

Partner Violence against Women in Zimbabwe: Prevalence, Forms, and Implications for Legislations

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the prevalence of partner violence against women (PVAW) in Zimbabwe, with a specific focus on the districts of Zvimba and Karoi. The research utilized a mixed-method approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather data. Questionnaires were used to collect information, while focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs) provided valuable insights from participants. The findings revealed that the overall prevalence rate of PVAW was 63.5%. More specifically, sexual, economic, physical, and emotional partner violence against women were prevalent at rates of 18.5%, 37.1%, 43.3%, and 46.1% respectively. The results highlight the significant violation of human rights that PVAW represents and emphasize the urgent need for comprehensive legal frameworks to address this issue. Although laws such as the Domestic Violence Act and the ongoing consideration of the Women's Anti-Discrimination Bill exist to address PVAW, their implementation and enforcement are hindered by various challenges. This study underscores the importance of strengthened coordination among different institutions and emphasizes the necessity of education awareness, transparency, and accountability in the implementation and enforcement of these laws. Efforts should be made to strengthen legislation that criminalizes all forms of partner violence and ensures the protection of survivors.

Keywords: Partner, violence against women, prevalence rate, gender-based violence, human rights, legislation, domestic violence act

Introduction

Partner violence against women is a pervasive issue that affects the lives of countless individuals worldwide (World Health Organization (WHO), 2013). It encompasses a range of abusive behaviours, such as physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence, inflicted upon women by their intimate partners (United Nations, 1993). Regardless of significant progress towards gender equality, partner violence remains a significant challenge, particularly in countries like Zimbabwe where cultural norms and societal structures often

perpetuate unequal power dynamics between men and women (Jewkes et al., 2010).

PVAW takes various forms, including physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse. Physical violence often involves acts of physical aggression, such as hitting, slapping, kicking, and strangulation (Kandiyero & Chikwuyo, 2016). Sexual violence encompasses non-consensual sexual acts, including rape, forced sexual acts, and other forms of coercive behaviour. Psychological abuse frequently manifests in the form of verbal threats, insults, intimidation, and isolation, eroding the victim's self-esteem and exacerbating emotional distress (Guramatunhu-Mudiwa & Angel, 2017). Economic abuse involves controlling the survivor's access to financial resources, limiting their financial independence and ability to escape abusive situations (Fulu et al., 2013).

PVAW is a global issue, with women being the primary survivors of partner violence. Women also tend to experience more severe forms of violence compared to men (McQuigg, 2018; UN Women, 2019; WHO, 2017). The prevalence of PVAW worldwide is alarming, with approximately 35% of women experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or non-partner at some point in their lives (WHO, 2013; WHO, 2017). Additionally, it is estimated that 30% of women in relationships have encountered some form of physical and/or sexual violence from their intimate partners (WHO, 2017).

In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), PVAW rates are reported to be the highest compared to other regions, including South-East Asia and the Mediterranean region (Devries et al., 2013; Kapiga et al., 2017). SSA records an overall partner violence prevalence rate of 36% - exceeding the global average rate of 30% (García-Moreno et al., 2013). Emotional violence is the most common form of PVAW globally, affecting 49% of women, followed by physical abuse and sexual abuse (35%) (WHO, 2017). In SSA, emotional violence ranges from 7% to 40.1%, with Cameroon exhibiting the highest rate. Rates for sexual abuse in SSA range from 1.6% in Comoros to 24.4% in the Democratic Republic of Congo, while physical violence rates range from 4.9% to 45.3% (WHO, 2017). However, PVAW in Zimbabwe is a grave and prevalent issue, as indicated by research studies. Research suggests that approximately one in three women aged 15 to 49 in Zimbabwe have encountered physical violence, while one in four women have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15 (Zimbabwe Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT), 2016). Moreover, 35% of women experienced physical violence, 15% experienced physical violence within the past year, and 14% experienced sexual violence at least once in their lifetime. Mashonaland West province has been identified as having the highest rates of PVAW, with an estimated prevalence of 52.5%. Emotional violence is the most common form, ranging from 22.5% to 36.8% in the Midlands province. Physical

violence rates range between 17.3% and 37.9%, with the highest rate recorded in Mashonaland West. Similarly, sexual violence rates vary from 5.5% to 18.2%, with the highest rate also observed in Mashonaland West.

