Factors Influencing Arrest Decision-Making in Domestic Violence Cases in Zambia

Abstract

Domestic violence is among the mostprevalent 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 on the Zambia police service officers' decision-making in domestic violence cases reported to them. Data consisting of 1258 cases of domestic violencefrom 2017-2019 were collected from five urban police stations in Lusaka city. In this study, we used univariate, bivariate and multiple logistic regression analysis to examine police officers' decision-making in domestic violence cases.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.Policy strategies and effortsshould be channelled towards advocacy and awareness programmes across the communities and should not neglect the participation of victim support unit (VSU) police officers. Therefore, the 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, cases

1. Introduction

Domestic violenceis 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(WHO)[2] reports thatat least three in five women experiencelifetime violence.Consequences of physical violence include causing permanent disabilities, homicide, poor health, insecurity, and mental health challenges and may disruptthesocial 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. Zambia Statistics Agency (ZamStats) et al [41] report that 39 percent of women in Zambia have been abused either physically or sexually. Further, ZamStats [41] highlight that gender based violence (GBV) in Zambia affects the health and economic activities of the victims, and it interferes with social relationships and the ability for the children to get an education.In 2013, the estimated economic cost of GBV was ZMW 1.78 billion [42].

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, despite the effort by the government and other stakeholders targeted at its prevention,fighting domestic violencehas been a challenging endeavourin Zambia becausemany cases tend to bewithdrawn at the police stations [7].Menon et al [42] have even being critical against the justice systemand argue that police abuse of perpetrators and survivors and corruption of the police officers interfere with case processing. This raises questions on the policing of domestic violence in Zambia. For example, what factors influence the police to arrestthe perpetrators ofdomestic violence?

To date, research on thefactors that affect police decision-making processes has been scarcein 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 affectingarrest 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 studiesconducted by O'Neal et al [8], DurfeeandFetzer [9], Dawson andHotton [10] and Lee et al [11] have identified several factors that are associated with the likelihood of arrest in domestic violence cases. Most of these studies reveal that thedecision to arrest depends on the type of domestic violence offence [9-11]. According to DurfeeandFetzer [9], physical assault with evidence is more likely to result in arrest compared to other types of domestic violence offences. Durfee andFetzer [9], show thatan arrest for physical assaults cases is 51.6%more likely thansexual assault at26.2% and verbal intimidationsis at 22.9%. The reason for this could be attributed to the fact that physical injuries could enhance the credibility of the cases, but it is difficult to prove sexual assault in cases involving partners.In Africa, some researchers have also foundthat the nature of the offence hasan influence on the decision of whether to charge the suspect or not[12-14].Samuels et al [31] talk about the police focusing too much on assault cases because they inflict injuries. Therefore, it can be ascertained that what matters the most is the seriousness of the offence [9,15-17].Lee et al [11]seem to confirm this assertion as they report high odds ofarrest decision-making in serious domestic violence casesdue to the presence of injuries.

Further, previous studies have shown that demographic factors such as age[9,11], gender[18,21],relationship type[9], area of residence[10,11,39],and ethnicity [9,22,33]have an effect on the decision to make an arrest.Concerning the age of both the victims and perpetrators, Durfee andFetzer [9], Lee et al [11] and Gover et al [19] found it to be one of the explanatory factors in domestic violence arrest decision-makingprocesses.Durfee andFetzer [9]show that victim age have a statistical significant relationship with the decision to make an arrestHirschel et al [37]also demonstrate that offender age is significantly associated with the odds of arrest. They found that an increase in age by a year increases the chances ofarrest by less than 1 percent.Another study also discusses that the odds of arrest are greater when the age difference between the victim and the perpetrator is wider[11], and cases involving children aged 16 years or younger have low attrition rate[20].However,Dawson andHotton [10] failed tofind age to be a predictor of arrest decision-making.

The other factor relates to gender. Kingsnorth andMacIntosh [21]note that arrest decisions are more likely when the perpetrator is malecompared to when they are female. Richards andHarinam [18]also suggest that being a male suspect increases the chances of arrest.They further show that cases which involve female victims are more likely to result in arrest than the ones where the victims are male.Further, Dawson andHotton [10] report that gender of the victim is significantly associated with arrest decisions with the odds of placing charges against the offenders being higher by a factor of 2.4 for female victims.To the contrary, Dichter et al [33] after confounding factors were controlled found the gender of the suspect to have no influenceon arrest outcome.

Concerning relationship type, Tasca et al [17]show that in cases where there is a close relationship between the victim and perpetrator, the likelihood of arrest is very lowbut being married increases the likelihood of arrest in assault cases[9].Rollwagen and Jacob [40] report that crimes involving people in an intimate relationship have an increased likelihood of resulting in an arrest than those in an immediate/extended family type because aggression against a dating partner may summon police response but violence concerning avictim and an offender who are family members could be tolerated.

Area of residence is also significantly associated with arrest decisions in that,community characteristics affect the probability of an arrest[39].Huff [39]observes that the nature of a locality is predictor of arrest outcomes. The author points out that arrest decisions are more

likely in areas where Hispanic and Black people live.According to Lee et al [11], neighbourhood differences seem to be stronger predictors of arrest with poor areas having greater effect on arrest decisions. Dichter et al [33] discuss that in Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), the likelihood of arrests are high in influent residential areas and in the suburban. The reason was attributed to the fact that police stations in such areas are less busy and officers have more time to respond to reports of IPV. However, Dawson andHotton[10]observe no effect on the odds that the police would charge the suspect.

