

Challenges newspapers face when reporting gender-based violence in Tanzania

Abstract

The traditional media plays an important role as an agent of change, an agenda setter for various societal concerns, and a watchdog for whatever goes astray. Vested with such roles, the media, therefore, contributes greatly to the fight against Gender-based Violence (GBV) through the information published in newspapers, televisions, and all other media facilities. In Tanzania, newspapers report incidences of GBV to influence unacceptable behaviour and practices to be abandoned and to adapt to norms and values that are acceptable in society

This study examined the challenges newspapers face when reporting GBV in Tanzania. Despite the anecdotal evidence that the media in Tanzania and some other countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Ghana, and Nigeria plays a major role in reporting GBV complementing the existing policies, strategies, plans, and efforts of various stakeholders who are on the front line in fighting GBV, the media faces various challenges that render it ineffective in playing its role of being an agent to reduce and or erode the problem.

The study was conducted in Tanzania covering Unguja and Pemba (Zanzibar) and the regions of Mwanza, Kigoma, Dodoma, Iringa, Mtwara, and Tanga (Tanzania Mainland). The cross-sectional, and triangulation approach was applied to gather the required information while employing both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and analysis. The study had a total sample size of 161 respondents, including 84 respondents for quantitative data and 77 (seven editors, seven reporters, and 63 media audiences) for qualitative data. The study applied univariate techniques to analyse quantitative data and content and thematic analysis for the qualitative data.

Findings from the study revealed that there were seven key challenges that newspapers face when reporting GBV in Tanzania. All these challenges can negatively effect not only the contribution of media in eliminating this atrocity but also efforts of the The challenges were scarcity of GBV-educated and specialized reporters, lack of investment in investigative journalism on Gender-based Violence issues, peer pressure not to report the GBV cases involving influential people's family members and or relatives, and lack of urgency to GBV news. Others were threats directed to GBV reporters from the perpetrators and or perpetrators' relatives, lack of timely and accurate GBV data as well as settlements of GBV cases out of court. The study concludes by proposing viable recommendations to reduce GBV in Tanzania effectively.

It is recommended that to contribute effectively to the reduction of the GBV in the country, the media should initiate and sustain in-house GBV reporting training for reporters and editors hired without specialization in GBV, stakeholders in the fight against GBV among NGOs, government, and media invest in investigative journalism with special emphasis in GBV to unearth the hidden issues. media organizations/outlets to promote adherence to journalism ethics in general and GBV reporting ethics specifically, media houses/outlets should consider establishing special GBV pages and pullout to improve urgency to GBV news, the government should guarantee the safety of GBV reporters/editors/sources, GBV data custodian improve

availability of timely and accurate GBV data and improved working collaboration between GBV stakeholders and media to promote access to justice among survivors and hence minimize settlements of GBV cases out of court

Keywords: *Newspapers, Reporting, Gender-based Violence, perpetrators, Tanzania.*

Introduction

This study examined the challenges newspapers face when reporting GBV issues in Tanzania. Traditionally, the media was expected to play a few roles: to inform, educate, and entertain (Arias, 2019; Wole-Abu, 2018; Shea, 1998). However, with improved democracy and the introduction of modern communication technologies, society's expectations of the media have expanded. Currently, the media in Tanzania and elsewhere are expected to play additional roles such as agenda-setting, watchdog, and social-behaviour change (Christian et al., 2009). In other developing countries such as South Africa media including social media conduct campaigns against GBV and group women and girls together to fight GBV and other forms of injustice (Sundani et al., 2022) though are blamed for ignoring GBV directed at men (Malatjie et al., 2024). It is in pursuing these roles that the media in Tanzania are also expected to play a role in reducing GBV in the country.

The media in general terms can be defined as the channels of communication through which various kinds of information, entertainment, data, and advertisement messages are disseminated to the targeted audience (Paul & Rai, 2021). These include newspapers, radio, television, magazines, newsletters, and social media platforms. Nevertheless, for this study, the term media was not used in its broad terms but narrowed specifically to refer to newspapers.

