



Assessing the Content Relevance of Gender-based Violence News Articles in Tanzanian Newspapers on Reducing the Problem

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Aims: The purpose of the study was to assess the content relevance of Gender-based Violence (GBV) news articles in Tanzanian newspapers on reducing the problem.

The study applied Agenda setting theory (McCombs and Shaw, 1972) as a leading theory complemented by the Priming theory (Iyengar, Peters, and Kender, 1982) and Framing theory (Gregory Bateson, 1972).

Study Design: The study adopted a triangulation approach where both quantitative and qualitative methods and tools were applied.

The study was conducted between September 2022 and January 2023 in six regions of Tanzania Mainland (Dodoma, Iringa, Kigoma, Mtwara, Mwanza, and Tanga) and two main Islands of Zanzibar (Unguja and Pemba).

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Methodology: The study was cross-sectional and applied a triangulation approach whereby both qualitative and quantitative research methods were applied in data collection, analysis, and reporting. It involved 161 respondents and 297 copies of five daily newspapers for data.

Findings: From the study, it was revealed that GBV content had little relevance. It was scarcely reported; that was, only 2% of GBV articles out of 14,618 were identified. There was also a significant variation in GBV reporting between newspapers - the highest percentage of articles in newspapers was 0.76% and the lowest was 0.06%. In addition, the study revealed sexual violence was reported more frequently 36% and psychological violence less frequently 11%. Furthermore, Kiswahili newspapers carried 80% of all GBV articles compared to 20% of English newspapers. GBV articles were geographically relevant but were not enough to motivate respondents to read newspapers. Hence the majority of the respondents 52% were not satisfied with the usefulness of GBV issues reported in newspapers.

Conclusion: The study concluded that most of the contents of GBV articles in the Tanzanian newspapers had little relevance and thus low contribution to reducing GBV in the country. It was therefore recommended that media houses/outlets should think of establishing special GBV reporting desks, investing in investigative reporting of GBV, and considering the recruitment of specialized GBV editors and reporters.

Keywords: Newspapers; articles; gender-based violence; media.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Media in Tanzania like in any democratic society are expected to play important roles in contributing to the fight against societal problems among them Gender-based Violence (GBV). The roles include a monitoring role by remaining vigilant and alerting members of society when a problem is detected so that appropriate action can be taken accordingly (Christians, et al. 2009); agenda setting role to mobilize and guide public opinion on issues of interest to the society; and behavior change role as it influences the abandonment of unwanted behavior and or practice and embracing new and accepted ones. These roles are apart from traditional ones of informing, educating, entertaining, and provoking public debate while providing a forum for continued discussions (Wole-Abu, 2018; Shea, 1998). These roles are imperative when it comes to GBV because of GBV's evil nature and the fact that it is deeply rooted in society. Media roles and efforts in fighting GBV in Tanzania are complimented by a lot of other legislative, administrative, social, educational, and other measures. Policies such as gender/community development policies, the Sexual Offenses Act, the Evidence Act, and strategies such as the National Plan of Action to End GBV in Mainland and Zanzibar make the environment favorable to end the problem.

It is anticipated that when the media regularly and skillfully report the GBV with relevant content it may impact society by igniting the desire of the

audience to take appropriate actions towards reducing the problem. According to (Schröder, 2019), content relevance is a powerful driver of news consumption, and it can bring about sociability and shareability of information among audiences. However, despite the anecdotal evidence that, in complementing the existing policies, strategies, and plans, GBV was reported in Tanzania media, however, the problem persists (Tanzania Media Women's Association, 2023; Ministry of Health, (MoHCDGEC), 2016; Ministry of Health (MoH) [Tanzania Mainland], 2022).

The current study used newspapers over other types of media because, despite the immense consumption of content from social media sources, traditional media such as newspapers continue to be an important part of Tanzanian lives, as audience data shows that people consume news content mostly from mainstream media (Katunzi and Spurk 2019). Also, newspapers are the most trusted source of information because of the time taken to prepare the articles, the various hands of editors the articles passed through before being published, the number of sources of information as well as the available room for verifying information and sources and thus an opportunity to avoid unnecessary mistakes (O'Neill, 2022 ; Sutter, 2020).

