



## Exploration of Male Partners' Gender Based Violence by Female Partners in Dar es Salaam-Tanzania

Amaniel Athuman\*

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1277-4500>

Department of Business Administration, College of Business Education, Tanzania

Email: [amanielathuman2022@gmail.com](mailto:amanielathuman2022@gmail.com)

Emmanuel J. Munishi, PhD

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8648-7379>

Department of Business Administration, College of Business Education, Tanzania

Email: [e.munishi78@gmail.com](mailto:e.munishi78@gmail.com)

\*Corresponding Author: [sammynort@gmail.com](mailto:sammynort@gmail.com)

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**Abstract:** This study explored Gender Based violence of male partners by female partners in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, using the qualitative approach. It employed a prolonged field engagement through in-depth interviews. While Dar es Salaam Region consists five municipalities, this study was conducted in Ilala Municipality owing its strategic location in the city with big populations and large social interactions. Through snow ball sampling technique, 25 men were sampled as respondents and thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The study established that males experienced a variety of gender based violence including physical, psychological and economic violence. Factors contributing to gender-based violence included lack of awareness and negative perception toward gender-based violence services. Because of the patriarchal nature of the society, men who experience GBV did not report the incidents since they felt being embarrassed and undermined by the community's social structure. Based on conclusions, the study recommends that men should strive to get empowered economically, considering that there has been a positive correlation between men's economic powerlessness and violence against them by their partners. Affected men should be sensitized on the availability and significance of various institutions dealing with GBV; they should consult the institutions whenever they fall victim to GBV. Finally, there is a need for more male representation in gender desks since gender desks in many police stations currently lack equitable men representation.

**Keywords:** Gender; violence, men; female; partners; Ilala; Dar es Salaam

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### Introduction

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) includes sexual, physical, mental and economic harm inflicted against a person or a group of people because of their factual or perceived sex, gender, sexual orientation and/or gender identity (Council of Europe, 2009). GBV can be physical, economic, sexual and or psychological and may take different

forms such as threats of violence, coercion, manipulation, intimate partner violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation, to mention just a few. GBV violence is a term describing any harm perpetrated against a person that results from unequal power relationships determined by social roles ascribed to males and females. The World Bank report provides some shocking data on GBV mainly among women. The data certain that 35% of

women worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence. Globally, 7% of women have been sexually assaulted by someone other than a partner and as many as 38% of murders of women are committed by an intimate partner. Furthermore, 200 million women have experienced female genital mutilation (World Bank, 2019).

Generally, gender-based violence leads to serious short and long-term physical, psychological, economic and social effects to various social groups including, health problems such as diseases, disability and ultimately death (UNHCR, 2019; Council of Europe, 2019). GBV has a significant negative effect on the national economy and productivity as a whole considering that it negatively affects victim's self-development and ability to function well in society and it negatively affects future opportunities and development of individuals. GBV may result in homelessness and it may erode social fabrics among family members, friends and colleagues that further push them to sufferings (UNHCR, 2019).

Following the negative impacts associated to GBV at both the individuals and community level, various efforts have been undertaken by different actors in a bid to reverse the situation. At global level, there have been enactments of international agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. Moreover, the United Nations entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women has worked with partners across the global such as the UN agencies, government ministries and departments, civil society organizations and other institutions to enhance data collection with an aim of providing a better understanding of the nature, magnitude and consequences of violence against women and girls. These efforts have been specifically directed on finding ways to prevent violence against women and girls, focusing on early education, respectful relationships, and working with men and boys (UN-WOMEN, 2020).

In Tanzania, GBV has been addressed by the Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children through Regional and Council Health Management Teams through formulations of relevant policies and plans (Simmons, et al, 2019). Moreover, National gender-based violence coordination unit, social welfare

department and private sector representatives have been established. Moreover, campaigns against gender-based violence in Tanzania have also been integrated in the HIV prevention programs as a multi sectoral approach toward ending the practice. However, most of relevant national and international stakeholders like the UN-Women, Tanzania Women's Lawyers Association (TAWLA) and Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP), to mention just a few, have invested more on women empowerment and forgotten the male counterparts which makes those institutions and the related initiatives irrelevant to male victims.