Literature Review

Gender-based Violence in Tanzania

Tanzania has a population of 61,741,120 according to the Population and Housing Census (2022). It involves 30,053,130 males (48.7%) and 31,687,990 females (51.3%). When it comes to Gender-based Violence (GBV), evidence shows that GBV remains a daily reality for a significant number of women, girls, and children in both Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar (TDHS – MIS, 2022; WB, 2017; TDHS – MIS, 2015-16) The persistence of the problem in the country poses instantaneous and lifelong socio-economic and public health consequences and challenges to women, girls and children as well as to national development not only in terms of cost but also in fulfilment of the promise of Gender equality comes 2030 as per Sustainable Development Goal number five (SDG 5 – Gender Equality). According to the Tanzania Demographic Health Survey and Malaria Indicator Survey (2022), about 22% percent of women who are divorced, separated, or widowed have ever experienced sexual violence. Recent violence against women (emotional, physical, or sexual) by a husband or intimate partners was at 33% while physical violence alone was at 24% and emotional violence at 22% (TDHS _ MIS, 2022) In Tanzania GBV is perpetrated by husbands/former husbands/ partners, teachers, relatives, mother/stepmother father/stepfather. For instance, according to UNICEF (2023), the most likely perpetrators of sexual violence against women and girls are current husband/partner (42%); former husband/partner (33%); or current/former boyfriend (11%) and friends (12%).

Gender-based Violence and Media

Globally, the role of media in combating GBV and other forms of discrimination against women is well acknowledged in most policies, strategies, and plans of action developed to end GBV (see Zimbabwe National Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence 2023-2030 and South Africa's National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence & Femicide). In Tanzania, evidence shows that the media in Tanzania play a role in reporting GBV. The media in Tanzania has been enjoying a wider platform for reporting various issues from as early as the 1990s when Tanzania consented to media pluralism by allowing the private ownership of media together with multipartyism politics. (Stummer, 1998). Mainstream media such as radio, television, and newspapers enjoy the freedom by sharing information in their traditional ways and through emerging social media platforms to hook audiences. However, despite the anecdotal evidence that media in Tanzania play a role in reporting GBV complementing the existing policies, strategies, plans, and efforts of various stakeholders, media face various challenges that may render it ineffective in reducing the problem (Twaweza, 2024; TDHS – MIS, 2022; Katunzi & Spurk, 2019; TDHS-MIS, 2015-16). The study was guided by Agenda Setting Theory by McCombs and Shaw as the lead theory and complimented by the Priming Theory by Iyengar, Peters, and Kender, and the Framing Theory by Gregory Bateson. These are the most common media effects theories, which complement each other in influencing members of the public to hold opinions as presented by the media.

Methodology

The current study applied a cross-sectional and a triangulation approach whereby both qualitative and quantitative research methods were applied in data collection, analysis, and reporting. The study was conducted in the United Republic of Tanzania which is made up of Tanzania's mainland and semi-autonomous Zanzibar. Specific the study was carried out in Tanga, Iringa, Dodoma, Mtwara, Kigoma, and Mwanza for Tanzania mainland and Unguja and Pemba for Zanzibar. It applied a purposive sampling technique to select seven (7) newspaper brands among the 16 regularly published newspapers in Tanzania and from which 14 respondents (seven editors and seven news reporters) - one editor and one reporter from each newspaper were purposively selected for interviews on challenges that media faces on reporting GBV. In addition, questionnaires were administered to 84 newspaper audiences from all research regions, and 63 other news readers were involved in Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The data collected was carefully sorted and analysed using appropriate methods. The researcher used univariate techniques to analyse quantitative data and content and thematic analysis for the qualitative data.