These statistics paint a distressing picture of the level of violence inflicted upon women, emphasizing the urgency to address this matter through legislative actions. The implications of partner violence against women in Zimbabwe are manifold. Beyond the immediate physical injuries and emotional trauma experienced by survivors, partner violence perpetuates a vicious cycle of abuse, shaping their life trajectories and limiting their opportunities for social, economic, and personal growth (WHO, 2013). Women who experience partner violence are more likely to suffer from mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety, and are at increased risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections, including Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) (Shamu et al., 2019). Additionally, violence in the household has detrimental effects on children who witness such abuse, perpetuating intergenerational cycles of violence (Dube et al., 2023).

Despite several policies in place to address PVAW, it continues to persist in Zimbabwe. The Domestic Violence Act criminalizes domestic violence and provides for protection orders, while the Gender Equality Act promotes gender equality and prohibits discrimination and violence against women (The Government of Zimbabwe, n.d.a; The Government of Zimbabwe, n.d.b). Additionally, the Women's Anti-Discrimination Bill, currently under consideration, aims to strengthen legal protections for women, including measures to prevent and address partner violence. However, weak implementation and enforcement of these policies are significant barriers. Inadequate resources, insufficient training of law enforcement personnel, and limited awareness about existing laws contribute to the ineffectiveness of their implementation (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

Cultural norms and attitudes also play a role, as patriarchal beliefs and traditional gender roles perpetuate gender inequality and make it challenging to challenge and change attitudes (Pham & Prevention, 2014). Economic dependence further exacerbates the issue, as women's financial reliance on their partners often prevents them from leaving abusive relationships (Human Rights Watch, 2015). Stigma and fear also contribute to underreporting of partner violence. Fear of social stigma, judgement, and retaliation from the perpetrators or their family members deter women from reporting incidents. Lack of trust in the criminal justice system and a fear of inadequate support further discourage reporting (Human Rights Watch, 2015). Moreover, limited support services, such as shelters, counselling, and legal aid, hinder survivors from escaping abusive situations and seeking help (Pham & Prevention, 2014).

To further understand PVAW as a complex issue it is, theoretical perspectives can be used. The social learning theory suggests that individuals may learn violent behaviours through observation and imitation of others (Bandura, 1977). This means that individuals who grow up witnessing violence or coercion towards women in their family or social environment may replicate those patterns of violence in their own relationships, perpetuating the cycle of abuse. Another theory is the feminist theory. It examines power imbalances and gender inequalities in society, emphasizing the structural gender norms and practices that contribute to violence against women (Betz et al., 1989). In Zimbabwe, the patriarchal social structures that reinforce male dominance and control in intimate relationships play a significant role in partner violence against women. Gender inequalities and limited autonomy for women contribute to the acceptance and normalization of violence as a means of control in relationships.

Last but not least, the cycle of violence theory suggests that PVAW follows a cyclical pattern consisting of tension-building, acute battering incidents, and a honeymoon phase (Wilson, 2019). This theory highlights that partner violence is not a one-time event but rather a recurring pattern in which tension gradually builds, leading to violent incidents, followed by remorse, apology, and reconciliation. This cycle can become more frequent and severe over time, perpetuating the cycle of abuse. These theories provide different perspectives on the prevalence, forms, and implications of partner violence against women in Zimbabwe. They highlight the importance of addressing structural inequalities, promoting gender equality, providing comprehensive support services, and implementing legislation that protects and empowers women.

