(RESEARCH ARTICLE)

Cultural factors contributing to gender-based violence in Zambian societies

Chanda Chansa Thelma *

Department of Humanities, Education, and Social Sciences, Chreso University, Lusaka, Zambia.

Abstract

Overview: This study examined the intricate cultural dynamics underlying the prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) within Zambian societies. Despite legislative efforts and international campaigns to combat GBV, its persistence underscores the need for a deeper understanding of the cultural underpinnings that perpetuate such violence.

Body of Knowledge: Through qualitative and quantitative analysis, this study sought to identify key cultural elements such as patriarchal structures, beliefs about masculinity and femininity, and the role of family and community dynamics in shaping attitudes and behaviors related to gender-based violence. Additionally, this study delves into the multifaceted ways in which cultural norms, beliefs, and practices intersect with gender dynamics to foster environments conducive to GBV.

Methods: The population comprised of government officials at the district level who had some responsibility for GBV, police officers from VSU, and Members of the community. The total target population was 1000. The sample size involved a total of 100 respondents which is 10% of the target population. The study used purposive sampling to select government officials and police officers while simple random sampling was used to selected community members. This study used descriptive design to analyze the data. Interviews, ethnographic observation, and questionnaires were used to collect data. Qualitative and Quantitative techniques of data analysis was used, and data was presented on the analytical tools such as tables, figures and charts.

Results: Initial findings revealed that traditional gender roles deeply entrenched in Zambian culture play a pivotal role in perpetuating GBV. The patriarchal structure of society often assigns men dominance and control over women, leading to power imbalances that facilitate violence. Furthermore, beliefs surrounding masculinity, including expectations of aggression and dominance, contribute to a culture of impunity surrounding GBV. Men are often socialized to perceive violence as a legitimate means of asserting authority, while women may internalize norms of submission and silence.

Recommendation: This study underscores the urgent need for culturally sensitive interventions that address the root causes of GBV in Zambia. By engaging communities in dialogue and challenging harmful cultural norms, sustainable solutions can be developed to promote gender equality and create safer environments for all individuals.

Keywords: Cultural Factors; Gender-based Violence; Gender Roles; Patriarchy; Zambian Societies

1. Introduction

Cultural factors encompass a broad spectrum of elements that shape societies, communities, and individuals. These factors include traditions, customs, beliefs, values, languages, norms, rituals, arts, and social institutions that are shared by a particular group of people. They play a pivotal role in shaping identities, behaviors, and interactions among individuals within a society. Cultural factors influence various aspects of life, including social relationships,

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* Corresponding author: Chanda Chansa Thelma

communication patterns, decision-making processes, ethnicity, and perceptions of the world. Chitondo & Chanda (2023) says that ethnic diversity is the existence of people from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds or identities. Diversity is about what makes each of us unique and includes our backgrounds, personality, life experiences and beliefs, all of the things that make us who we are. Moreover, they contribute significantly to shaping collective worldviews and defining what is considered acceptable or taboo within a particular cultural context. Cultural factors are dynamic and subject to change over time, influenced by historical events, technological advancements, globalization, migration, and interactions with other cultures. Understanding and appreciating cultural factors are crucial for fostering cross-cultural understanding, promoting diversity and inclusion, and building harmonious relationships in a multicultural world. Gender based violence is violence directed against a person because of that person's gender. If refers to a global phenomenon that knows no geographical, ethnic, economic, social, cultural or other boundaries. GBV happens around all societies and symbolizes a brutal violation of human rights most especially for the weaker sex (Chanda, 2023a).

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a pervasive and deeply rooted issue that encompasses various forms of physical, sexual, psychological, and economic harm inflicted on individuals based on their gender. This type of violence is primarily directed at women and girls, although men and boys can also be victims. GBV knows no boundaries of age, race, or socioeconomic status, and it occurs in both private and public spheres, including homes, workplaces, schools, and communities (Ibid, 2023a). Its causes are complex and multifaceted, often stemming from unequal power dynamics, rigid gender norms, and societal structures that perpetuate discrimination and marginalization. GBV not only inflicts immediate harm but also has long-term consequences, affecting individuals' physical and mental health, limiting their opportunities, and impeding their full participation in society. Addressing GBV requires comprehensive strategies that encompass legal reforms, education, awareness-raising, and support services for survivors. Additionally, challenging harmful gender stereotypes and promoting gender equality are crucial steps towards preventing and eradicating GBV.

