

## An Examination of Factors Influencing Arrest Decision-Making in Domestic Violence Cases in Zambia

### Abstract

**Background:** Domestic violence is among the most prevalent forms of violence globally. It includes physical violence, emotional violence, sexual violence and economic violence. Several studies focusing on arrest decisions are conducted in the west; unfortunately, there is a dearth of studies focusing on domestic violence in Zambia especially on factors that influence arrest decision-making. This study was conceived to examine whether legal and extra-legal factors have an influence in the Zambia police service officers' decision-making in domestic violence cases reported to them.

**Methods:** Data consisting of 1258 cases of domestic violence from 2017-2019 were collected from five urban police stations in Lusaka city. In this study, we used univariate, bivariate and multilevel logistic regression analysis to examine police officers' decision-making in domestic violence cases.

**Results:** Descriptive results show that arrest rates are high in physical violence (13.20%), economic violence (9.46%), sexual violence (5.41%) and emotional violence (3.18%). Whilst the age of the victim, perpetrator ethnicity and the gender of police officers were found to be non-significant, strong predictors of arrest decision-making in a logistic analysis were found to be victim tribe, residential area, perpetrator age and type of domestic violence.

**Conclusion:** Policy strategies and efforts should be channeled towards advocacy and awareness programmes across the communities and should not neglect the participation of victim support unit (VSU) police officers. Therefore, Victim support unit should be appropriately funded to enhance awareness campaigns and educational programmes. Additionally, the police command should find ways of navigating around victims' preferences in arrest decisions whilst respecting and upholding human rights and ethical standards.

**Keywords:** domestic violence, arrest, decision-making, police officers, victim support unit

## 1. Introduction

Domestic violence is considered a social, economic, human rights and public health problem (1) and ranked as the fourth major cause of mortality globally. The World Health Organization (2) reports that at least three in five women experience lifetime violence. Consequences of physical violence include causing permanent disabilities, homicide, poor health, insecurity, and mental health challenges and may disrupt social life and career development of the victims, leading to a cycle of poverty and economic dependence (3). Further, domestic violence directly threatens the attainment of Sustainable Development goals especially goals number 3, 4, 5 and 10 relating to health, gender equality, inclusiveness and quality education for all and reduction in inequality within and among UN member countries (3).

Due to its prevalence and negative effects, the international community came up with many treaties aimed at curbing the vice and these include the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the 1993 world conference on human rights in Vienna among others enhanced the formulation of laws in many countries worldwide (4) and countries were also argued through Sustainable Development goal number 5 to effectively enforce laws to stop domestic violence in all its types (5). In Africa, the African Union (AU) also created a Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACPHR) and another one on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Moreover, Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) committed itself by a declaration of all member states on Gender and Development and its addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Gender-Based Violence (4). All of these instruments are meant to stop or at least reduce the prevalence of domestic violence.

Zambia has not been spared and has higher incidence rates just like many other nations in Sub-Saharan Africa. In order to address this challenge, the Zambian government showed political will and committed the country to fighting it by ratifying and domesticating all major international and regional anti-gender based violence instruments. Besides, she has made efforts by enacting the anti-domestic violence law in 2011, criminalised it in the penal code and enhanced the operations of the justice system by creating institutional structures such as the Victim Support Unit (VSU) of the Zambia Police Service (ZP), Child Protective Unit (CPU); also under ZP in collaboration with the Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare (MCDSW), National Prosecution Authority (NPA) and fast tract courts to combat it (6).

However, fighting domestic violence cases has been a challenging endeavour in Zambia because many cases tend to be withdrawn at the police stations (7). To date, research on the factors that affect police decision-making processes has been scarce in Zambia (7,31) and little is known about the factors that influence the likelihood of making an arrest. It is for this reason that this study was conceived. It uses police administrative data to analyse factors affecting arrest decision-making processes in domestic violence cases in Zambia in order to contribute to existing literature. Understanding factors that affect arrest decision-making is important in the formulation of policy strategies aimed at reducing domestic violence cases in Zambia and the region.