1.2 Gender-based Violence in Tanzania

Tanzania is considered among the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa where GBV remains a daily reality for a significant number of women, girls,

and children. Data from the Demographic Health Survey and Malaria Indicator Survey (Ministry of Health, 2016) showed the persistent presence of physical violence, sexual violence, emotional violence, and harmful practices in both Zanzibar and Tanzania Mainland. For instance, in Zanzibar, according to the study, 14% of women of reproductive age (15-49) experienced physical violence since the age of 15, and 40% of women (15-49) have been subjected to one or more acts of physical violence in their lifetime and 17% of them have ever experienced sexual violence ((Ministry of Health, 2016)) GBV is deeply rooted in society as evidenced by the fact that more than half of women in Tanzania (58%) still believe that a man is justified in beating his wife in certain circumstances such as burning food, arguing with him, or if she refuses to have sex (Ministry of Health, 2016). Four in 10 men, also shared the same belief as women. Common perpetrators of physical violence are husbands/partners, teachers, relatives, mother/stepmother father/stepfather while perpetrators of sexual violence range from persons with close relationships with women (current/recent husbands and partners, former husbands/partners) to friends and strangers (Ministry of Health, 2016 ; Ministry of Health (MoH) [Tanzania Mainland], 2022). Because of GBV Women and girls in Tanzania who experience the problem suffer various long, short, and life-threatening consequences such as homicide, disabilities, miscarriages, injuries, HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancies, STDs, mental illness, social stigma, rejections, anxiety and fear (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 2008).

1.3 Gender-based Violence and Media

Globally evidence shows that Gender-based Violence is reported though with differing priorities from country to country (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2015). For instance, the Global Media Monitoring Project report (2015) – the largest media survey carried out in 114 countries around the world has revealed that GBV in its various forms was among the top 10 news topics covered by traditional newspapers around the globe. Rape, harassment, battering, and sexual assaults are all found to make headlines in newspapers, radio, and television in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, North America, Latin America, Pacific and Middle East (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2015). Tanzania is not exceptional, and the media are expected to play a role in contributing to the

reduction of GBV. One positive aspect of this in Tanzania is the fact that the arena for media to report on GBV has increased since the Tanzania government allowed private ownership of media in the early 1990s (Sturmer, 1998). In addition, anecdotal evidence also shows that the media reports GBV in all its forms though with differing priorities. However, despite this encouraging context in terms of the number of media brands and issues on GBV to report on, it was not known if the reported content was relevant in contributing to the reduction of the GBV problem. This study therefore aimed to examine the content relevance of Gender-based Violence news articles in Tanzanian newspapers on reducing the GBV problem.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was cross-sectional and applied a triangulation approach whereby both qualitative and quantitative research methods were applied in data collection, analysis, and reporting. The quantitative approach provides information in figures which makes the skeleton of the findings, and the qualitative approach provides the verbal views and opinions which make the flesh of the research findings. The study was conducted in six regions of Tanzania Mainland namely Tanga, Iringa, Dodoma, Mtwara, Kigoma, and Mwanza, and two main Islands of Zanzibar (Unguja and Pemba). The media audience data was sourced through Press Clubs in respective regions (Tanga Press Club, Iringa Press Club, Central Press Club, Mtwara Press Club, Kigoma Press Club, Mwanza Press Club, Zanzibar Press Club, and Pemba Press Club). It applied a purposive sampling technique to select seven (7) newspaper brands among the 16 regularly published newspapers in Tanzania for content analysis. The newspapers involved in this study were Daily News, Zanzibar Leo, and HabariLeo (government-owned newspapers). Others were the Guardian, the Citizen, Nipashe, and Mwananchi (Privately owned newspapers). From these newspapers, the study systematically sampled 297 copies of newspapers published in 2020 to analyze their contents. Then, seven editors and seven news reporters (14 - one editor and one reporter from each newspaper) were purposively selected for interviews because of the special information they had to supplement the content analysis data. In addition, questionnaires were administered to 84 newspaper audiences from all research regions, and 63 other news readers were involved in FGD. The news readers (media audience) were

obtained through respective Press Clubs registers of media stakeholders. Data obtained was analyzed using different methods. The quantitative data was analyzed using the univariate technique and the qualitative data was analyzed using content and thematic analysis.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

Indicators were used to assess the content relevance of GBV articles in Tanzania newspapers in reducing the problem. It included the extent of GBV reporting in newspapers, types of GBV reported, respondents' newspaper reading habits and motivation, satisfaction with the impact of GBV articles covered by newspapers in Tanzania, GBV reporting variation between English and Kiswahili newspapers, and geographical relevance of the GBV articles reported by newspapers in Tanzania. The overall responses were sought by studying the contents of newspapers under study, focus group discussions, interviews with editors and news reporters, and questionnaires.

3.1.1 The extent of GBV Reporting in Tanzania newspapers

3.1.1.1 Quantitative analysis on extent of GBV reporting in Tanzania newspapers

The study went through 297 copies of seven selected newspapers to find out how many GBV articles were reported from January – December 2020. Within the above-mentioned number of copies, the study found the presence of 288 GBV-related news/articles published on various pages of newspapers from the total number of 14,618 news/articles of various themes published during the period. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 reveals that Gender-based Violence was not adequately reported in Tanzania media as there were only 2% GBV articles in seven newspapers studied out of a total of 14,618 other articles published in these papers for the period of one year from January – December 2020. The results also indicated that some newspapers published GBV articles more frequently than others as there were newspapers with as many as 0.76% GBV articles and others with as low as 0.06% articles. This means that Gender-based Violence was given different priorities by different

newspapers, reporters, and editors. This minimizes its relevance as GBV needs to be addressed comprehensively.