Addressing PVAW in Zimbabwe requires a comprehensive legal framework that recognizes the diverse forms of abuse and provides adequate protection for survivors. This paper highlights the importance of legislative interventions to combat partner violence and protect the rights and well-being of women in Zimbabwe. This paper aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on partner violence against women in Zimbabwe. The objective is to explore the prevalence, forms, and implications of partner violence in the Zimbabwean context, with a particular focus on its ramifications for legislation. By investigating these key aspects, this study seeks to shed light on the urgent need for comprehensive and effective legal frameworks to address and prevent partner violence against women.

Methods and materials

Study design and setting

The study is cross-sectional, mix methods study. Qualitative findings were explored to triangulate the quantitative results and to explore prevalence and forms of partner violence against women in Zimbabwe. Combining qualitative

and quantitative data allows for the triangulation of results, where findings from one method validate or deepen the understanding derived from the other. Mashonaland West is mainly a rural province with a few urban centres (Kadoma, Kariba, Chinhoyi, Norton, Hurungwe and Chegutu). Two district which were Hurungwe and Zvimba where the study was piloted (Figure 1). The study targeted women aged between 18-60 years. In Zimbabwe, the set minimum age of marriage is 18 years under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1991 whilst according to ZIMSTATS (2012), in Zimbabwe most women above the age of 60 are widows which excludes them from the survey as it focuses on current unions. The study used primary data. Questionnaires, Focus Group Discussions and In-depth Interviews were conducted to find the prevalence and forms of PVAW in Mashonaland West.

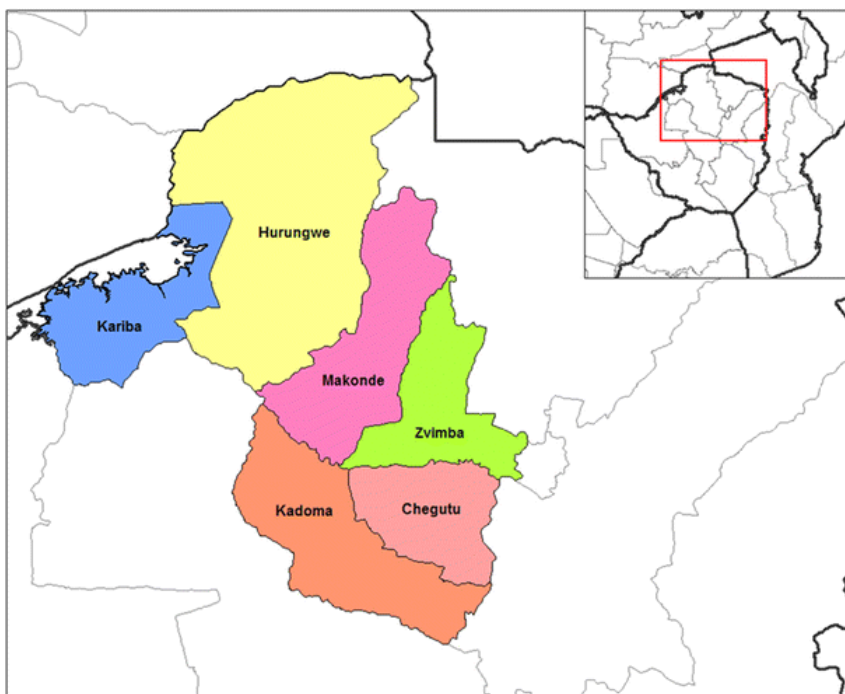


Figure 1: Map extract of Hurungwe and Zvimba district from Mashonaland West, Zimbabwe

Sample size and sampling technique

To determine the required sample size, the study employed the Cochran (1977)'s formula that is given by:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 p(1 - p)}{[S.E (p)]^2} \quad (1)$$

Where Z is the coefficient corresponding to the chosen confidence interval of 95% in this study, p is the proportion of an attribute that is present in the

population (women aged 18-60). According to ZIMSTATS (2012), female population for Hurungwe and Zvimba are 28 606 and 263 020 respectively. Females in the age group of 18-60 years in Hurungwe and Zvimba are 7 469 and 55 130 respectively. Therefore, the sample size using the Cochran's formula provided above where p was found to be 0.21 and the allowable error ($S.E(p)$) being 0.06 is 177. However, the researcher rounded off 177 to the nearest 10 and distributed 180 questionnaires to cater for those respondents that were going to default or not finish the questionnaire.