Table 1: Newspapers involved in the study

S/N	Name of Newspaper	Frequency of Publication	Ownership
1	Daily News	Daily	Government-owned
2	HabariLeo	Daily	Government-owned
3	Zanzibar Leo	Daily	Government-owned
4	The Guardian	Daily	Privately-owned
5	The Citizen	Daily	Privately-owned
6	Mwananchi	Daily	Privately owned

7	Nipashe	Daily	Privately owned
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Source: *Researcher compilation (2023)*

Findings and Discussion

In pursuing the response to the research question, the study used two indicators - the challenges from within that media face in reporting Gender-based Violence; and the external challenges that the media face in reporting Gender-based Violence.

Challenges within the Media

Regarding the scarcity of GBV reporters who are conversant and specialized in the field, it was found out that, there is a lack of such reporters. This was indicated by 93% of the respondents who said there are no conversant and specialized reporters on GBV type of news. Hence the existing challenge in effectively reporting the GBV news is indicated in the table below.

Table 2: The scarcity of GBV-educated and specialized reporters in newspapers

The Scarcity of GBV-educated and Specialized reporters in newspapers is a challenge to GBV reporting

	Male	Female	Total	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	11	5	16	19
Agree	32	30	62	74
Neutral	0	2	2	2
Disagree	3	1	4	5
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
Total	46	38	84	100

Source: *Researcher compilation (2023)*

Qualitative results also indicated that the scarcity of GBV educated and specialized reporters were a challenge. One FGD respondent elaborated that GBV is multifaceted, and it cannot be eliminated if journalists who report about it have partial knowledge about it. Some respondents even suggested that the media should take measures not only to increase the number of reporters but also to make formal qualification on GBV a pre-requisite for a person to be assigned as a reporter on GBV issues. In FGD conducted in Unguja, one respondent had the following to say:

“I think the time is ripe for newspapers in Tanzania to emulate newspapers from the developed world by ensuring that people who are assigned to make coverage of various sectors are not only knowledgeable in the areas but also have formal education as a prerequisite before being assigned. In the developed world, reporters who report wars are experts in the area and so are those who report

foreign affairs, agriculture, environment, and the like. This can be emulated in Tanzania if we are to end GBV through media". (FGD respondent, Unguja)

The editors during interviews admitted that there was a scarcity of GBV conversant and specialized reporters. Therefore, there was a challenge to the media. They proposed that media authorities should try to provide on-the-job training in the area as a mitigation measure.

As regards the challenge of lack of investment in investigative journalism on Gender-based Violence Issues, 88% expressed the concern that it is a serious challenge to GBV proper and effective reporting as can be seen in Table.2 below.

Table 3: Lack of investment in investigative journalism on GBV issues

Lack of investment in investigative journalism on GBV issues in newspapers is a challenge to GBV reporting

	Male	Female	Total	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	4	13	17	20
Agree	36	21	57	68
Neutral	5	4	9	11
Disagree	1	0	1	1
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
Total	46	38	84	100

Source: *Researcher compilation (2023)*

On the other hand, results from participants involved in this study agreed on the need to invest in investigative journalism to unearth the GBV issues as it will help to reduce the notion of impunity among perpetrators and improve the public's confidence that GBV can be eliminated and that lack of investment in investigative journalism to GBV is a challenge to media in Tanzania. One respondent in Pemba shared the following quotation:

"As a newspaper reader, my experience with GBV news in our newspapers in Zanzibar, and I think Tanzania at large, is that it is very rare to see big news that has been revealed after many days of investigation, the way we see in corruption or drugs. Most of the news we read is incident-based. In my opinion, this is a problem because if the media does not make separate investigations, perpetrators who manage to conceal their GBV crimes will be confident that they are safe. This will motivate them to continue humiliating women without a fear that their wrongdoings may one day be exposed in the media". (FGD respondent, Pemba)

Editors also admitted and emphasised the importance of investigative journalism in unearthing the truth on GBV issues but lamented the affordability of the same in their newspapers because of limited resources thus remaining an unresolved challenge. One of the English medium newspaper editors had this to say:

