community resources and services can be prioritised as a way to foster women's empowerment and encourage CFS.

Taken all together, because GBV is not only a human rights violation issue but also a catalyst to social degradation and food insecurity, it is essential, at least as our review has shown, that making CFS initiatives GBV-responsive should constitute the core premise of CFS efforts in GBV-exposed communities. Refocusing CFS assistance schemes to prioritise human rights to food, female agency and social protection can positively influence workers' willingness to commit time, energy and knowledge to GBV preventative actions. This can also enhance the legitimacy of CFS efforts.

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