3.1.1.2 Qualitative analysis on extent of GBV in reporting in Tanzania media

As for the qualitative part of the study, a total of eight FGDs were conducted with media audiences in eight research regions as well as seven interviews with editors and seven interviews with news reporters from newspapers examined in this study.

In their response, respondents from all eight FGDs explained that GBV was reported in Tanzania media. However, some of the respondents believed that newspapers should do more in reporting GBV as there are a lot of issues that are not reported and the few reported mainly focus on issues that took place in town areas and very minimum from rural. In expressing his dissatisfaction, one FGD respondent from Iringa had the following to say:

“At a glance, one may think Gender-based Violence is well reported in Tanzania newspapers but in my opinion, this is not the case. When you go through those papers you will see only a few selected events most of them from regional and district centers. You can rarely find issues that have been reported from our rural areas where a large part of the population lives. For example, I have grown up in a place where Gender-based Violence is a part of daily life but I have never read some news specifically reported from our area”. (FGD respondent – Iringa)

Nevertheless, when interviewed news editors and news reporters insisted that their newspapers reported GBV to a large extent and that efforts were taken to make sure that the content was relevant and had an impact on a targeted audience. One editor of the Kiswahili newspaper said:

“I cannot speak much about other newspapers but what I can say is that our newspaper is leading in reporting GBV issues which touch the community. Several times our GBV reporters have won the Media Excellence Award in the category of GBV reporting. This shows that we are doing fine”. (Interview respondent - Editor)

Table 1. Percentage presentation of GBV reporting in Tanzania newspapers (January - December 2020)

Name of newspaper	Total number of news articles reported	Number of GBV articles reported	Percent (%)
Daily News	3,060	17	0.11
HabariLeo	2, 250	31	0.21
The Guardian	2, 480	31	0.21
Nipashe	1, 840	50	0.34
The Citizen	1, 755	10	0.06
Mwananchi	1, 209	37	0.25
Zanzibar Leo	2, 024	112	0.76
Total	14, 618	288	1.94

Interview respondents among reporters said sometimes they face difficulty in completing GBV stories because even if a member of the community has informed the reporter about the issues, still reporter will still have to confirm the information from various other sources including from survivors, close friends, or family, social welfare officers, police, police gender and children's desks or witnesses. This may take more than one day to complete the report. She however explained that because she understands that GBV information is vital for readers to understand and make decisions she continues to make follow-ups to get something to report regularly.

The above comments show that professionals believe that they are doing well in reporting Gender-based Violence. However, their belief is contrary to the evidence on the ground gained by examining the same newspapers they are working with which showed that GBV makes up only a fraction of all news articles reported.

3.1.2 Types of GBV Reported in Tanzania Media

In the context of this study, GBV had been categorized into four main types namely physical violence (beating, burning, kicking, punching, biting, maiming, or killing – including actual, attempted, or threatening to all of those acts); Sexual violence (vaginal, anal or oral rape, sexual abuse, harassment, and exploitation as well as forced prostitution – whether actual, attempted or threatened); Socio-Economic violence (denial of economic, cultural, and political opportunities and services, discrimination, as well as disruptive legal process) as well as emotional/psychological violence (insults, restrictions on liberty and freedom of movements, forcing woman to engage in humiliating acts, constant threat).

3.1.2.1 Quantitative analysis of types of GBV reported in Tanzania media

Regarding types of GBV reported in Tanzania media, the results indicate that all types of GBV were given space in newspapers during the research period. However, it is important to note that according to the findings, sexual violence 36% and socio-economic violence 35% were reported more often than physical violence 18% and psychological/emotional violence 11%. There was not any type of GBV that had not been reported at all during the research period. Table 2 clarifies.

Concerning physical violence, the findings depicted that all seven newspapers published physical violence articles with significant differences between one newspaper and another. For instance, it was given high priority by Zanzibar Leo which published 23 physical violence articles equal to 45% of all physical violence articles reported by all newspapers, followed by Mwananchi which had 10 physical violence articles equivalent to 20% of all physical violence articles reported by all newspapers examined. Physical violence was given less attention by Daily News and Habari Leo which reported 2% and 4% respectively.

Regarding sexual violence, the findings indicated that sexual violence was a preferred type of GBV in reporting by all newspapers during the study period. It made up almost one-third of all GBV articles which include 33% of articles published by Zanzibar Leo, 19% reported by Nipashe, and 17% covered by Mwananchi. The results further indicated that GBV was also reported by English medium newspapers namely the Guardian 8%, the Daily News, and the Citizen which had 5% articles each.