"Applying Investigative journalism in revealing GBV issues needs real investments. This is because it requires a lot of money to support reporters that will be assigned for the work, it needs special reporters that will not be assigned

on other issues and it needs time as it takes days, weeks, and even months to have a complete story. For newspapers with small economy like ours, we cannot afford such kind of investment". (Interview respondent, Editor)

As for reporters, they believe that for effective reporting the newspapers must invest more. They said the current way of reporting only helps to inform people what is going on in the area, but it does not provide the hidden part of the story. One reporter of the Kiswahili newspaper said the following:

"Conducting a journalistic investigation on GBV issues may be expensive but, in my opinion, we still need to do it as it is the only way that we can expose the inner information that cannot be attained by reporting stories the way we do currently (Interview respondent, Reporter).

Regarding reporters being pressurised not to report GBV cases involving influential people's family members and or relatives, about 87%of respondents indicated that, journalists are being pressurised by media colleagues (peers) not to report the GBV issues involving family members and relatives of influential people, those with authority. Table 3 below clarifies.

Table 4: Peer pressure not to report the GBV Cases

Peer pressure not to report the GBV cases involving influential people's family members and relatives is a challenge to GBV reporting.

	Male	Female	Total	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	4	4	8	10
Agree	38	27	65	77
Neutral	4	5	9	11
Disagree	0	2	2	2
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
Total	46	38	84	100

Source: *Researcher compilation (2023)*

FGD respondents claimed that the issue of peer pressure not to report GBV is caused by corruption and *Muhali* (the situation of refraining from taking action against the perpetrator because you want to safeguard friendship or family ties). However, in general, they agreed that it is a challenge to the media which not only affects media credibility, but it affects the whole exercise of fighting GBV in Tanzania. FGD participants in Tanga had the following to say:

"The problem of GBV continues to persist because of these kinds of issues. There is some sort of bias in reporting serious issues. If it involves ordinary people, quickly media exposes the problem but if the problem particularly GBV touches an influential person, it will never be published or if it was published the first time, it will not be published again. This is an enduring challenge to media and without stopping this we should not expect success in fighting GBV in our country". (FGD respondent, Tanga)

Editors and reporters in their verbatim statements concurred about the presence of the challenge. One of them said that several times has experienced pressure from his colleagues within the same newspapers and sometimes reporters from other media asking him not to report a certain GBV issue particularly if the alleged perpetrator is a relative or family member of an influential person. One of the editors narrated his experience as follows:

“About one year ago there was an asexual violence story in which the alleged perpetrator was a son of the regional commissioner. It was gathered by our reporter from the police briefing. When I was editing the story first, I was discouraged by my fellow editors in the newsroom that I should not allow it to be published as it would embarrass the regional commissioner and the government at large. Thereafter I also received a call from RC himself asking me not to report the story because it would cast a bad image of him to the society. After a long discussion with the chief editor, we decided to go on and publish the story but with a lot of censorship of original information sent by a reporter”. (Interview respondent – Editor)

As regards to lack of attention to GBV news, 96% of the respondents indicated that, lack of attention to GBV news is among the challenges facing media in reporting GBV. Table 4 below clarifies.

Table 5: Lack of urgency to GBV news

The lack of attention to GBV news is a challenge to GBV reporting in Tanzania.

	Male	Female	Total	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	21	18	39	46
Agree	23	19	42	50
Neutral	2	1	3	4
Disagree	0	0	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
Total	46	38	84	100

Source: *Researcher compilation (2023)*

In qualitative findings, respondents shared their experience on GBV news in support of the statement insisting that it has been an enduring challenge to Tanzania newspapers. They often compared the lack of urgency to GBV news to the priority given to political news and sports news. Participants pointed out that the time is ripe for newspapers to provide a balance between business and society in publishing their news.