Gender-based violence is often perpetuated and reinforced by cultural factors deeply embedded within societies. These factors include traditional gender norms and stereotypes that assign rigid roles and expectations to individuals based on their gender. In many cultures, there exists a patriarchal system where men are viewed as dominant and women as subordinate, leading to the normalization of violence against women as a means of asserting control and power (Gill, 2018). Additionally, cultural attitudes that condone and justify violence, such as victim-blaming or the belief in male entitlement to women's bodies, further contribute to the prevalence of gender-based violence. Cultural practices such as child marriage, female genital mutilation, and dowry-related violence also perpetuate systems of inequality and reinforce the subjugation of women, making them more vulnerable to various forms of violence. Moreover, cultural norms surrounding masculinity often emphasize aggression, dominance, and the suppression of emotions, which can manifest in violent behaviors towards both women and other men. Addressing gender-based violence requires challenging and transforming these cultural norms and beliefs through education, advocacy, and the promotion of gender equality and respect for human rights.

Gender-based violence (GBV) persists globally due to deeply entrenched cultural factors that perpetuate harmful norms and attitudes. One significant contributor is rigid gender roles and expectations, where masculinity is often associated with dominance, aggression, and control, while femininity is linked with submissiveness and obedience (Lewis, 2013). These stereotypes not only constrain individuals within prescribed roles but also justify violence as a means of enforcing conformity. Additionally, cultural norms that prioritize male superiority and female inferiority create power imbalances, enabling perpetrators to exploit their dominance and exert control over women and marginalized genders. Furthermore, cultural attitudes that normalize violence, particularly within intimate relationships, contribute to the perpetuation of GBV. Concepts such as "love" and "passion" are sometimes misconstrued to justify possessiveness and control, leading to the normalization of abusive behaviors like stalking, emotional manipulation, and coercive control. Moreover, patriarchal values that prioritize family honor and reputation often prioritize maintaining the status quo over addressing instances of violence, fostering a culture of silence and impunity (Chanda, 2023a). Religious and traditional beliefs also play a significant role in perpetuating GBV. Interpretations of religious texts and cultural practices may uphold patriarchal ideologies, reinforcing the notion of women and marginalized genders as property or objects of male authority. This can lead to practices such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and honor killings, all of which are deeply rooted in cultural and religious traditions (Chanda & Chitondo, 2023).

Cultural factors contributing to gender-based violence in Zambian societies delves into a complex intersection of traditional beliefs, social norms, and power dynamics that perpetuate violence against women. In Zambia, like many other societies, cultural norms play a significant role in shaping attitudes towards gender roles and relationships. These norms often dictate expectations regarding masculinity, femininity, and power dynamics within families and communities (Chanda, 2023b). One prominent cultural factor contributing to gender-based violence in Zambian societies is the persistence of patriarchal values. These values emphasize male dominance and control over women, leading to the normalization of behaviors such as intimate partner violence and marital rape. Traditional gender roles

assign men as providers and decision-makers, while women are expected to be submissive and obedient, creating a power imbalance that can escalate into violence. Furthermore, cultural practices such as bride price and inheritance customs can exacerbate gender-based violence by commodifying women and reinforcing their subordinate status within families. Bride price, for instance, may create a sense of ownership over women, making it difficult for them to leave abusive relationships for fear of being seen as a burden or bringing shame to their families. Similarly, inheritance customs that prioritize male heirs can leave women economically dependent on their male relatives, making them more vulnerable to abuse.

Religious beliefs and practices also play a significant role in perpetuating gender-based violence in Zambian societies. Chanda et al (2023) said that religion is arguably one of the single most significant causes of warfare and turmoil in human history. In evaluating the success of societies and nations in achieving harmony and religious tolerance one must also consider the increasing secularization of societies in the industrial and post- industrial eras. While Christianity is the dominant religion in Zambia, interpretations of religious teachings vary widely, and some beliefs may be used to justify gender inequality and control over women. For example, teachings on submission and obedience may be manipulated to justify abusive behavior towards women, leading to a culture of silence and impunity. Moreover, the stigma surrounding gender-based violence and the lack of effective legal mechanisms for addressing it further perpetuate the cycle of abuse. Victims often face social ostracism and blame, discouraging them from seeking help or reporting incidents of violence. Additionally, the limited access to justice and support services for survivors leaves many women trapped in abusive situations with little recourse for escape Gopin, 2011).