Given the above-stated lopsided efforts, GBV, more especially among men, has continued to persist. While Fleming et al (2015) ascertains the existence of GBV among men as a worldwide practice which has also been experienced among men in Tanzania, it is now the right time for the government and gender stakeholders to re-think about new strategies of promoting gender equality through increasing awareness on gender issues among Tanzanians. Specifically, Kayombo, et., al (2019) established Men's life-time experiences and perpetration of violence at home and outside home, including physical violence, sexual violence, emotional abuse and economic abuse that was manifested through controlling behavior. The study further mentioned that some aspects of psychological violence observed between men and women were hurting, humiliating challenging men's role as providers and taking female partners of other men. Physical violence aspects included fighting over money, property or women (Kayombo, et. al., 2019; Fleming et al, 2015).

Despite the prevalence and critical impact of GBV on men, it has been observed that few studies have explored GBV against men (Hines, 2015; Perryman & Appleton, 2016; Arnocky & Vaillancourt, 2014; Hines & Douglas, 2010). Another strand of research has focused on GBV on men in general ways without necessarily associating it with female partners (Kayombo, et al 2019; Fleming et al, 2015). In this case, some existing sources warn that concentration on GVB among women and girls may lead to forgetting about men and boys as potential victims of GBV, adding that the current prevalence of GBV among males may be higher than previously thought (Hines, 2015; Perryman & Appleton, 2016).

Moreover, despite, a number of campaigns against GBV, men have still continued to fall victims of GBV

and they have experienced difficulties in overcoming it. Worldwide alleviation of GBV has focused on preventing violence, strengthening legal and policy frameworks and improving response services for survivors (Mtaita et al 2021). This study sought to establish the Male Partners' Gender Based Violence by Female Partners in Dar es Salaam-Tanzania.

## **Literature review**

Gender Based Violence against women and girls cannot be separated from that of men as the two sexes experience the same challenges such as forced rape, sexual abuse, forced recruitment and sex- selected mass execution more especially in areas with political clashes (Carpenter, 2006). Current GBV trend shows that men are falling victims of GBV. As stated in the background section, it is a fact that a significant number of men worldwide are victims of various forms of gender-based violence, Tanzania not being immune. According to Fleming et al. (2015), various forms of GBV experienced by men include physical, psychological, sexual and economic. Essentially, men face violence at home and outside their homes in the form of controlling behavior, hurt, or humiliation, which poses physical, social and economic challenges to them (Kayombo, et., al (2019).

The growing rate of GBV to men is accelerated by many factors such as civil wars, education and increase in income among women as well as gender equality campaigns championed by various public and private institutions. Worse enough, unlike women, most men who face GBV are less likely to report the abuse and thus they even fail to seek any support from formal or informal institutions (Gueta & Shlichove, 2022). Some recent studies in Tanzania outline some of the factors related to various forms of gender violence against men including women being economically more powerful than their husbands, secrets surrounding the relationship of husbands and their wives in the households, differences in educational levels between couples, defense for ordained ministry in churches and extramarital engagement of husbands (Mligo, 2021; Chiganga, 2020). This situation provides a justification for conducting this study.

Another frequently cited reason that pushes men to gender-based violence is their reluctance to look for gender-based assistance due to a lack of awareness about their existence (McCleary-Sills et al. 2013).

Closely related to this is lack of GBV institutions dealing with men (IOM, 2018). Police gender desks in Tanzania are inadequate and are not well equipped with required GBV-related knowledge and skills. Currently there are only around 400 police stations across Tanzania with Police Gender and Children's Desks, including seven in Zanzibar's 20 police stations (Gwebu, 2021). Furthermore, gender desks do not have sufficient number of trained police officers and the few officers are involved in other police duties and they do not have adequate budget to deal with gender desk issues (Mussa & Mohamed 2019).

Another factor fueling GBV among men in the African context is patriarchy culture as men are pushed to GBV situations because they are not able to report cases as customs and traditions hinder them to do so since they feel shy due to societal norms and traditional perspectives that men should be most dominant to female partners (Baker et al 2022). The patriarchy system leads to a tendency of not reporting the gender violence they experience which makes it harder to acquire a real picture of the scenario. Such a situation paints a wrong picture that GBV is more rampant to women than men (Oladepo & Arulogun, 2011; Oppong et al., 2022; Jagbir & Annuradha, 2019). Financial constraints resulting from unemployment and poverty among men have also led to the growing acts of GBV against men by their female partners. In India for instance 54% of men in rural areas of Haryana reported that GBV acts done to them by their female partners are significantly attributable to men's poor economic status (Jagbir & Annuradha, 2019).