The news reporters had the opinion that GBV is not given the priority it deserves by the newspapers they are reporting for and may affect the reaction and action that audiences were expected to take. One of the reporters shared the following quote:

“As a reporter, I do not have direct influence on where the story should be published but I know that a story reported on the front page is valued differently with one placed on inside pages”. (Interview respondent, Reporter)

Challenges outside the Media

As for the threat directed at GBV reporters from the perpetrators and perpetrators' relatives, it was clear from the quantitative findings that 78% of respondents believe the threat directed to GBV reporters from the perpetrators and or perpetrators' relatives affects media to effectively report GBV.

Table 6: Threat directed to GBV reporters from the perpetrators and or perpetrators' relatives.

The threat directed to GBV reporters from the perpetrators and or perpetrators' relatives is a challenge to GBV reporting in Tanzania

	Male	Female	Total	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	3	9	12	14
Agree	31	23	54	64
Neutral	8	5	13	15
Disagree	3	2	5	6
Strongly disagree	1	1	2	1
Total	46	38	84	100

Source: *Researcher compilation (2023)*

According to the United Nations Cultural and Scientific Organizations (UNESCO, 2024) media and journalist are threatened to silence them or pressurize them to censor their work for the benefit of a few.

Respondents said threats were caused due to fear by perpetrators that the media will expose them for their wrongdoing leading to loss of credibility in society and ending up being taken to court One of FGD respondents from Pemba said: -

“Threat to journalists reporting GBV is a challenge to media in reporting GBV which should not be ignored because the impact of being intimidated will not end up in media but will come back to society. If reporters are silenced and do not reveal the sexual, physical, and emotional violence that women go through almost daily we will end up having a rotten society that does not respect women”. (FGD respondent, Pemba)

As for editors and reporters mentioned verbatim statement that threat is a challenge to reporters reporting GBV. One editor shared a story of a GBV reporter in their paper who was intimidated just because she reported the GBV incident. One interview respondent among reporters shared the following narration: -

“From my experience, there are some people within the community that like to settle GBV cases out of courts – at the family level. The family of the perpetrator and survivor negotiate the compensation so that the perpetrator should not be taken to court as they know that if it is a rape case the penalty is up to 30 years in jail. Because they understand that when the issue is exposed by the media the

police and other law enforcement agents will intervene and make the family settlement difficult, they do not want the media to report the issue at all. This is why when they know that someone from the media is making follow-ups on the issues, they try to threaten them” (Interview respondent – Reporter)

As regards to lack of timely and accurate GBV data, 83% of the respondents perceived the lack of timely and accurate GBV data as a serious challenge facing media in reporting GBV.

Table 7: Lack of timely and accurate GBV data

Lack of timely and accurate GBV data is a challenge to GBV reporting in Tanzania media

	Male	Female	Total	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	12	11	23	27
Agree	28	19	47	56
Neutral	0	6	6	7
Disagree	6	2	8	10
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
Total	46	38	84	100

Source: *Researcher compilation (2023)*

In qualitative findings, FGD participants said lack of timely and accurate GBV data is a challenge not only to media personnel but also to media audiences because media audiences depend on the data shared by media to understand the magnitude of the problem in their respective areas. One of the FGD participants in Dodoma had the following to say:

In my opinion, data is everything in reporting GBV because when people read newspapers, they want to see evidence of what is being said in the article for them to believe. The media should find a solution to the problem of lack of timely and accurate GBV data. If newspapers continue to report GBV articles without data, it will take time to see its impact because people will not be motivated to take action as they do not know the severity or magnitude of the problem. (FGD respondent – Dodoma)

Editors and reporters were also asked about the availability of timely and accurate GBV data, they indicated that it is difficult to obtain data. Officers in District offices normally need several days and sometimes weeks to provide needed information to support the GBV articles in a newspaper. Regarding` data gathered from national prevalence surveys, editors claimed that the data are of high level, and it is difficult to narrow it down to show the readers that GBV is also a problem at their respective places.