### *Literature Review*

Prior studies have identified a several factors that are associated with the likelihood of arrest in domestic violence cases (8). Most of these studies reveal that the decision to arrest depends on the type of domestic violence offence (9-11). Physical assault with evidence is more likely to result in arrest compared to other types of domestic violence offences. As Durfee & Fetzer (2016) show, an arrest for physical assaults cases is 51.6% more likely than sexual assault at 26.2% and verbal intimidations is at 22.9%. In Africa, some researchers have also found that the nature of the offence has an influence on the decision of whether to

charge the suspect or not (12-14). Therefore, it can be ascertained that what matters the most is the seriousness of the offence (9,15-17). Alderden & Ullman (2012) seem to confirm this assertion as they report high arrest decision-making in serious domestic violence cases.

Further, many previous studies have shown that demographic factors such as age, gender, relationship type, area of residence, and ethnicity have an effect on the decision to make an arrest (10,11,15,18). Age of both the victims and perpetrators is one of the explanatory factors in domestic violence arrest decision-making processes (9,11,19). Research finds that older victims are more likely to have their cases dropped (11) and cases involving children aged 16 years or younger have low attrition rate (20).

The other factor relates to gender, and in this regard, (18,21) note that arrest decisions are more likely to be made when the perpetrator is male compared to when they are female. Also, cases which involve female victims are more likely to result in arrest decision than the ones where the victims are male. Furthermore, evidence also shows that in cases where there is a close relationship between the victim and perpetrator, the likelihood of arrest is very low (9). Area of residence is also significantly associated with arrest decisions in that, cases which are reported in the rural areas have low probability of arrest compared to cases which happen in urban areas (15).

Concerning ethnicity, some studies have confirmed that a relationship exists between ethnicity and arrest decision-making (9), although other studies found only little or no relationships between the two variables (16,22).

Many scholars (15,19,23-25) found officer demographic information as having an influence on arrest decision-making. Some scholars found that female police officers are less likely to make an arrest than male officers (19), and those with few years of experience have high likelihood of making an arrest compared to more experienced police officers (23). Robinson & Chandek (2000) only found gender of police officers to be a predictor of arrest decision-making. However, (26) did not observe any likelihood of arrest decision-making when police officers profiles were analysed. Therefore, this study is important because previous studies are mostly conducted in developed countries and conflict each other and more so, to contextualise the outcomes in the Zambian context.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### **2.1. Data source**

The data for this study was extracted from five police stations in Lusaka urban district of the Zambia police service in Lusaka division. A total of 1258 reports that were extracted from police record files from victim support unit from 2017 to 2019 were included in the final analysis. The data was extracted from police case files with the help of police officers under the victim support unit department. Data on officer experience was provided by police officers who helped in the extraction of the data.

We used RStudio version 4.2.1 in data management and analysis. The analysis started with univariate descriptive statistics and then a test of independence between each independent variable and the dependent variable was determined using chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ). We used a multiple logistic regression models, with 95% odds ratio confidence intervals to ascertain the strength and direction of associations. In the analysis, we applied a number of predictor variables as represented in the following equation:

$$Y = X\beta + \epsilon$$

Y is a vector of values for the outcome variable, X is a matrix of values of the predictor variables,  $\beta$  is a vector of coefficient and  $\epsilon$  is the vector of errors (27).

## 2. 2. Variables and variable operationalization

The outcome variable in this study is arrest decision-making and was determined by whether or not the perpetrator was formally charged. We had a number of predictor variables that were categorised into four components: The first and second categories were about victim and perpetrator characteristics. The third category was about victim/perpetrator relationship and offence type. The last set relates to police officers' profiles.

