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Dissemination of Research Findings

Research Topic: Exploring Norms, Values and Approaches that Protect Women Against Abuse in Tanzania: Case Study of Mbeya, Mara and Tanga Regions.

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Introduction: Both globally and in Tanzania, women constitute a marginalized and vulnerable group that persistently experience various forms of abuse and violence, including Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Global and regional estimates of violence against women show that 35% of women worldwide have experienced intimate partner violence, while one in two adolescents has experienced physical and emotional violence (United Nations [UN], 2021). In Africa, 36.6% of women have experienced violence, with adolescent girls being at high risk (Colombini et al., 2020). In Tanzania, 40% of women have experienced physical violence since age 15, and 20% have experienced sexual violence (United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 2015/16).

This practice violates their basic rights for survival, non-oppression and non-discrimination and hinders their smooth integration into society and attainment of social and economic development. Coupled with economic deprivation, gender stereotypes, based on cultural norms, are often used to justify violence against women. However, there are also encouraging cultural attitudes towards women, yet these aspects are under-researched in the Tanzanian context. Hence, the Institute of Social Work (ISW) conducted a study that aimed to explore norms and values that are deemed suitable to protect and safeguard women and girls against GBV.

Main Objective: To explore norms, values and indigenous approaches that protect women against abuse in Tanzania with the view of ascertaining whether they can be mainstreamed into social work training, practice, and policies.

Research Questions: i. What are the social norms, values and indigenous approaches that support non-violent acts against women in the study areas? ii. To what extent are the identified norms and values maintained as part of the individual, family and community practice in the study areas? iii. How effective are the norms and values in preventing abuse against women? iv. To what extent has the globalization process affected impediment or reinforcement of such norms and values? v. To what extent can the norms and values be mainstreamed into social work education and practice.



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Methodology: The study was conducted in two (2) districts of three (3) regions namely Mbeya, Tanga and Mara. Cross-sectional, phenomenological, descriptive and emergent designs with qualitative approaches of data collection and analysis were employed. Methods of data collection were: i) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with a total of 96 elderly men and women divided into four (4) groups of eight (8) participants each per region; and ii) In-depth Interviews (IDIs) with 48 participants including six (6) traditional leaders, six (6) Gender Desk Police Officers, six (6) Social Welfare Officers (SWOs); six (6) representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) ; six (6) Community Development Officers (CDOs) and twelve (12) Religious leaders.

Major Findings: Despite existence of the destructive norms, values and practices, there are positive norms, values and indigenous practices that existed in the studied communities that were deemed useful in preventing women against abuse. These include: Rite of passage /initiation rituals; norms and practices related to protecting women against dangers and risks: rituals related to marriage arrangements and preparations, gender-sensitive living arrangements and division of labour, pre and post marital care of women and communal sanction and punishment of the wrong doers.

The existence of such norms notwithstanding, findings show that the majority of participants viewed that these norms are not adequately integrated into real life practices by families and communities. There are gaps and failures in the intergenerational transfer of knowledge. Participants attributed this failure to factors such as: life pressure that leave parents with little time to impart and integrate the norms, globalization, modernization, intermarriages, limited knowledge of some parents about the norms, low acceptance of the norms and values as well as moral decay. However, some participants including traditional leaders, religious leaders and on representative of NGO admitted that they integrate positive norms and condemn the destructive ones in their teachings and engagement with community members especially youths.

Findings also show that majority of participants were of the view that norms that were deemed positive were effective in protecting women in a sense that they addressed and prevented problems and conflicts, they: kept societies in peace, corrected errors, protected youths from engaging into relationships with people who are likely to abuse them due to differences in upbringing and orientations, created solidarity and helped societies to bring up children together "your child is mine", helped to maintain discipline and respect of each other, they helped societal members including married couples to understand their roles, responsibilities and powers within families and helped women to receive care and support when in need.



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Findings also show that modernization and the globalization process have negatively affected reinforcement of such norms and values. For instance, an example was given that globalization and modernization have contributed in replacement of the traditional indigenous ways of intergenerational transfer of knowledge. “There is no story telling no singing. People are busy watching movies children watching cartoons” (elderly participant in FGD, Mbeya). There was also a general feeling that due to modernization and globalization processes people emulate what they see on television and consider the traditional norms and practices as outdated (zimepitwa na wakati).

There is general feeling that the positive norms, if identified and reinforced, can contribute in prevention of the problem. Therefore, nearly all participants were of the view that there is a need to identify, document and pass on the good norms from one generation to another.

Recommendations: Since it was observed that there is low level of integration of the norms, values and indigenous practices the following suggestions were given:

To the Government

That it should

- Increasingly control morals and ethics by setting boundaries and controls for children from watching morally inappropriate television programs.
- Enhance controls and interventions in schools because the rate of teenage pregnancy and sexual abuse in school settings is rising.
- Ensure that at community levels, and where traditional leadership exist, grant them authorities and powers to also control ethics. That the council of traditional leaders should be formed and given mandate to take actions and change the behaviours of those who miss behave especially youths.
- Promote our culture and ways of life. It can also do so through its ambassadors.
- Integrate the norms and values in the curricula and ensure that good norms are taught at different levels of training.
- Provide more education regarding GBV to community members and the importance of upholding good practices.
- That is should relate norms with development.
- Ensure that here radio programs that educate and sensitize the public about the importance of maintaining good norms and values and condemn the negative ones.



To families and communities

- Family and community members should develop a culture of learning about the past and its goods, choose and enforce a style of life that works. That they should ensure that norms are taught to children at an early stage.
- Parents should demonstrate good conduct before the children. For instance, they should avoid conflicts at the presence of the children.
- Parents must set aside time to talk to children and inculcate to them good norms, values and indigenous. They must also teach them the effects of uncritically adopting foreign culture.

To religious and traditional leaders

That they should:

- Adequately fulfill their obligations of imparting and continuously enforcing
- Have tolerance, common understanding and cooperate well in enforcement of the goods.
- Work with other government and other stakeholder to analyze the norms and file good and bad ones to inform practice as a single person cannot know all the norms and values.

Recommended strategies for mainstreaming norms and values into social work education and practice: Participants were of the views that in order to ensure mainstreaming of the norms and values the following has to be done:

- More studies should be conducted to finding out how can the norms be helpful if applied; their effects and gaps that exist by abandoning them.
- There should be forums where different stakeholders including academicians and the traditional leader come together to further identify, discuss and analyze the good and bad norms and values.
- After the analysis, norms should be documented and the good ones proposed for integration into teaching syllabus and curricula and hence enable them to be integrated at different education levels.
- The identified the positive norms should also be imparted to teachers and other educators in social work and community development profession so that they can be able to emulate and equally pass them on to students.
- That the identified negative norms should be listed and condemned.



Conclusion: Social work practice and education in Tanzania has a crucial role to play in addressing various social problems (GBV inclusive). However, based on the previous studies by Mabeyo, Ndun'gu and Riedl (2014) and Mabeyo and Mvungi (2019) it was evident that social work practice and training in Tanzania is less informed by local knowledge, approaches, models and indigenous knowledge. This study explored and identified norms, values and indigenous practices that were deemed by study participants as protective against abuse of women. However, such norms, though considered good are not adequately integrated into practice. Thus, such a gap has an implication to professionals including social workers. They can not only continue to explore and interrogate about them and equally contribute in further research, analysis, documentation and, depending of contexts, integrate appropriate norms into practice. By so doing, they will contribute towards efforts and the clarion call in African to indigenize and decolonize social work practice and training.

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