Regarding settlements of GBV cases out of court, 81% of respondents pointed out the issue as big challenge media in Tanzania face when it comes to GBV reporting GBV.

Table 8: Settlements of GBV cases out of court

Settlements of GBV cases out of court are a challenge to GBV reporting in Tanzania.

	Male	Female	Total	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	7	5	12	14
Agree	25	31	56	67
Neutral	9	1	10	12
Disagree	5	1	6	7
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0
Total	46	38	84	100

Source: *Researcher compilation (2023)*

Focus Group Discussion respondents said settlements of GBV cases out of court is a challenge as it lead to lack of trust in justice enforcement organizations. One of the participants argued that the families of survivors particularly on cases relating to sexual violence were not sure if they would get justice for their cases as most of the cases are dropped along the way and few that move forward, do not get convictions. This makes the families settle the issues with the perpetrators or perpetrators' families. One of the FGD participants in Kigoma shares the following:

“Settlement of GBV cases out of court is a challenge not only to media but to the fight against GBV itself. While the media misses the continuation of reporting when the case is settled at the family level, the community misses everything because the perpetrators continue to walk free and most likely may continue to humiliate more women and children”. (FGD respondent, Kigoma)

Editors and reporters added that settlements of GBV cases out of court are a challenge to media though is outside of the media itself. Editors said the settlements of GBV cases are most of the time made after the GBV issues have been revealed and many cases reported by media. It is a challenge because the media misses the continuation of reporting on the story to the last stage. This makes the audience feel that the media do not pay much attention to GBV cases.

Discussion of Findings

The study findings indicate that there were seven key challenges that newspapers face when reporting Gender-based Violence in Tanzania. These include scarcity of GBV educated and specialized reporters, lack of Investment in Investigative Journalism on Gender-based Violence Issues, Fear of reporting GBV cases involving influential people's family members and or relatives, Lack of Urgency to GBV News, threats directed to GBV Reporters from the Perpetrators and or Perpetrators' Relatives, Lack of Timely and Accurate GBV Data and Settlement of GBV cases out of court.

Regarding the scarcity of GBV educated and specialized reporters, 93% of the respondents agreed that there is a lack of such specialized reports. Their views tallied with the editors and reporters who also admitted that there was a scarcity of such specialized reporters. The scarcity of specialized reporters on the theme seems to be a worldwide problem causing inefficiency in

GBV reporting and the struggle to end the problem as it is also indicated by Tuneva and Bashkova (2023)

Tuneva and Bashkova, (2023) argued that efficiency in GBV reporting will only be attained by ensuring that journalists have proper GBV reporting education, enabling them to gain the skills necessary to handle sensitive GBV topics and interview survivors with empathy and respect.

Speaking of the consequences of the lack of specialized reporters in Kenya, Njuki (2018) said media reports of Gender-based Violence end up representing a pattern where serious GBV issues such as rape or other forms of GBV are treated lightly, as humour, and often women and girls are blamed for the violence subjected against them (Njuki, 2018). According to Dekic (2017), it is the role of the newspaper specifically the editorial board to support the education and specialization of journalists who report Gender-based Violence. She argued when a journalist specializes in one topic, it enables them to establish and maintain contact with their sources efficiently, obtain information, and follow up on the development of the issues they covered. TAMWA (2023) added that specialised reporters over time develop a network of experts who can always be consulted something which transforms reporters to be more sensitive when reporting about GBV and GBV survivors (TAMWA, 2023).

According to framing theory, for a piece of information to have the potential to change the attitudes of audiences in addition to being well presented as an agenda it needs to be framed in such a way that the important aspect of the issue is given greater emphasis or priority, so that to enable the problem to be defined, its causes, interpreted, moral judgments suggested and appropriate solutions and actions are proposed to audiences (Entman, 1993).