Table 2. The frequency and percentage presentation of GBV articles reported in newspapers by type

Type of Violence	Daily News	HabariLeo	The Guardian	Nipashe	The Citizen	Mwananchi	Zanzibar Leo	Total	Percent (%)
Physical violence	1	2	7	6	2	10	23	51	18
Sexual violence	5	13	8	20	5	18	34	103	36
Socio-economic violence	9	10	13	24	1	6	38	101	35
Emotional violence	2	6	3	0	2	3	17	33	11
Total	17	31	31	50	10	37	112	288	100

Source: Researcher (2022)

Socio-economic types of violence like sexual violence were found to be one among the types of violence that were given priority by most newspapers studied. It made up more than one-third of all GBV articles 38% published by Zanzibar Leo newspaper and 24% of all GBV articles reported by Nipashe. Socio-economic violence was less reported by the Citizen newspaper which carried only one article 1% of all socio-economic GBV articles published by newspapers researched.

Regarding psychological violence, the study revealed that it was the least reported by all newspapers studied. For instance, Nipashe did not publish any psychological/emotional type of Gender-based Violence 0% for the whole year. Daily News and the Citizen published 6% each.

3.1.2.2 Qualitative analysis of types of GBV reported in Tanzania media

The above information gathered by studying newspapers had some resemblance with information gathered through qualitative means, specifically from FGD and interview respondents. For instance, respondents believed reporters favored reporting some types of GBV of others. One FGD respondent provided the following quote: -

“My observation is that the media prefers to report sexual violence rather than other types of violence. The incidents of rape, sodomy, and sexual harassment are reported regularly particularly when the case involves children. The other types mainly depend on the magnitude of the problem or if it involves a famous person. In this situation even if GBV is reported it will take time to fully impact members of the community”. (FGD respondent, Tanga)

While the Editors claimed that there is an equal chance of being published in all GBV news stories, news reporters agree with editors but with some reservations. One of the reporters of Kiswahili language newspapers said that there are no limits to sending news articles on all types of GBV. However, she thought that some type of GBV news is only published when news is scarce in the newspapers.

“It has happened to me several times that I send in a story to the news editor and expect to see it the next morning only to find out that it was not given a space. For example, if you

send a story of a husband who has been taken to court for failing to support his family and your colleague send in a story of a husband who has been taken to court by raping his stepdaughter the story about family support will be shelved to next day unless if the number of stories needed to make a newspaper in a submission day is inadequate”. (Interview respondent, - News reporter)

From the quantitative and qualitative findings above all types of GBV were reported by Media in Tanzania during the research period. However, it was also clear that some types of GBV were reported more often by the media than other types. The types of GBV that were reported more often were sexual violence and socioeconomic violence while the ones that got low coverage were physical violence and emotional violence.

3.1.3 Newspapers reading habit and motivation

During the study, media audiences were asked through questionnaires about their newspaper reading habit. This question aimed at understanding if the respondents were in a position to understand what was taking place in the media context as expected.

3.1.3.1 Quantitative analysis of newspaper reading habit and motivation

Regarding newspaper reading habits and motivation the findings revealed that all respondents 100% who filled in the questionnaires read newspapers. Thus, they can follow reporting and discussions on Gender-based Violence when published. Table 3 clarifies.

However further analysis showed that the respondents differ in the frequency to which they read those newspapers indicating that 73% of respondents reported that they read newspapers almost every day. Other 27% read newspapers either weekly or biweekly. None of the respondents read the newspapers monthly.

As for the motivation for reading newspapers, the findings showed respondents had 12 different motivations. These include being up to date with current events in their surroundings, understanding current affairs, being timely informed on various events in the country, getting

in-depth information, increasing knowledge, confirming what they read in social media, and understanding miscellaneous information. Others were getting information about GBV, news on sports and community events, information on politics and society, getting to know the surroundings from a media perspective, and reading investigative information.

3.1.3.2 Qualitative analysis of respondents' newspaper reading habit

During Focus Group Discussions, respondents mentioned almost the same motivation for reading. However, they explained that while the main motivation for reading newspapers can be something different from GBV that does not mean that they do not read GBV articles. It only means that the first thing to read is what motivates them.

"As for me, my main motivation for reading newspapers is sports. Nevertheless, that does not mean I do not read news about Gender-based Violence or politics or business. I read almost everything from the first page to the last page. It is only that my interest is more on sports than other issues".
(FGD Respondents - Unguja)

During FGD, the study observed that a good number of respondents read newspapers to get informed about political issues. This might be a reason also why newspaper editors give priority to news on politics over others. One of the respondents expressed:

"What pushes me to read newspapers is politics. Politics is everything to me. I enjoy it when I read the perspectives of various political parties on issues of national interest. I want to read what CCM says, what CHADEMA says, what ACT says etc. Once I knew that there was a political meeting somewhere, the first thing I did the next day was to read the newspaper to get the details of what was said. I may become a parliamentarian one day... who knows."
(FGD Respondent - Mwanza)

The above findings revealed that despite all respondents being newspaper readers, they differed in what motivates them to read newspapers. It was also clear from the FGD conversation that GBV was not the only motivation for readers to read newspapers.