Sampling methods

Sampling was done in three stages. Firstly, Zvimba and Hurungwe districts are prone to a number of gender issues which include Gender Based Violence (GBV) and the community is patriarchal in nature. In as much, Mashonaland West was selected under the Spotlight Initiative Zimbabwe as a hotspot for GBV and the two districts were the representative samples for the whole province. Secondly, two-stage cluster sampling technique was employed, where the population was divided into two clusters (two wards). Clustered sampling technique was chosen so as to avoid biasness when selecting households for interviews (Bartlett, 2001). For Zvimba, Chilsanga ward (ward 20) was selected and for Hurungwe district, Chikangwe ward (ward 6) was selected. Chilsanga and Chikangwe wards have 4757 and 905 females respectively. For each ward, stratified sampling was used to select number of respondents for each ward. Total female population for these wards is 5662, therefore proportion sample for Chilsanga ward was 0.84 (4757/5662) and for Chikangwe ward it was 0.15¹ (905/5662). Finally, the random sampling was applied to avoid systematically excluding certain types of respondents, so that each household should have an equal chance of being surveyed in these clusters (wards) (Bartlett, 2001). This was done using random numbers. The survey included either survivors or not, as long as they were in the age range 18-60.

Data collection methods

A survey was conducted with female participants aged 18-60 using both open-ended and close-ended questionnaires. Additionally, two focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with female participants from rural and urban areas, using a semi-structured FGD guide in the Shona language. The FGDs aimed to validate issues raised during the survey. Each FGD consisted of five participants of the same sex to encourage openness. The FGDs were held at Chikangwe Roman Catholic church hall in Hurungwe and Chilsanga club gathering place in Zvimba. Furthermore, four in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted with females who have experienced partner violence, using an

¹ Note that the proportion are huge for Zvimba and this is explained by the fact that Mashonaland West is a rural province with few people in urban areas. In order to represent Mashonaland West, this disparity was necessary.

interview guide. The IDIs aimed to gather detailed information on partner violence. These one-on-one interviews were also held at Chikangwe Roman Catholic church hall in Hurungwe and Chilsanga club gathering place in Zvimba.

Ethical considerations

The study adhered to ethical guidelines designated by the Department of Economics at the University of Zimbabwe. Written approval was obtained from the Department of Economics, allowing for the collection of data and conducting interviews in Mashonaland West Province. Prior to gathering data, the researcher informed the participants about the study objectives and explicitly stated that the findings would be used for academic purposes, ensuring confidentiality would be maintained.

Data analysis

The researcher recorded the data from the survey in excel. After data cleaning, the collected data was imported into STATA version 15.0. Recordings from FDGs and IDIs were used to validate issues which were being raised in the survey. Summary statistics was also done in STATA v15.0 along with tabulations were done for descriptive statistics and to find the prevalence and forms of PVAW.

Results

This section presents the results of this study. First, it presents the background characteristics of the respondents. Secondly, the section presents the results of the prevalence, forms and implications of PVAW in Mashonaland West and lastly the discussion of results with a conclusion.

Descriptive statistics by social-economic background

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for continuous variable. Mean age of the respondents was 36.8 years and average years of union was 10.9 years with a maximum of 47 years. Average years spent at school was found to be 10.6 years with 0 and 20 years as minimum and maximum respectively. The average household size was 5 and average children of the respondents was 3 with maximum of 15 households and 8 children. The mean income per month was RTGS\$975 (US\$39) with a maximum income of RTGS\$15 000 per month (US\$600).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for continuous variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Age (years)	36.85632	10.86688	18	60
Household size	5.212644	2.297438	1	15
Number of children	2.770115	1.614251	0	8
Years of schooling (years)	10.16092	2.932274	0	20
Duration of union (years)	10.92529	11.11319	0	47
Household income (RTGS\$)	975.5976	2405.092	0	15000