Age was treated as: Victims age: 1 = 0-15, 2 = 16-30, 3 = 31-45 and 4 = 46+ Perpetrator age: 1=15-24, 2=25-34, 3=35-44 and 4=45+; Gender as a state of being male or female. Residential area was classified according to Lusaka city council (LCC) land use classification; 1=low cost, 2=medium cost, 3=high cost and 4=other areas outside LCC land use classification. Ethnicity group related to the seven major tribes in Zambia as used on Zambia National Broadcast (ZNBC) radio one. Thus: Tonga = Tonga, Ila, Soli and Lenje; Lozi = Lozi, Nkoya, and Mbunda; Bemba = Bemba, Namwanga, Bisa, Mambwe, Lala, Lungu and Ushi; Chewa = Chewa, Ngoni, Tumbuka, Nsenga and Kunda; Kaonde = Kaonde and Lamba Luvale = Luvale; Lunda = Lunda. Victim/perpetrator relationship was grouped as; Parent relates to father, mother, aunt, uncle, grandparents and parents in-law; partner to spouse, ex-spouse and those in dating and ex-dating relationships; Siblings as persons who shares at least one parent, and other relationships relates to cousins, living in-maid and sister/brother in-law, co-wives, ex co- 32 wives. Offence type as DV classification; Economic = failing to provide, neglect to provide, desertion and depriving beneficiaries; Physical relates to assault (OABH), unlawful wounding, assault on a child; Sexual to rape, defilement, indecent assault, child marriage, incest, neglect act likely to spread infections such as sexually transmitted diseases (STIs), sexual harassment and attempted rape, and emotional relates to verbal abuse, insulting language, cruelty to juveniles, threatening violence, child abuse, child stealing and misconduct. Officer rank relates to constables, sergeants, and inspectors; Officer experience was treated as number of years a police officer has been with VSU or CPU.

## 3. Data Analysis

### 3.1 Univariate and bivariate descriptive statistics

Table 1 shows the univariate and bivariate analysis of arrest decisions in domestic violence cases. Descriptive results show that out of the 1258 domestic violence cases that were reported to the police, 66.61% resulted in an arrest. We also found that many cases of domestic violence victimisation reported to the police involve victims of 16-31 olds (50.56%) and least for 48+ olds (5.64%), females (80.37%), living in low-cost residential areas (56.6%) and, Chewa (29.81%) and Bemba (29.33%) speaking people of Zambia.

Regarding perpetrators, our study found that arrest rates are high against male perpetrators (81.80%), 25-34 olds (41.24%), living in low-cost areas (55.48%) and among the Bemba tribe (29.41%). Further, it was established that more cases involving intimate partners (64.55%) and physical violence (61.76%) are reported to the police. Concerning the demographic characteristics of police officers, the study shows that female police officer make more arrests, at 51.67% and many years of working experience, 6-10 years of services (29.25%) and 11-15 years of service (27.34%)

We further conducted a chi-square test to ascertain whether the differences in arrest rates across the variable types were statistically significant. The results show that all the variables, apart from the victim and perpetrator tribe, perpetrator age and police officer gender, were statistically significant.

**Table 1. Descriptive and Bivariate analysis of Arrest Decision-Making for DV Cases Reported to the Police in Lusaka Urban**

