

**Sub-track 2: Bio-medical, agricultural and environmental sciences and
climate change research for sustainable development**

**"The Crucial Role of Social Workers in Preventing Obstetric Fistula in Kisii
County: Promoting Maternal Health, Advocacy, Counseling, Referral, and
Follow-up"**

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Abstract

Obstetric fistula is a preventable and treatable condition that can have a significant impact on the physical, social, and economic well-being of women who experience prolonged obstructed labor during childbirth. This study delves into the profound essence of social workers' transformative role in the prevention of obstetric fistula within the intricate tapestry of Kisii County. It endeavors to unravel the intricate threads of their invaluable contributions, illuminating the path towards holistic well-being for women. By elucidating the interconnectedness of maternal health, advocacy, counseling, referral, and follow-up, this study endeavors to uncover the profound impact social workers can have on transcending the barriers that obstruct the realization of a society free from obstetric fistula. Data was collected through focus group discussions with practicing social workers in Kisii County who were purposively selected. The finding of this study indicate that Social workers play a crucial role in preventing obstetric fistula in Kisii County. They provide essential support and services to women at risk of or experiencing obstetric fistula, by offering counseling and emotional support, they address fears and misconceptions, encouraging women to seek timely and skilled care. They also serve as a link in the healthcare system, facilitating referrals to appropriate healthcare providers and rehabilitation services. Social workers advocate for women's rights and work towards improving access to quality healthcare services. The study recommends increased investment in maternal healthcare services and increased training and support for social workers to effectively prevent obstetric fistula in Kisii County.

Key words: Obstetric fistula, Psycho-social support, Maternal Health, Referral services