3.1.4 The usefulness of Gender-based Violence issues reported in newspapers

3.1.4.1 Quantitative analysis on usefulness of GBV articles reported in newspapers in Tanzania

As for the usefulness of GBV articles reported in newspapers in Tanzania, 52% of respondents were not satisfied with the usefulness of GBV issues reported in newspapers.

3.1.4.2 Qualitative analysis on usefulness of GBV articles reported in newspapers in Tanzania

Qualitative findings showed mixed responses among respondents. Most replied that they were not satisfied with the usefulness of what was reported. They pointed out that most of the time, GBV articles provide basic information on the issues reported and thus only serve the purpose of informing, not empowering or motivating readers to act. Both men and women complained of a lack of follow-ups to GBV issues reported in newspapers in Tanzania after the first reporting.

However, there were also a few respondents who said what was reported was useful because information helps them to understand what is going on and they can apply it to protect themselves and their families. One respondent said:

"If you asked me whether the coverage was useful or not, I would answer the question negatively because I understand that GBV is reported in media, but the problem continues. This implies media does not advocate for authorities to eradicate the problem. They are only informing what has happened without further action. They do not even follow up on what they reported to us and thus, we do not know what happened later to survivors or victims of violence".
(FGD respondent- Mwanza)

As for editors they editors they responded that all media has news values (what makes news worth being published) and use them as a yardstick to measure the relevance of news reported to the intended audiences.

News reporters agreed on the presence of those news values are used to make their GBV articles professional and impactful.

“As a news reporter, I believe that what I report is useful and has an impact to our audiences, otherwise editors could not allow it. Sometimes even the readers themselves send me a text of thanks for some news stories, I reported or inform me of a similar event that they want me to make a follow-up of. This gives me hope that what I report is of interest to them”. (Interview respondent – Reporter)

3.1.5 Gender-based Violence reporting variation between English and Kiswahili newspapers

3.1.5.1 Quantitative analysis on gender-based violence reporting variation between English and Kiswahili newspapers

The study examined both newspapers published in the English language and those published in Kiswahili. It equally studied GBV stories in both English and Kiswahili newspapers and recorded its findings. The results indicated that only 20% of GBV stories were published in English medium newspapers compared to 80% published in Kiswahili medium newspapers. This can be translated that GBV was reported less in English newspapers compared to Kiswahili ones. Table 5 clarifies.

Findings as per Fig. 1 show that more than two-thirds of GBV articles were reported in Kiswahili Language newspapers and less than one-third of all articles were published in English language newspapers. This implies that there was room for more Kiswahili newspaper readers to read and understand what was reported as Kiswahili is the national language in Tanzania.

3.1.5.2 Qualitative analysis on Gender-based Violence reporting variation between English and Kiswahili newspapers

Qualitative findings indicated that all seven editors (100%) and seven news reporters (100%) agreed that there is a disparity in reporting GBV between the English and Kiswahili language newspapers. However, the reasons for such variation differ among the respondents. Some respondents attributed it to the fact that Kiswahili newspapers have a network of reporters and correspondents in wider geographical areas than English newspapers and thus have more chance of getting many stories. Other respondents hinted that it is not because the newspapers published in the English language do not pay much attention to GBV stories but because of other issues such as newspaper policy, editorial

policy, objectives of the media, and the targeted audiences, they are compelled to restrict the number of GBV stories. One of the editors from English-language newspapers had this to say:

“I know that there might be a difference in emphasis made in publishing GBV stories between one newspaper (English Language newspaper) and another, but it happens for a reason. Our newspaper is a commercial newspaper, although we provide space for other issues such as politics, education, water, and other social services, our policy requires us to ensure that at least 60% of the daily contents of our newspaper are on the economic news/stories. In considering this fact we cannot provide equal space for GBV news stories like other newspapers that focuses on social issues”. (Interview respondent – Editor)

3.1.6 Relevance of GBV articles to location (geographical relevance)

3.1.6.1 Quantitative analysis on relevance of GBV articles to location (geographical relevance)

The geographical focus of news articles including GBV news is an important aspect in understanding the relevance of news articles published as it helps the audience to associate themselves with the issue reported. By associating themselves with the issue reported, the audience can willingly take action as they might feel affected in one way or another.

Regarding geographical relevance findings show that 90% of GBV news articles published by Tanzanian were geographically relevant. Table 6 clarifies.

Regarding geographical relevance, the editors interviewed said their newspapers normally give higher priority to national news that interests the majority of the local audiences and provide little priority to international news.