Variables	Total (n = 1258)		
	N	%	n (%)
<b>Victim age</b>			***
0-15	116	9.22	97(7.71)
16-31	636	50.56	407(32.35)
32-47	435	34.58	288(22.89)
48+	71	5.64	46(3.66)
<b>Victim gender</b>			***
Male	247	19.63	191(15.18)
Female	1011	80.37	647(51.43)
<b>Victim residential area</b>			**
Low cost	712	56.6	506(40.22)
Medium cost	307	24.4	192(15.26)
High cost	200	15.9	115(9.14)
Other	39	33.1	25(1.99)
<b>Victim tribe</b>			ns
Bemba	369	29.33	242(19.24)
Chewa	375	29.81	252(20.03)
Kaonde	58	4.61	47(3.74)
Lozi	220	17.49	140(11.13)
Lunda/Luvale	54	4.29	40(3.18)
Tonga	182	14.47	117(9.30)
<b>Perpetrator age</b>			ns
15-24	115	9.16	86(6.85)
25-34	518	41.24	347(27.63)
35-44	429	34.16	282(22.45)
45+	194	15.45	122(9.71)
<b>Perpetrator gender</b>			*
Male	1029	81.8	670(53.26)
Female	229	18.2	168(13.35)
<b>Perpetrator residential area</b>			***
Low Cost	698	55.48	507(40.30)
Medium Cost	344	27.34	208(16.53)
High Cost	188	14.94	111(8.82)
Other	28	2.23	12(0.95)
<b>Perpetrator Tribe</b>			ns
Bemba	370	29.41	258(20.51)
Chewa	332	26.39	226(17.97)
Kaonde	60	4.77	45(3.58)
Lozi	225	17.89	135(10.73)
Lunda	45	3.58	31(2.46)
Luvale	35	2.78	23(1.83)
Tonga	191	15.18	120(9.54)
<b>Victim/perp.</b>			***

<b>Relationship</b>			
Parents/children	341	27.11	195(15.50)
Partner	812	64.55	569(45.23)
Siblings	39	3.1	23(1.83)
Other	66	5.25	51(4.05)
<b>Violence type</b>			
Economic	314	24.96	119(9.46)
Emotional	80	6.36	40(3.18)
Physical	777	61.76	611(48.57)
Sexual	87	6.92	68(5.41)
<b>Arrested</b>			
Yes	838	66.61	
No	420	33.39	
<b>Officer gender</b>			
			ns
Male	606	48.17	401(31.88)
Female	652	51.83	437(34.74)
<b>Officer rank</b>			
			***
Constable	267	21.22	206(16.38)
Sergeant	341	27.11	216(17.17)
Inspector	650	51.67	416(33.07)
<b>Officer Experience</b>			
			***
0-5 years	312	24.8	176(13.99)
6-10 years	368	29.25	278(22.10)
11-15 years	344	27.34	239(19.00)
16-20 years	234	18.6	145(11.53)

\*\*\* p < 0.001; \*\* p < 0.01; \* p < 0.05; ns = not significant

### 3.2. Multiple Regression Logistic Analysis for Predictor Variable Categories

In order to ascertain whether the observed statistical significance in the bivariate analysis was meaningful, we conducted a multiple logistic regression analysis with 95% CI. Statistical significance was determined by the confidence level of 0.05. Four models were conducted. Model 1 uses independent variables that relate to victim characteristics only, Model 2 analyses independent variables that relate to perpetrator characteristics, Model 3 takes into account relationship type, domestic violence type, and characteristics of police officers. Model 4 is a full model and it includes all the independent variables.

In Model 1, when the victim characteristics were observed, victim age was significant but the odds of arrest decision-making are low compared to 0-15 olds. The gender variable shows surprising results in that cases which involve male victims have high odds (1.82 times) that the police will arrest the perpetrator. Residential areas have low odds to influence arrest decision-making. However, arrest decisions are likely if the victim is Kaonde (2.30 odds) and Lunda/Luvale (1.79 odds).

In Model 2, although perpetrator gender, residential area and tribe show significant relationship, the odds of arrest decision-making are significantly reduced. As expected, model 3 shows that physical violence (5.40 odds) and sexual violence (5.70 odds) are very strong predictors of arrest decision-making.

In Model 4, results still show surprising results when victim gender was observed than expected, whereby the police are 2.03 times more likely to make an arrest in cases involving male victims than when the victim is a woman. Victim age (16-31 olds- OR= 0.39,  $p<0.01$ ; 32-47 olds- OR= 0.38,  $p<0.05$ ; 48+ olds- OR= 0.24,  $p<0.01$ ) has significantly less likelihood of the police to make an arrest. Arrest decisions for cases of victims living in areas outside Lusaka city council land use classification have high odds (OR= 3.18,  $p<0.05$ ), medium cost (OR= 1.93,  $p<0.05$ ) and victims living in high cost residential areas have reduced odds for the police to arrest the suspects by 0.93 times. Arrest decision-making are very high favouring Kaonde and Lunda/Luvale victims as the decision to arrest increases by 2.14 odds for Kaonde and by 2.62 odds ( $p<0.05$ ) for Lunda/Luvale. Meanwhile, the Chewa and Lozi victims have non-significant odds (OR= 1.00; 1.02 respectively) whilst Tongas have reduced odds (OR= 0.96) for the police to arrest their abusers.