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the categorical variables. The majority of respondents had attained secondary education (72.6%), while 1.8% had never attended school. 79.2% of the respondents were from rural areas, and the predominant religion among them was African Apostolic (40.2%). The respondents who were married were 63.1%. For employment, 87% of the respondents were informally employed, whereas 10% and 3% were unemployed and formally employed, respectively. The majority of informally employed individuals were involved in merchandising (43%).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for categorical variables

VARIABLES	PERCENTAGE (%)
Levels of Education	
None	1.80
Primary	19.40
Secondary	72.60
Higher and Tertiary	6.20
Place of Residence	
Urban	20.80
Rural	79.20
Religion	
Catholic	28.30
Pentecostal	22.00

VARIABLES	PERCENTAGE (%)
African Apostolic	40.20
Don't go to church	9.40
Marital status	
Married	63.1
Widowed	13.8
Divorced	4.6
Separated	3.1
In a relationship	4.6
Single	10.8

The forms and prevalence of partner violence against women

Table 3: Percentages of Prevalence of PVAW

Forms of partner violence	Prevalence (%)	Confidence interval
Physical	43.3%	0.361-0.501
Emotional	46.1%	0.388-0.535
Sexual	18.5%	0.134-0.250
Economical	37.1%	0.301-0.445
Overall	63.5%	0.297-0.891

The overall prevalence of partner violence in Mashonaland West was 63.5% (95% Confidence Interval (CI): 0.297-0.891). This means that 13 in every 20 women were experiencing violence from their partners. The study also assessed the prevalence of emotional, sexual, physical and economic partner violence. The prevalence of physical violence was reported to be 43.3% (95% C.I: 0.361-0.501) and majority of married women reported that their partners would slap, beat, kick and/or hit them with hands or feet. Women who were in a relationship, not married to the partner, mostly reported forced abortion.

The highest prevalent form of partner violence was emotional violence, with the rate of 46.1% (95% C.I: 0.388-0.535). Most women reported that their partners would threaten them to use force, insult them, refuse to talk to them and restrict them from going to see anyone. Married women reported being insulted and being restricted to go out and talk or see anyone whilst never married, mostly in a relationship, reported that their partners would refuse to

talk to them at some point. During all interviews, emotional violence was universally reported as the most type of PVAW that is quite hard to experience as a woman. The below statement is an experience which was shared by one of the participants during the interviews:

“Words they go straight to the heart and form a big hole there. He told me that he did not even know what he saw in me in the first place and that I am as good as dead to him. I left the marriage but I will not forget all the insults he threw at me. Only God knows what I have gone through.”

The study found that sexual violence was the least prevalent form of partner violence, with a prevalence rate of 18.5% (95% C.I: 0.134-0.250). The most commonly reported types of sexual violence were rape and forced sexual acts. Both married individuals and those in a relationship reported experiencing rape by their partners, while married individuals mainly reported being coerced into performing non-consensual sexual acts.

The prevalence of economic violence was reported to be 37.1% (95% C.I: 0.301-0.445). The most common forms of economic violence included denial of access to income, denial of access to education, seizing of property, and partners taking away all the woman's earnings after forcing her to earn income. Women who were not married but in a relationship primarily reported that their partners refused them access to education or to earn income.

During an in-depth interview, a 41-year-old female talked about her following experience:

“I saw a flirtatious text message on his mobile phone while I was transferring the money he had given me to buy food. I asked him who the person was, and he replied it was someone who doesn't ask him for money like I do.”

Discussion

The descriptive statistics reveals some important characteristics of the respondents. It should be noted that the majority of respondents had attained secondary education (72.6%). This finding is consistent with previous studies that have shown a general increase in educational attainment among women (Gakidou et al., 2010). Interestingly, a small percentage of respondents (1.8%) had never attended school. This could indicate a lack of access to education for some women in the study population. This finding aligns with research that has highlighted the barriers faced by women in accessing education, particularly in rural areas (Movahedi & Yaghoubi-Farani, 2012).