“Readers like to read contents which they can associate themselves with it. In this context, the consequences or potential consequences of the issue to the wider community, proximity to audiences, magnitude of the event, persons involved, and place contribute to an editorial decision. For the case of our newspapers, news with a national and local focus are given priority over international ones.” (Interview respondent, Editor)

3.2 Discussion of Results

From the study findings as presented above, it became clear that the contents of GBV articles in Tanzanian newspapers had little relevance and thus low impact in reducing GBV. The discussion of the findings based on indicators is presented below:

3.2.1 The extent of Gender-based Violence reporting in Tanzania media

The findings on this variable suggested that the GBV was scarcely reported in Tanzania newspapers. All seven newspaper brands published only 2% of reports on GBV which represents 288 articles out of the total of 14,618 other articles covered by the newspapers

selected in the study period. The newspaper with the highest number of GBV articles reported in a year (Zanzibar Leo) had 0.76% articles out of all 14, 618 articles while the newspapers with the lowest number of GBV articles (the Citizen) had 0.06% articles for the whole year.

3.2.1.1 Qualitative analysis on relevance of GBV articles to location (geographical relevance)

The qualitative results attained through FGDs and interviews with editors and news reporters corroborated that GBV was sparsely reported and suggested that newspapers should do more if they are to increase the extent of Gender-based Violence reporting in Tanzania.

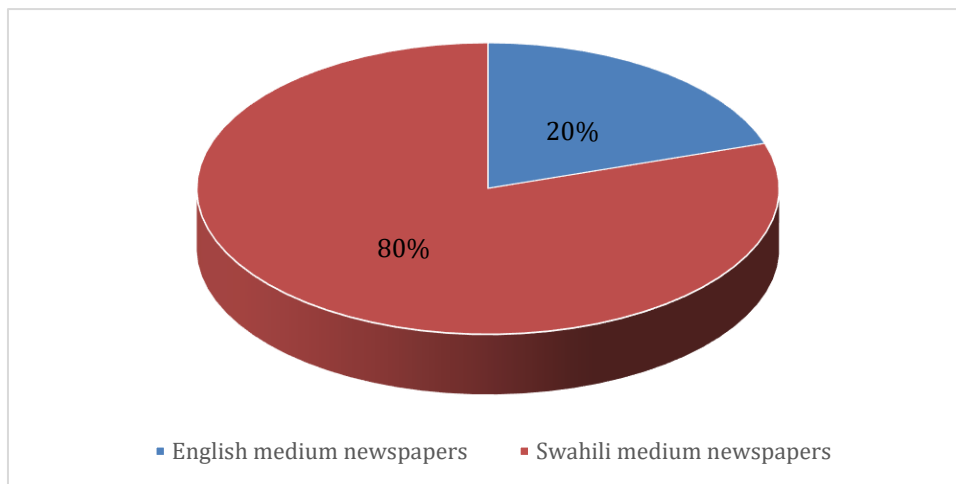


Fig. 1. English and Kiswahili newspaper coverage of GBV news

Source: Researcher (2022)

Table 3. Respondents' newspaper reading habit

Do you read newspapers?				
	Male	Female	Total	Percent
Yes	46	38	84	100
No	0	0	0	0
Total	46	38	84	100

Source: Researcher (2022)

Table 4. Frequency to which respondents read newspapers

How often do you read the newspaper?				
Frequency	Male	Female	Total	Percentage (%)
Daily	34	27	61	73
Biweekly	6	5	11	13
Weekly	6	6	12	14
Monthly	0	0	0	0
Total	46	38	84	100

Source: Researcher (2022)

Table 5. English and Kiswahili newspaper coverage of GBV news

S/N	Type of Gender-based Violence	# of articles reported in English newspapers	Percent (%)	# of GBV articles reported in Kiswahili newspapers	Percent (%)	# of GBV articles reported in both English & Kiswahili newspapers	Percent (%)
1	Physical violence	10	20	41	80	51	100
2	Sexual Violence	18	17	85	83	103	100
3	Socio-economic violence	23	23	78	77	101	100
4.	Emotional violence	7	21	26	79	33	100
	Total	58	20	230	80	288	100

Source: Researcher (2022)

Table 6. Relevance of GBV news articles to location (geographical relevance)

S/N	Newspapers	Geographical focus							
		National focus	Percent (%)	Local focus	Percent (%)	International focus	Percent (%)	Total	Percent (%)
1	Daily News	12	70	2	12	3	18	17	100
2	HabariLeo	17	55	11	35	3	10	31	100
3	The Guardian	22	71	6	19	3	10	31	100
4	Nipashe	41	82	6	12	3	6	50	100
5	The Citizen	6	60	1	10	3	30	10	100
6	Mwananchi	6	16	30	81	1	3	37	100
7	Zanzibar Leo	93	83	5	4	14	13	112	100
	Total	197	68.4	61	21,1	30	10.4	288	100

Source: Researcher (2022)

The issue of low coverage of GBV in Tanzania was pointed out also by a study conducted by (Okoth, 2023) covering countries of Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, and Rwanda which said GBV reporting in those countries is inadequate and fails to effectively address this serious issue.