Further, we discovered another interesting result when perpetrator characteristics were considered. Only perpetrator residential area was significant but with reduced odds, indicating that type of perpetrator residential area has less likelihood to influence arrest decision-making.

The odds ratio indicate that all forms of perpetrator/victim relationship have reduced likelihood that an arrest would be made (parent/child- OR=0.37,  $p<0.05$ ; partner- OR=0.53; siblings- OR= 0.43). DV type is significantly associated with arrest decision-making. It is observed that making an arrest is 5.33 times high ( $p<0.001$ ) in physical violence, 4.74 times ( $p<0.001$ ) in sexual violence and 1.74 times ( $p<0.05$ ) in emotional domestic violence.

Upon holding constant the influence of confounding factors, our results in Table 2 indicate that some of the variables such as perpetrator age Model 1, the type of relationship and police officer gender in Model 3 and perpetrator age, perpetrator gender, perpetrator tribe and police officers' characteristics in the full model are not significant. This entails that they are not statistically associated with arrest decision-making.

**Table 2. Multiple Logistic Regression Analysis for Arrest Decision-making in DV Cases Reported to the Police in Lusaka Urban**

Variables	Adjusted odds ratio			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Intercept	4.76(2.86,8.32)***	5.40(3.21,9.37)***	1.86(0.86,4.20)	4.75(1.44,16.32)*
<b>Victim age</b>				
0-15	1			1
16-31	0.39(0.22,0.65)***			0.39(0.19,0.77)**
32-47	0.42(0.24,0.70)**			0.38(0.18,0.79)*
48+	0.34(0.17,0.69)**			0.24(0.09,0.62)**
<b>Victim gender</b>				
Male	1.82(1.31,2.57)***			2.03(1.29,3.26)**
Female	1			1
<b>Victim residential area</b>				
Low cost	1			1
Medium cost	0.68(0.51,0.91)**			1.93(1.07,3.50)*
High cost	0.58(0.42,0.81)**			0.93(0.43,2.01)
Other	0.78(0.39,1.59)			3.18(1.32,8.03)*
<b>Victim tribe</b>				
Bemba	1			1
Chewa	0.10(0.80,1.50)			1.00(0.69,1.44)
Kaonde	2.30(1.18,4.86)*			2.14(0.98,5.02)
Lozi	0.96(0.67,1.38)			1.02(0.65,1.61)
Lunda/Luvale	1.79(0.95,3.56)			2.62(1.21,5.95)*
Tonga	0.96(0.66,1.41)			0.96(0.61,1.51)
<b>Perpetrator age</b>				
15-24		1		1
25-34		0.75(0.46,1.18)		1.07(0.61,1.86)
35-44		0.75(0.46,1.20)		1.18(0.65,2.13)
45+		0.69(0.40,1.15)		1.39(0.72,2.68)