As regards the lack of investment in investigative journalism on Gender-based Violence issues 88% of respondents agreed it is a challenge that hampers efficient media reporting of GBV in Tanzania.

The above quantitative findings were supplemented by verbatim statements from editors and reporters who insisted on the importance of investigative journalism in unearthing the truth on GBV issues. However, they admitted that investigative journalism is rarely done in GBV because it is not affordable to their newspapers due to limited resources.

Dekic (2017) suggests that GBV stakeholders should encourage the media to carry out investigative stories about GBV that cover different aspects of the atrocity. By investing in investigative stories media will be able to come out with articles that paint a bigger picture of the problem of GBV, its causes and consequences as well as trends and statistics. This will enable GBV to be presented as a problem of the community as a whole and not individual women (Dekic, 2017).

The need to invest in investigative journalism has also been emphasised by Galvao (2023) who argued that investigative journalism plays a significant role in holding strong institutions accountable and providing power to members of society by offering them accurate information that can help in decision-making. Where it happens, investigative journalism helps to expose the corruption, and human rights abuses and establish a tradition of in-depth and accurate reporting even in areas burdened with corrupt duty bearers. (Kaplan & Sullivan, 2016)

As regards pressure directed at journalists, 87% of respondents believed that journalists are being pressurised by their media colleagues not to report the GBV issues involving family

members and relatives of influential people specifically persons with authority and that it was a challenge facing media in Tanzania in reporting GBV. This is a serious challenge because it may be a decreased number of GBV issues reported in media and thus having what Macek and Voithl (2022) called “the news that did not make the news”. While this problem is not widely discussed by media personnel it can be among the reasons that GBV remains thinly reported by both privately and publicly owned newspapers (Macek & Voithl, 2022). Suggesting a panacea to pressures aimed at suppressing the GBV stories United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2020) suggested strict adherence to one of the main ethical principles of journalism “duty to inform”. By knowing their duty to inform news reporters will manage not only to distinguish between what is in the public interest to report as far as GBV is concerned but also to avoid being drawn back by outside pressure of those with intent to suppress GBV stories.

GBV is mainly rooted in inequality and prejudices against women and girls. Hence in reporting on Gender-based Violence, news reporters and editors must remain aware of their own biases on GBV and their negative cultural perceptions about women and girls if they are to avoid becoming stumbling blocks to GBV reporting within their media (TAMWA, 2023)

As for the lack of urgency to GBV, 96% of respondents mentioned it as a challenge. The quantitative results were complemented by the qualitative findings where respondents agreed in a verbatim statement that it is a problem. One interview respondent pointed out that GBV editors need extra efforts to convince others within the editorial cycle to place the GBV news on the front page compared to news about politics.

Tuneva and Bashkova (2023) in their study had the same opinion as the findings of the current study that issues related to GBV were not given the priority they deserve in media reporting or, it is rarely done. Their study observed the lack of will as well as interest to report on the GBV topics from editors and or media owners who most of the time dictate editorial policy and as a result do not accord enough space to GBV in their newspapers (Tuneva & Bashkova, 2023). The findings are also corroborated by the findings of the study carried out by the Tanzania Media Women Association (TAMWA – Zanzibar, 2023) that argued that because of the lack of urgency to GBV news, there is no in-depth investigation of the issues, there is a lack of research on the way GBV happened, causes of it, and the consequences of the atrocity.

The quantitative findings showed that 78% of respondents agreed that the threat directed at GBV reporters from the perpetrators and or perpetrators’ relatives was a challenge to media in reporting GBV. The qualitative findings also revealed the same. One FGD respondent from Pemba warned that threats to journalists should be stopped because if reporters are silenced and do not reveal the sexual, physical, and emotional violence that women go through almost daily we will end up having a rotten society that does not respect women.