In addition, in a report of Media Audit to Assess the impact of GBV stories conducted by Tanzania Media Women Association [TAMWA–Zanzibar], (Tanzania Media Women's Association., 2023) covering newspapers published between January and March 2023 it was also revealed that GBV is also lightly reported by popular newspapers in Tanzania. For instance, the findings showed that within 82 copies of the Habarileo newspaper, there were only three (3) GBV stories published. This is equivalent to one GBV story every 27 days because Habarileo is a daily newspaper. This was also true for Nipashe which despite producing 88 copies of newspapers in three months, there were only 11 GBV stories. This also indicated that there was one (1) GBV story every 8 days. In what shows that low reportage of GBV is a common problem, (Owusu-Addo, et al. 2018) their study revealed that GBV received limited media coverage in Ghana as only 52 cases of GBV were published by the top media outlets in the year 2014 contrary to the statistics which showed a high prevalence during the period.

Globally, in its 2015 report, the Global Media Monitoring Project (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2015) showed that rape, harassment, sexual assault, and trafficking, were all found to make headlines in newspapers, radio, and television in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, North America, Latin America, Pacific and Middle East (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2015). The situation was different in its 2020 report when GMMP report revealed that stories on Gender-based Violence hardly made the major news of the day. The report added that just 1% of the stories in the total sample fall under the category of gender and related issues which includes news on various forms of Gender-based Violence. However, the situation was different in Australia where studies showed that there was extensive coverage of GBV in newspapers (VicHealth, 2012; Sutherland, et al. 2019).

According to the Agenda Setting Theory by (McCombs and Shaw, 1972) which is the main theory of this study, with the above kind of findings we should not expect any significant

changes or impact on the audience based on what is reported. This is because there is a strong correlation between the emphasis that mass media place on certain issues and the importance attributed to these issues by media audiences. In this context, because newspapers in Tanzania put a low emphasis on reporting Gender-based violence it is likely that media audiences also attributed low importance to the Gender-based Violence problem. In this context, its contribution can hardly be felt.

3.2.2 Types of GBV reported in Tanzania media

As for types of Gender-based Violence reported in Tanzania media, the findings on this variable showed that all types of Gender-based Violence were reported in newspapers during the research period though with a bias to sexual violence and socio-economic violence which made more than two-thirds of GBV articles reported 71% by all media. The articles on sexual violence were 36%, socio-economic violence 35%, physical violence 18%, and psychological violence 11%. The psychological violence was the least reported type of GBV even though it is equally dangerous as it leads to mental torture and internal suffering.

The quantitative results were supported by qualitative results from interviews with editors and with reporters who said it is true physical violence and psychological violence were less reported, but they claimed it happens because both men and women still consider wife battering as a normal act and a given right to husband or a man to women hence, they rarely report.

The Tanzania Demographic Health Survey and Malaria Indicator Survey (Ministry of Health (MoH) [Tanzania Mainland], 2022) has mentioned physical, sexual, and psychological harm and controlling behavior as common forms of Gender-based Violence under intimate partner violence. These reflect common forms of Gender-based Violence mentioned in the Tanzania National Plan of Action to End Violence against Women and Children 2016/2017 – 2022/2023 (Minister for Health, UNICEF, 2016) and the Zanzibar National Plan of Action to End Violence against Women and Children 2017 - 20239 (Ministry of Labour, Empowerment, Elders, Youth, Women and Children, UNICEF, 2017). Thus, by reporting the same type of GBV media shows that they reverberate the real situation in the Tanzania society.

In line with that, even the low reporting of physical and psychological violence that has been observed in Tanzania media during this study is justified in the same (Ministry of Health (MoH) [Tanzania Mainland], 2022) which disclosed that when it comes to wife beating, in Tanzania 51% of married women and 49% of divorced, separated, or widowed women as well as 32% of men believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife in at least one of the five specified circumstances such as burns the food, argue with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children, refuses sexual intercourse. With this level of tolerance to physical violence, it is obvious that the number of cases that will be reported for the media to pick will become less. However, according to priming theory, it is the amount of time and space that media dedicate to a subject that makes an audience receptive and alert to themes (Smith, 2011) and not just reporting for the sake of reporting. Media should give the highest importance to news so that it gives the audience the impression that is the most important information.

3.2.3 Newspapers reading habit and motivation

The study findings on this variable revealed that, respondents had the habits of reading newspapers with divergent frequencies and diverse motivations and that GBV was not the only motivation. A total of 73% of respondents reported that they read newspapers almost every day - more males 40% than females 32% daily read newspapers. In addition, the study revealed that respondents had diverse motivations for reading newspapers as comprehensively shown in chapter four. The quantitative findings corroborated with qualitative findings as one FGD respondent from Mtwara said politics is the one which motivated him to read newspapers and not GBV.

According to "Multimedia Strategy Against Gender-based Violence" (Ministry of Gender, 2016), reading newspapers alone is not enough to combat GBV though can be a good entry point. A good yardstick is when perpetrators stop Gender-based violence, survivors develop assistance-seeking behavior after an incident of GBV, community members provide support and assistance to GBV survivors, society reports incidents of GBV, and duty bearers do not abuse the right holders (powerless), then we can say that one's engagement with media has been of

benefit in fighting GBV (Ministry of Gender, 2016).