<b>Perpetrator gender</b>		
Male	0.69(0.49,0.95)*	0.98(0.62,1.54)
Female	1	1
<b>Perpetrator residential area</b>		
Low cost	1	1
Medium cost	0.59(0.45,0.77)***	0.37(0.21,0.65)***
High cost	0.55(0.39,0.77)***	0.62(0.28,1.34)
Other	0.30(0.13,0.65)**	0.27(0.10,0.74)*
<b>Perpetrator Tribe</b>		
Bemba	1	1
Chewa	0.92(0.66,1.28)	1.04(0.71,1.52)
Kaonde	0.47(0.80,2.87)	1.03(0.50,2.21)
Lozi	0.67(0.47,0.96)*	0.74(0.47,1.15)
Lunda	0.95(0.49,1.92)	0.86(0.40,1.89)
Luvale	0.88(0.42,1.92)	0.57(0.24,1.41)
Tonga	0.74(0.51,1.08)	0.76(0.49,1.18)
<b>Victim/perp. Relationship</b>		
Parent/child	0.53(0.27,1.02)	0.37(0.16,0.83)*
Partner	0.55(0.28,1.04)	0.53(0.24,1.13)
Siblings	0.52(0.20,1.31)	0.43(0.15,1.25)
Other	1	1
<b>Violence type</b>		
Economic	1	1
Emotional	1.55(0.93,2.59)	1.74(1.01,2.99)*
Physical	5.40(3.96,7.39)***	5.33(3.84,7.46)***
Sexual	5.70(3.29,10.28)***	4.74(2.43,9.54)***
<b>Officer gender</b>		
Male	1.07(0.82,1.39)	1.01(0.77,1.33)

Female	1	1
<b>Officer rank</b>		
Constable	1	1
Sergeant	0.69(0.46,1.03)	0.72(0.47,1.09)
Inspector	0.61(0.40,0.93)*	0.71(0.46,1.11)
<b>Officer Experience</b>		
0-5 years	0.59(0.38,0.91)*	0.66(0.42,1.05)
6-10 years	1.05(0.69,1.58)	1.02(0.66,1.58)
11-15 years	1	1
16-20 years	0.95(0.65,1.39)	1.02(0.68,1.52)

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UNDER PEER REVIEW

## Discussion

This study sought to analyse factors associated with arrest decision-making in domestic violence cases in Zambia using multiple regression modelling of data extracted from police administrative data between 2017 and 2019 in Lusaka urban district. The review of literature shows that no study of this nature has been conducted in Zambia and thus bolstering the importance of our findings in the fight against domestic violence.

Findings from descriptive statistics revealed that domestic violence still remains a serious social problem in Zambia as more cases against women are still being reported to the police. Like some previous studies, this study found that gender is an important factor in arrest decision processes, in that arrest rates are high for cases involving female victims and low when perpetrators are females. Further, arrest rates in sexual offences are very high favouring minor victims aged between 0 and 15 years (20). Arrest rates were also found to be high in low cost residential communities and, among those in a sexual relationship for physical violence and between parents and their children for sexual violence (28). Notably, the results from the bivariate show that most of the factors examined had significant influence on decisions to make an arrest (9); (11). However, the age of the victim, perpetrator ethnicity and the gender of police officers were non-significant (8).

In the logistic analysis, most of the variable categories had weak influence on arrest decision-making. Despite the Chi-squared test statistics showing that more arrest are made against male perpetrators, gender of the victim and perpetrator had surprising results contrary from most of the prior studies that report that police officers are likely to make an arrest in cases involving female victims and less likely to arrest female suspects (10,18,21). The results for this study reveal that the police are more likely to make an arrest when the victims were male than female. Although the difference in the odds is not significant by a factor of 0.02, the police officers are almost less likely to make an arrest when the perpetrators were male. We could not find any proper explanation for this finding. However, we attributed this finding to the fact that most female victims lack social networks that could offer support for an arrest. Further, the masculinity practices limit and influence women's preferences (30), since arrest decision-making in Zambia are based on the wishes and preferences of the victims. Further, unlike men, most women in Zambia regard men in their lives as breadwinners and higher dependency on men for survival and therefore exhibit unwillingness to support an arrest because of economic costs that are likely to ensue if the male breadwinner is arrested and eventually imprisoned (7,31). Therefore, they would only support simple imprisonment of few days to punish them briefly and later withdraw the case.