Concerning ethnicity,Durfee andFetzer [9]confirm that a relationship exists between ethnicity and arrest decision-making by indicating that Black complainants have lower odds to have their cases result in an arrest compared to people of unknown race and the Whites. Further, they found reduced odds of arrest for Black suspects and people of unknown race than for the White offenders. O'Neal et al [8]found that officers take crimes committed against the Whites more serious than those against Blacks and Hispanics.Dichter et al [33]also found a bias in arrest outcome, favouring Whites. Hirschel et al [37] provide that cases involving Black suspects and victims have reduced odds of arrest because IPV offences seem to be tolerated and normalised in Black communities as Black victims prefer no arrest decisions.However, Hall [22] found no relationship between race and arrest decision-making.

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 [25]only found gender of police officers to be a predictor of arrest decision-making. However, Franklin et al [38]indicate that rank, years of service and being a female police have no effect on the outcome of arrest.Eitle[26]alsodid not observe any likelihood of arrest decision-making when police officers profiles were analysed.

The Current Study

This study is important because previous studies are mostly conducted in developed countries and conflict each other. It was also discovered that these past studies concentrated on either physical or sexual forms of violence and intimate partner violence. In orderto contextualise the outcomes to the Zambian situation and environmentand to provide a holistic perspective, our study examined four forms of domestic violence; economic, sexual, emotional and physical, and includes many types of relationships such as partners, parent/child, siblings and other relationships such as cousins, co-wives and living in maids.

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 domestic violence casesthat were reported to victim support unit between 2017 and 2019were extracted from police record filesandwereincluded in the final analysis.The data was extracted from police case files with the help of police officers under the victim support unit. 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.We usedRStudiobecause it is an open source and it is obtained without any payment.The analysis started with univariatedescriptive statistics and then a test of independence between each independent variable and the dependent variable was determined using Chi-square (χ^2). We used a multiple logistic regression models, with 95% odds ratio confidence intervals(CI)to ascertain the strength and direction of associations.

The chi-square test was used as an initial examination of the relationship between the independent variables and the outcome variable. But because it only reveals the statistical significant without controlling the effects of confounding factors, we applied multiple regression analysis with 95 CI because it provides the size of the relationship between the predictor and the outcome variables and the direction of the relationship. More so, it provides the statistical significance and contribution of each variable category. As Forgart [27]notes, multiple regression analysis prevents the possibility of having a spurious relationship between the covariates and the outcome variable.

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, β is a vector of coefficient and ϵ 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 predicator 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 LambaLuvale = 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 aspersons 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 experiencewas 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%), livingin low-cost areas (55.48%) andamong the Bemba tribe (29.41%). Further, it was established that more cases involvingintimate 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%, andregardingyears 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 Statistics and Chi-square (χ2)Testof Arrest Decision-Making for DV Cases Reported to the Police in Lusaka Urban

Variables	Total (n = 1258)		
	n	%	n (%)
Victim Characteristics			
Victim age			***
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)
Victim gender			***
Male	247	19.63	191(15.18)
Female	1011	80.37	647(51.43)
Victim residential area			**
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)
Victim tribe			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)
Perpetrator Characteristics			
Perpetrator age			ns
15-24	115	9.16	86(6.85)
25-34	518	41.24	3470(27.63)
35-44	429	34.16	282(22.45)
45+	194	15.45	122(9.71)
Perpetrator gender			*
Male	1029	81.8	670(53.26)
Female	229	18.2	168(13.35)

Perpetrator residential area			***
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)
Perpetrator Tribe			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)
Officer Profiles			
Officer gender			ns
Male	606	48.17	401(31.88)
Female	652	51.83	437(34.74)
Officer rank			***
Constable	267	21.22	206(16.38)
Sergeant	341	27.11	216(17.17)
Inspector	650	51.67	416(33.07)
Officer Experience			***
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)
Other Variables			
Victim/perp. Relationship			***
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)
Violence type			***
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)
Arrested			
Yes	838	66.61	
No	420	33.39	

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

3.2. MultipleRegression Logistic Analysis for Predicator 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 tovictim 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 thatcases 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 (RO= 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 inModel 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

	Adjusted odds ratio			
Variables	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)*
Victim Characteristics				
Victim age				
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)**
Victim gender				
Male	1.82(1.31,2.57)***			2.03(1.29,3.26)**
Female	1			1
Victim residential area				
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)*
Victim tribe				
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)
Perpetrator Characteristics				
Perpetrator age				
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)
Perpetrator gender			
Male	0.69(0.49,0.95)*		0.98(0.62,1.54)
Female	1		1
Perpetrator residentialarea			
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)*
Perpetrator Tribe			
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)
Officer Profiles			
Officer gender			
Male		1.07(0.82,1.39)	1.01(0.77,1.33)
Female		1	1
Officer rank			
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)
Officer Experience			
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)
Other Variables		
Victim/perp. Relationship		
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
Violence type		
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)***

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 reportedbetween 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 fromdescriptive statistics revealed thatdomestic 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 thatgender 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 Chi-squaretestshows 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 studiesthat 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 are 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 are 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 arebased on the wishes and preferences of the victims. Further, unlike men, most women in Zambia regard men in their lives as breadwinners[7], and they havehigher dependency on men for survival and therefore exhibit unwillingness to support an arrest because of economic costs that are likely to ensue if themale breadwinner is arrested and eventually imprisoned[7,31].Frontieres [7] also report that men have the decision-making power to choose which cases to pursue with the police and the courts. Therefore, victims would only support simple imprisonment of few days to punish the offenders 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 report domestic violence casesbecause 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. [11] andEitle[26] found that all the extra-legal characteristics influence the decisions to make an arrest whilst others do not support the claimHall [22. 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 casescommitted 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 [35] 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 36; p. 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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