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study utilized the qualitative approach as it intended to receive respondents' inner views, opinions and perceptions on the topic under study. Decision to use this approach was further justified by the fact that a considerable number of studies on GBV used the quantitative approach that tends to leave behind a lot of useful information. Therefore, the use of a qualitative approach would be critical in bridging this knowledge gap.

### **Population and Sampling**

While Dar es Salaam Region consists five municipalities namely Ubungo, Kinondoni, Ilala, Kigamboni and Temeke, this study was conducted in Ilala Municipality owing its strategic location in the

city with big populations and large social interactions. Snow ball sampling technique was employed to attract 25 men as respondents. This method was considered relevant due to the sensitivity of the study, considering that not all respondents were ready to share information publicly. In this case, key informants assisted to recruit other subjects as suggested by Kirchherr and Charles (2018). Data was collected using the in-depth interview.

### **Validity and Reliability**

In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, the researchers employed a prolonged field engagement and triangulation, the use of multiple instruments as sources of data.

### **Statistical Treatment of Data**

The researchers transcribed the data collected and thereafter the Swahili manuscripts were translated into English Language, typed and saved as documents in rich text format. Thematic analysis was conducted with the aid of MAXQDA 10 [VERBI Software, Marburg, Germany]. In order to obtain meaningful content, the researchers read through the interview transcriptions several times to familiarize themselves with the data.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Considering the involvement of human subjects in this study, it was imperative for the researchers to acquire a research permit from the College of Business Education on behalf of the Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH), the Research Permit granting Commission). This permit was submitted to the Dar es Salaam Regional Administrative Secretary and to other authorities of the sampled areas to elaborate on the safety of all human subjects who would be involved in the research task. The researchers ensured that names, identities and information provided by respondents remained confidential. To protect respondents, no name of any respondent was revealed.

### **Results and Discussion**

This section presents results and discussion of the findings. The section was guided by research questions as follows:

**Research Question 1:** What are forms of Gender Based Violence experienced by men under investigation?

Data from the field indicates that men had fallen victims of various forms of gender-based violence

including, physical violence, psychological violence and economic violence though at different rates and context as presented below.

#### ***Physical violence***

It was revealed that forms of physical violence experienced by the interviewed men included being beaten and battered by their female counterparts and being denied food. It was sadly stated that, in some families female partners colluded with children to beat up the fathers [male partners] as one of respondents said:

The other day I came back home from meeting my friends not very far from home. Upon arriving at home, I experienced several complaints from my wife and children. Before I could even sit down, my wife summoned me up and started slapping me. I had to defend myself, obviously. However, this sounded like I did not deserve to defend myself. So, my wife asked two of our boys at home to come and discipline me [beat me up]. I ended up being injured.

#### ***Psychological Violence***

The study found that some forms of psychological violence waged against men by their female counterparts included coercion and verbal insults or harassments. Moreover, men were embarrassed in public, being called by their nick or bad names in public, receiving threats to harm them as well as being treated badly because of things they couldn't change such as their disability, sexuality and family backgrounds. Some men also felt ignored and were subjected to things or situation that would make them feel confused. One male partner confesses how he experienced humiliations from his wife:

In most cases, my wife used to do and say things which embarrass my moods. For example, she said, I do not resemble with my children and that she's the only one who knew the actual father of my children. Moreover, she was too harsh to me and sometimes all these words are directed to me simply because I failed to provide for some family needs as per her expectations. But I think this is completely unfair because I cannot support the family and her demands perfectly.

Another kind of psychological violence levelled against the interviewed men was uttering

psychologically disturbing statements as stated below:

My wife, the woman I loved most started calling me bad names and answering me rudely. All this is because I lost job due to changes that took place at work place. This stressed me up and I became incapable fulfilling my family obligations. Now, my wife started telling me some jokes that could further annoy me. For example, sometimes she could say I should not touch her while at bed. This disturbs me psychologically as I think maybe she treats me that way because I no longer have job.