Another notable finding is that 79.2% of the respondents were from rural areas. This suggests that the study sample is largely representative of rural communities. It is important to consider the unique challenges faced by women in rural areas, including limited access to resources and services, which may impact their experiences of partner violence (Habib et al., 2021). The predominant religion among the respondents was African Apostolic (40.2%). This finding highlights the importance of considering the role of religious beliefs and practices in shaping attitudes towards gender roles and violence within relationships. Previous studies have shown that religious beliefs can both contribute to and mitigate the risk of partner violence (Sampson Sánchez, 2023; Magezi & Manzanga, 2020).

Regarding marital status, 63.1% of the respondents were married. This is consistent with studies that have found high rates of partner violence among married women (Atteraya et al., 2015; Yount & Carrera, 2006). It is important to note that partner violence can occur in various types of relationships, including cohabiting and dating relationships, and future research should explore these dynamics within the study population. In terms of employment status, the majority of respondents (87%) were informally employed. This finding suggests that economic dependence and financial vulnerability may be factors contributing to the experience of partner violence among women in the study. Research has consistently shown a link between economic factors and partner violence (Matjasko et al., 2013; Adu et al., 2022). Among the informally employed individuals, a significant proportion (43%) were involved in merchandising. This finding may indicate the presence of informal economies and small-scale businesses in the study area. Previous studies have highlighted the vulnerability of women involved in informal work, who may face increased risks of violence and exploitation (Izugbara et al., 2020).

In comparing these results with other studies on women who experience partner violence, it is important to note that there may be variations across different populations and contexts. However, some common themes emerge. For example, the prevalence of partner violence among married women aligns with findings from other studies (Gubi et al., 2020; Chernet & Cherrie, 2020; Lasong et al., 2020). Similarly, the association between economic factors and partner violence is a consistent finding (Adu et al., 2022). The findings related to education and rural residence suggest that women experiencing partner violence in the study may face specific challenges related to limited access to education and resources. Future studies could explore these issues in more detail and examine the impact on the experiences and outcomes of partner violence. While these findings may have similarities with existing research, it is important to recognize that each context is unique, and further studies are needed to better understand the specific dynamics and factors influencing partner violence in this population.

The findings of this study also highlight the prevalence of partner violence against women in Zimbabwe, specifically in Mashonaland West. The overall prevalence of partner violence was found to be 63.5%, indicating that a significant proportion of women in this region experience violence from their partners. This finding is consistent with previous research highlighting the high prevalence of partner violence in Zimbabwe (Jewkes et al., 2010; Naved et al., 2006). The study also examined the different forms of partner violence, including emotional, physical, sexual, and economic violence. Emotional violence was found to be the most prevalent form, with a rate of 46.1%. This finding aligns with previous research that has shown emotional abuse to be a common form of partner violence in Zimbabwe (Molden, 2013; Robertson & Corcoran, 2015). Emotional violence can have severe psychological and emotional consequences for women, as evidenced by the participant's experience about the lasting impact of insults and threats on her well-being.

Physical violence was reported by 43.3% of the respondents, with married women more likely to experience physical abuse such as slapping, beating, and kicking. This aligns with existing literature that indicates married women are at a higher risk of physical violence (Mugafura et al., 2017). Sexual violence, although the least prevalent form in this study at 18.5%, still represents a significant issue. The participants reported experiences of rape and forced sexual acts, indicating a need for interventions to address this form of violence (Tsitsi et al., 2019). Economic violence, reported by 37.1% of the respondents, included denial of access to income, education, and property grabbing. These findings highlight the importance of economic empowerment for women in addressing partner violence (Abraham & Tastsoglou, 2016). Restricting women's access to education and income can contribute to their vulnerability and dependence on their partners, making it harder for them to leave abusive relationships (Ghana et al., 2017). It is worth noting that the prevalence rates reported in this study might be underestimated due to social desirability bias and underreporting of sensitive information. Partner violence is often stigmatized and hidden, making it challenging to obtain accurate prevalence rates (Fulu et al., 2013). Therefore, the actual prevalence of partner violence in Mashonaland West may be even higher than reported.