Framing theory provided a clue that framing of the article can be a good motivation that media can positively manipulate readers to read what you want them to read so that later can take appropriate and informed action. According to Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015 the frame helps to organize people's perceptions, by influencing them to concentrate on what is within it and to disregard what is outside the frame.

3.2.4 The usefulness of GBV issues reported in newspapers

The study findings on this variable suggested that the majority of questionnaire respondents among newspaper audience 52% were not satisfied with the relevance of GBV issues reported in newspapers in Tanzania and believed that has a low impact in reducing the GBV problem in the country.

The above quantitative findings were in line with the qualitative results attained through FGDs in which respondents expressed their dissatisfaction for various reasons. One of the FGD participants in Mwanza said the coverage was not useful because it has not helped to end the GBV problem. She added that the media only informed what happened and there were no further actions or follow-ups.

Both quantitative and qualitative findings presented in this section above are supported by (Australia National Research Organization for Women's Safety [ANROWS], 2015) and Owusu-Addo, 2018) studies which pointed out that stories of Gender-based Violence are interpreted differently by different readers. In the context that there is no key message(s) from GBV stakeholders and audiences receive differing messages it is most likely that the interpretation of expected action will also be different. When this happens it will be difficult for what is reported on GBV to have a spiral effect on the community that may lead to reduction of GBV. According to framing theory media could use written words, still photos, and graphics to organize a GBV story to promote the meaning of the GBV problem as well as an understanding of the causes, consequences, and suggested actions to audiences thus influencing both political decision and public opinion on the problem.

3.2.5 GBV reporting variation between English and Kiswahili newspapers

The quantitative study findings on this variable suggested that Gender-based Violence was reported less in English newspapers compared to the newspapers published in Kiswahili. According to findings only 20% of GBV stories were published in English newspapers compared to 80% published in Kiswahili newspapers.

The above findings correlated with qualitative results. However, one of the editors said it happens because some of the newspapers are commercial oriented and they have a policy to ensure that at least 60% of the daily content of the newspapers is on economic news stories.

Findings disclosed that there was an imbalance of GBV reporting between English newspapers and Kiswahili newspapers. However, when one takes into consideration Tanzania's situation where despite having 125 tribes and 125 local languages Kiswahili is spoken by more than 90% of the population, the above results deserve to be celebrated. This can be translated into positive that, the audience of Kiswahili newspapers received GBV messages in a language that they understood. Thus, they had total power over how they perceived the GBV. It was easier for them to comprehend what had been communicated and promote common actions and changes in attitudes (Louis, 2021). According to Mukandabvute, 2023, language has the potential to reduce barriers that come from cultural, political, faith, and socio-economic variances.

3.2.6 Geographical relevance

The quantitative findings on this variable revealed that Gender-based Violence articles published considered the relevance of location (geographical focus) by targeting a national audience, 90% thus had the potential of influencing and thus impact the readers. The quantitative results were supported by qualitative findings where all editors and news reporters interviewed agreed that GBV articles were location-relevant to engage audiences and impact them with what has been reported.

Discussing the importance of geographical proximity in the understanding of issues in the news (Koetsenruijter and de Jong, 2023) said geographical proximity plays a significant role in establishing trust and enhancing the reliability

and worthiness of the issue discussed. This argument is also corroborated by (Oppegaard and Rabby, 2015) who said location relevance apart from being an enduring thought, in determining news values for many generations has also been used by media outlets to maintain their connections to places and audiences and a measurement of the usefulness of what is reported by the media to intended audiences.

By doing this according to Priming theory, media offers a context for public discussion of an issue and sets the stage for audience understanding and decision.

4. CONCLUSION

Clearly, the above discussion has revealed that the contents of GBV articles in Tanzanian newspapers had little relevance and, hence, had little contribution to reducing GBV in the country. First, GBV was scarcely reported, and there was a significant variation between newspapers when it comes to reporting GBV some newspapers reported fairly, while others did not, there was a bias in reporting some types of GBV over others – sexual violence was reported more frequently and psychological violence less frequent and thus fortify the existing myth on perceiving other types of GBV as less important. While having a big portion of GBV articles reported in Kiswahili (the widely spoken language in the country) and geographical relevance to the audience is encouraging, the fact that GBV was not the only motivation for respondents to read newspapers instead there were 11 other motivations is a shortcoming as it does not guarantee the readership to GBV articles even if it had been reported. The best way to ensure the relevant GBV content which is considered a powerful driver of media consumption and consequently behavior changes is to establish special GBV reporting desks to ensure increased attention to GBV news; invest in investigative reporting of GBV as it will help in unearthing the hidden issues including unreported ones in the area, and consider recruitment of specialized GBV editors and reporters to ensure the quality of the news articles reported.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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