### ***Economic Violence***

Some of the forms of economic violence experienced by men included property damage whereby things like vehicles were destroyed by their female counterparts, controlling behavior whereby female partners wanted to get strict accountability of the men's income or being forced to surrender significant part or whole of their income to their female counterparts. Another one was restricting men's access to financial resources such as selling assets. One of the interviewed men testified:

The other day I received some amount of money in my Bank account from a friend who owed me. Immediately my wife discovered this, she insisted me to surrender all the money to her since I had not provided for the family for almost a week. She did not entertain any kind of discussion with me. Personally, I was willing to provide for the family but I needed some discussion with my wife before I could do that. In this way I felt that my financial freedom was taken away.

Findings show that physical, psychological and economic GBV are common among the interviewed respondents. These findings corroborate well with previous literature which shows that the same aspects are common in different parts of the world and Tanzania in particular (UN-WOMEN, 2020). However, most of previous studies focused on women as opposed to men (UNHCR, 2019; Council of Europe, 2019; UN-WOMEN, 2020). This is a clear indication that the findings for the current study on GBV among men contributes unique insights on GBV field of study.

**Research Question 2:** What factors contribute on Gender Based Violence of men by their female partners?

Results indicate that male partners fell victims of gender-based violence due to lack of awareness on GBV related matters, community's negative perception about GBV, patriarchy culture, inadequate support to male-victims affected by GBV and poor economic status of men.

### ***Lack of Awareness and Negative Perception about GBV Services***

The study established that men fell victims of GBV due to poor knowledge and negative perception about GBV. This was basically due to lack of awareness of GBV related services such as presence of gender desks and counselling services. Most of the respondents were unaware of the existing institutions that provide gender related services where they could report issues of gender-based violence. One of respondents said:

Some of us are not aware of where to go in case we are faced with these challenges. I am not aware of any kind of counselling whatsoever. I once heard about the gender desk, but this is mainly for women. I think no men are entertained there unless you convince me otherwise.

### ***Patriarchy or Male Dominance Culture***

Another factor is related to patriarchy or male dominance culture. It was reported that the patriarchal system, perceptions and practices held men back from reporting issues of GBV that happened to them. In most African communities, it is thought that it is a taboo for male partners to report or speak out about GBV. One of respondents reported his fear to speak out about the GBV practices against him.

You see, it is very hard to report that you have been mistreated by your wife. First of all, nobody will even listen to you. Above all, everybody will be laughing at you as if you are too weak and stupid to be mistreated by you your female partner. That is what the community holds!

The findings corroborate with some previous studies which indicated that majority of men who are victims of GBV feel shy to report the cases due to social-cultural set up of the community where males are considered stronger and more powerful than

females (Baker, 2022). In the same discourse, Enryka et al. (2022) taking the case of Dar es Salaam posited that there are inadequate services to support male victims of GBV and many cases are underreported or understudied (Baker et al, 2022). Therefore, there is a need for the community to rethink the available cultural perception of GBV by considering it as a case that any person regardless of gender can become a victim of (Yagi, et al, 2022). It is also argued that community members need to change their perception of male dominance culture which can help to combat the increasing rate of GBV (Carpenter, 2006).

### ***Inadequate Responsiveness to Male GBV Victims***

Another factor that contributed to GBV among men was related to lack of satisfactory responsiveness to male GBV victims. It was reported that existing GBV-related institutions such as the department of gender and social work, gender desk and some private organizations have not paid adequate attention to the issues of GBV among men. These institutions were more lopsided to female victims, forgetting about the men. One of the respondents reported: the existing GBV Institutional mechanisms lean more on women. Men are hardly given priority and sometimes even when they report cases, they cannot be given good attention.”

This response corresponds to the fact that many GBV against men are under-reported or understudied and many studies are based on GBV among women and girls. There is inadequate attention to GBV issues related to men and this has made it hard to take immediate actions to support men who are suffering from GBV related issues in Tanzania (Enryka, et al, 2022). Lack of enough services to support men and even women who are victims of GBV has also been reported as a challenge (International Organization for Migration, 2018). Men think there is no need to report GBV cases as they don't see the possibility to acquire intended support. For this reason, many stay calm with what they are suffering from and this may bring to them health-related challenges like depression. Therefore, there is a need to increase awareness regarding male GBV (Jagbir & Annuradha, 2019).

Moreover, the available policies and legal frameworks are instituted as part of dealing with violence against women. For instance, international human rights frameworks like the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against

women (CEDAW) is based on safeguarding women's rights which is not bad but for the case of gender issues, it has to rethink about men too as they face the same gender-related challenges like women (Runge, 2015).