Concerning victim age, this study corroborate the findings of previous scholars who claim that extra-legal factors had no influence on arrest decision-making (32). Although others have found it to be a significant predictor (26). By contrast, in this study, it was found that perpetrator age had an effect on the likelihood of making an arrest (11,33). The finding was quite interesting because the older a perpetrator was, the more the police were likely to make an arrest. This finding is new and we could not find proper explanation or literature to support it. Consistent with prior studies that report of neighbourhood characteristics as having an effect in a decision to make an arrest (11,33), this study also found that victims living in medium cost and areas outside the classification of LCC had their cases likely to result in an arrest but those living in high cost areas had their cases less likely to end in an arrest. This result could be attributed to the fact that those living in high-cost areas are not willing to wash their linen in public because of their high social standing and they would prefer to resolve their cases outside the police. In contrast, this study did not find perpetrator's residential area to affect decision-making (8,10).

The study found that the ethnicity of the victim had an effect on arrest decisions favouring Kaonde and Lunda/Luvale but the study could not find any significant support for perpetrator's ethnicity. Prior studies too had mixed results; Lee et al. (2013) and (26) found

that all the extra-legal characteristics influences the decisions to make an arrest whilst others do not support the claim. Further, this study did not find any significant support for victim/perpetrator relationship and police officers' profiles to have an effect on arrest decision-making (26). Other studies claim that being in an intimate relationship increases the likelihood of an arrest (8,16) and being a male police officer increases chances that a decision to arrest would be made (34).

As expected and just like many prior studies (8,11), this study found strong evidence for the only legal factors that were examined. The decision to arrest has very high odds in physical and sexual violence (32). The plausible explanation for physical and sexual violence as strong predictors of arrest decision-making lies in that some physical assault cases such as unlawful wounding and causing grievous harm are felonious cases that cannot be withdrawn at police level whilst most of sexual offences are defilement cases committed against minors under the age of 16. Therefore, serious DV cases receive overwhelming police responses and end up in arresting the suspects.

Although it appears that many cases end up in arrest, more still needs to be done because the high levels of domestic violence perpetration shows that the police respond to cases of with leniency. Further, there are many networks and referral systems among the focal departments through the One Stop Centres (31) to ensuring that victims of domestic violence are assisted and the perpetrators are brought before the justice system. Further, in Lusaka there are even Multi-Disciplinary Team Meetings (MDTs) that brings together members of Zambia police service, National Prosecution Authority (NPA), health and social welfare to ensure that all the stakeholders are on the same page on matters relating to DV and help in reducing the existing gaps in the investigations and prosecution processes.

## **Conclusion**

This study attempted to examine the likelihood of decision-making in domestic violence in Zambia. The findings suggest that DV cases in Zambia are still very high despite massive campaigns against its perpetration. The major factors associated with arrest decisions include both extra-legal and legal factors. However, victim age, perpetrator area of residence, relationship type and the characteristics of police officers seem not to have any effects on decision-making. Policy efforts should also be made towards advocacy and awareness programmes. We therefore recommend that victim support unit should receive appropriate funding to carry out awareness campaigns and educational programmes. As Meyer & Reeves (2021) note, police officers should also endeavour to neglect victims' preference in arrest decisions but this should not be done to infringe the rights of the victims.

## **Weakness and Areas for Future Research**

This study has some limitations. Firstly, the study was conducted in Lusaka urban and the results may not be generalizable beyond the city of Lusaka and period covered by this study. Secondly, the tribe variable was mostly based on names as it was missing in some of the case files; hence, it lacks precision because same names are found across tribes. However, it was made sure that the data was as accurate as possible. Future research should focus on a broader sample base with a national character. Further, research should also focus on the behaviour of police officers towards the victims and if they follow laid down procedures in the discharge of their duties (see also Waaland & Keeley, 1985: 366).

## **Ethics approval and consent to participate**

We obtained ethical clearance approvals from the University of Zambia Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (UNZAHSSREC) and permission was given by Zambia Police (ZP). Further, only the data relevant to this study was extracted from DV case files. No names, phones numbers and other contact addresses were recorded.

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