The study titled “*Sauti za Waandishi: A survey of Tanzanian media practitioners*” conducted by Twaweza ni Sisi (2024) revealed that half (50%) of 1,202 practicing journalists, editors, and bloggers in Tanzania have been threatened, harassed, or assaulted at some time while doing their duties. This study did not focus directly on threats received after reporting GBV, but it is a good indicator that with this kind of large-scale threat journalists reporting sensitive issues like GBV are not safe. According to Ogola (2019) because of such fear directed to them, journalists try to self-censor what they write as most of them believe that they are under physical and or digital surveillance. While agreeing with the existence of the problem of threats directed at journalists, the United Nations Science and Cultural Organization (UN, 2021) pointed out that both male and female journalists are faced with violence and threats to their safety because of their work.

Generally, the findings on this variable showed that the lack of timely and accurate GBV data revealed a challenge to GBV reporting in Tanzania newspapers. The quantitative findings indicated that 83% of respondents admitted that the lack of timely and accurate GBV data is among the challenges facing media in Tanzania in reporting Gender-based Violence.

The importance of data for effective GBV reporting is emphasised not only by media and media practitioners but also by institutions that are custodians of data. In Zanzibar for instance, the office of the Chief Government Statistician (OCGS) said timely and accurate GBV data is necessary for addressing GBV in the isles because stakeholders need to understand not only the magnitude of GBV but also who is affected most, where, and underlying reasons (OCGS, 2022).

Regarding settlements of GBV cases out of court the quantitative findings showed that 81% of respondents believed that it was a challenge among the challenges that faced media in Tanzania in reporting Gender-based Violence. Verbatim statements from FGD and interviews with editors and reporters also supported the quantitative findings. For instance, one FGD participant in Kigoma said settling GBV cases out of court was a challenge not only to the media but also to the fight against GBV itself because it leaves GBV perpetrators to continue to walk free and humiliate more women and children.

According to the Interagency Standing Committee for GBV (IASC, 2015) settling cases out of court more often increases male GBV perpetrators' confidence, and control towards women and girls. The reason attributed to this during the FGD discussion was *Muhali*. In most GBV cases in Tanzania and elsewhere the perpetrators are people close to family. When this happens to avoid taking the family member/relative to court where he can be punished the two families reach an agreement at the family level which in some cases leads to marriage (the perpetrator marries survivor) and in other cases compensation. In most cases, it is only when the accused perpetrator is an outsider that the family stays strong to see the perpetrator is prosecuted. In many instances, according to TAMWA (2023), people report to the police the perpetrators of GBV just to threaten them to know that the relatives will come back to seek mediation if their family member is remanded.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It became evident from the study findings and the discussion above that, there were seven key challenges that newspapers face when reporting Gender-based Violence in Tanzania. There were challenges from within the newspapers and the challenges from outside the newspapers. The challenges within the newspapers included scarcity of GBV-educated and specialized reporters, lack of investment in investigative journalism on Gender-based Violence, peer pressure not to report the GBV cases involving the influential people's family members and or relatives, and lack of urgency to GBV news. The challenges outside the media were identified to be threats directed to GBV reporters from the perpetrators and or perpetrators' relatives, lack of timely and accurate GBV data, and settlements of GBV cases out of court. If media are to contribute effectively to the reduction of the GBV in the country it was therefore recommended by this study that newspapers should initiate and sustain in-house GBV reporting training for reporters and editors hired without specialization in GBV, stakeholders in the fight against GBV among NGOs, government and media invest in investigative journalism with special emphasis in GBV to unearth the hidden issues. In addition, media organizations, and media outlets to promote adherence to journalism ethics in general and GBV reporting ethics specifically, media houses/outlets should consider establishing special GBV pages and pullout to improve urgency to GBV news, the government guarantees the safety of GBV reporters/editors/sources,

GBV data custodian improve availability of timely and accurate GBV data and improved working collaboration between GBV stakeholders and media to promote access to justice among survivors and hence minimize settlements of GBV cases out of court.

Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)

Option 1:

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.

UNDER PEER REVIEW

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