### ***Poor Economic Status of Male Partners***

The other factor contributing to violence among men had to do with unstable economic status among men. Inquiry showed that men reported being abused by their female partners after becoming financially unstable. One of the respondents' reports:

I was laid off from work due to changes that happened at the office, which made me stressed that I was not capable of playing well my matrimonial role and the woman I loved the most started to call me bad names and answer me rudely, knowing that my libido is low due to stress.

Another one reported:

Ever since I lost my job, ten months ago, my situation at home is not well at all. The other day I was told that, so long as I don't contribute to the family financially, my relatives are neither allowed to visit the family nor are they welcome to stay with us. I understand this move was targeted at my father who is currently in the village but he's supposed to come to the city for treatment.

Another respondent added:

Sometimes I fail to get enough money for my work and thus I cannot provide properly for the family. Now, this is where my wife is irritated and conflicts begin from here. Sometimes she asks me where do you work; meaning that my work does not earn me enough money to support the family. As a man, you cannot withstand this. You must react. Now when you react, you end up being defeated [being beaten by a wife].

Studies found that males' poor economic status put them at higher risk of facing GBV as some women think and like men to provide everything for their families. A study by Jagbir and Annuradha (2019) indicates that unemployment and poverty among men increased the levels of GBV against men by their female partners. In India, for instance, 54% of

men in a rural area of Haryana reported GBV acts done to them by their female partners. The same is true in Tanzania's case as many males with low or poor incomes face discrimination and are sexually abused by their female partners as they fail to contribute properly to their family's economic well-being (Enryka, et al, 2022).

### ***Lack of Effective Communication and Emotional Intelligence***

Findings showed that gender violence among men by their female partners was due to a lack of effective communication skills among the partners as men found themselves experiencing physical or psychological violence due to poor exchange of messages, notably the use of negative language, ineffective listening, and inadequate emotional intelligence when communicating with their female partners. One of the respondents ascertains this fact here:

My wife is too emotional and she doesn't listen to me; therefore we find ourselves entering into serious conflicts. Sometimes, on top of harsh words, she takes up my hand and slaps me and the situation goes like this, many times. This is not good and I don't like it but I find myself in the same situation in most cases since my wife is not a good listener and sometimes, she cannot choose proper words to use when we are discussing issues.

The lack of effective communication and emotional intelligence as a reason for violence seems to be unique to this study as it could not be observed in the previous studies.

### ***Cheating Behavior by Some Men***

It was also established that men experienced some aspects of gender-based violence from their female partners due to cheating behaviors. It was basically explained that women practiced physical violence against men such as beating and fighting due to the disappointments that emanated from men's practices of cheating in marriage. One male respondent reported that "One day she discovered that I have another woman and that made her not to trust me anymore and since then, we are not in good terms."

Another respondent added: "men are in most cases the reason for many GBV because of adultery, forgetting their family responsibilities as fathers, alcoholism and returning home at

late hours in the night; they don't have even time to discuss things with their wives."

Therefore, extramarital relations seem to hasten the rate of gender violence against males. As both genders can get involved in infidelity, this increases the risk of GBV in their marriage. Males are highly considered to easily fall into infidelity and they don't care about their families. This situation infuriates women and they are found indulging in GBV acts against their husbands which results in sexual intimidation and physical violence (Conroy, 2014).

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Conclusion**

This study concludes that males under investigation experienced a variety of gender based violence including physical violence, psychological violence and economic violence. Factors contributing to gender-based violence of men by their female partners included lack of awareness and poor or negative perception of gender-based violence services such as gender desks and counseling services in government and private organizations and male irresponsibility. Because of the patriarchal nature of the society, men who experience GBV did not report the incidents since they felt being embarrassed and undermined by the community's social structure.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the above-stated conclusions, the study gives the following recommendations:

Men should strive to get empowered economically, considering that there has been a positive correlation between men's economic powerlessness and violence against them by their partners. Secondly, men should be sensitized on the availability of various institutions dealing with GBV and they should consult the institutions whenever they fall victim to GBV. Furthermore, men should be sensitized on the existence of counselling services provided by social work departments and NGOs as this would help them to cope much better with experienced violence cases. GBV institutions should be more responsive to men who happen to be victims of GBV. There is a need for more male representation in gender desks since gender desks in many police stations currently lack equitable men representation. Finally, men should consider avoiding cheating behaviors as this will help them to create better families and peaceful marriages.

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