Implications on the Legislations

The results presented have important implications for legislation and policy in Zimbabwe. Partner violence against women is a significant violation of human rights and should be addressed through comprehensive legal frameworks. While laws exist to address PVAW as stated before, their implementation and enforcement is affected by various challenges.

One significant challenge in implementing and enforcing laws is limited resources. There is lack of funding, personnel, and infrastructure necessary to effectively enforce the laws in Zimbabwe (Africa Development Bank, 2022). Without adequate resources, governments struggle to investigate cases, conduct necessary legal proceedings, and provide support services to survivors of violence. Limited resources also make it difficult to create and maintain awareness campaigns and educational programs that are vital for promoting compliance with the law.

Societal attitudes also present challenges to the implementation and enforcement of laws in Zimbabwe. Deep-rooted cultural beliefs, biases, and prejudices hinder the acceptance and enforcement of laws aimed at protecting certain groups of people or addressing sensitive issues (Chuma, 2012). For example, laws related to gender equality or LGBTQ+ rights face resistance in societies that adhere to traditional gender roles or hold conservative beliefs. Overcoming these societal attitudes requires comprehensive efforts to educate the public and change social norms, which can be an uphill battle.

Another challenge is the gaps in awareness and education regarding specific laws. Many people may be unaware of their rights or the existence of laws designed to protect them. This lack of awareness can result in under-reporting of incidents and a low rate of prosecutions. Additionally, inadequate education about the legal system and the consequences of violating the law can hinder compliance and perpetuate a culture of non-compliance.

Moreover, the implementation and enforcement of laws can be influenced by systemic or institutional issues. Corrupt practices, inadequate training, and inefficiencies within law enforcement agencies can undermine efforts to enforce laws effectively. Lack of coordination among various institutions responsible for implementing and enforcing laws can also lead to gaps in enforcement and an overall lack of accountability.

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach. Governments must allocate sufficient resources to law enforcement agencies, legal aid services, and awareness campaigns. They should also actively work towards changing societal attitudes through educational programs, public dialogues, and media campaigns. Strengthening coordination among different institutions and ensuring transparency and accountability in the implementation and enforcement of laws is equally vital. Efforts should be made to strengthen legislation that criminalizes all forms of partner violence, including emotional abuse, and ensures the protection of survivors. Additionally, increasing awareness and providing support services for survivors, such as counseling and shelters, are crucial in addressing the issue (World Health Organization, 2013).

This study shed light on the prevalence and forms of partner violence against women in Zimbabwe. The findings emphasize the need for a multi-faceted approach to address this issue, including legislation, awareness-raising, and support services. By addressing partner violence, Zimbabwe can work towards creating a society where women can live free from violence and enjoy their fundamental rights.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the prevalence and forms of partner violence against women in Mashonaland West, Zimbabwe. The findings highlight the urgent need for comprehensive measures to address this issue and protect the rights of women. Emotional violence was found to be the most prevalent form, followed by physical, economic, and sexual violence. These findings underscore the detrimental impact of partner violence on women's well-being and the importance of addressing all forms of violence within relationships.

The study also highlights the role of various factors in descriptive statistics, such as education, rural residence, and economic dependence, in shaping women's experiences of partner violence. These factors should be considered in the development of targeted interventions and support services for survivors. Furthermore, the findings emphasize the need for increased awareness and education about partner violence, both among the general population and within institutions responsible for its prevention and response.

The implications of this study for legislation and policy in Zimbabwe are significant. The findings call for improved implementation and enforcement of existing laws, as well as the allocation of adequate resources to support law enforcement agencies and survivors of partner violence. Efforts should also be made to address societal attitudes and cultural beliefs that perpetuate violence against women.

Therefore, this study contributes to our understanding of partner violence in Zimbabwe and provides a foundation for future research and interventions. By addressing the prevalence and forms of partner violence, Zimbabwe can take important steps towards creating a society where women are protected from violence and can enjoy their fundamental rights.

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