Gender-based violence (GBV) in Zambian societies is influenced by a complex interplay of cultural factors deeply embedded in traditional beliefs, norms, and practices. One significant cultural factor contributing to GBV is the persistence of patriarchal values, where men are typically seen as dominant and women as subordinate. Chanda (2023) added that this power imbalance often leads to the normalization of violence against women and girls as a means of maintaining control and authority within households and communities. In many Zambian societies, traditional gender roles dictate strict expectations for men and women, with men expected to be strong, assertive, and the primary decision-makers, while women are expected to be submissive, nurturing, and obedient. These rigid gender roles not only limit women's autonomy but also perpetuate harmful stereotypes and attitudes that justify violence against them when they deviate from societal norms or challenge male authority.

Cultural practices such as bride price and early marriage further exacerbate GBV by commodifying women and girls, reducing them to objects of exchange and control (Chanda et al, 2023). Bride price, in particular, can create a sense of ownership over women, leading to increased incidences of domestic violence as men feel entitled to assert their authority over their wives. Similarly, early marriage denies girls their right to education, economic independence, and bodily autonomy, leaving them vulnerable to various forms of abuse within marital relationships. Furthermore, Zambia's diverse cultural landscape, characterized by numerous ethnic groups each with its own traditions and customs, presents unique challenges in addressing GBV. While some cultural practices may explicitly condone violence against women, others may inadvertently enable it through silence or inaction. The fear of social stigma and ostracization often prevents survivors from seeking help or reporting abuse, perpetuating a culture of silence and impunity (Lussier, 2016). Religious beliefs and practices also play a significant role in shaping attitudes towards gender and violence in Zambian societies. While Christianity is the predominant religion in Zambia, traditional beliefs and rituals continue to influence people's worldview, often intertwining with religious teachings to reinforce patriarchal norms and gender inequalities. Misinterpretations of religious texts or teachings that prioritize male authority can further justify and perpetuate GBV within religious communities. Addressing GBV in Zambia requires a multifaceted approach that acknowledges and challenges these deep-rooted cultural factors. Efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment must engage with local communities, traditional leaders, religious institutions, and other stakeholders to foster meaningful dialogue, challenge harmful norms, and promote alternative models of masculinity and femininity based on respect, equality, and non-violence. By addressing the cultural underpinnings of GBV, Zambia can create a more inclusive and equitable society where all individuals can live free from violence and discrimination.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

In Zambia, gender-based violence (GBV) persists as a significant societal issue, often rooted in complex cultural dynamics. Many victims choose not to report incidents of physical abuse because they perceive it to be a private matter or an incident that is too minor to warrant police involvement. A domestic violence module was included in the 2013-14 ZDHS, recognizing the seriousness of the problem of gender-based violence in Zambia. Despite legislative efforts and awareness campaigns, the problem persists due to entrenched cultural norms and practices that perpetuate unequal power dynamics between genders. Traditional gender roles, patriarchal structures, and beliefs about masculinity and femininity contribute to the normalization of violence against women and girls. Additionally, socioeconomic factors

such as poverty and lack of education exacerbate the problem by limiting access to resources and opportunities for women, further entrenching their vulnerability (Chanda et al ,2023). Addressing GBV in Zambian societies requires a multifaceted approach that acknowledges and addresses these cultural factors while promoting gender equality, education, economic empowerment, and the enforcement of laws protecting women's rights. This study therefore aimed to delve deeper into these cultural dynamics to understand their impact on GBV prevalence and to develop culturally sensitive interventions that effectively combat this pervasive issue.

1.2. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the cultural factors that contribute to gender-based violence within Zambian societies. By examining the intricate interplay between cultural norms, traditional practices, and societal attitudes towards gender roles, this research aims to shed light on the underlying mechanisms that perpetuate violence against women and girls in Zambia.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- Identify cultural practices prevalent in Zambian societies that shape attitudes towards gender roles, power dynamics, and violence.
- Examine how various intersecting identities intersect with gender to exacerbate or mitigate the risk of gender-based violence.

1.3. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework on cultural factors contributing to gender-based violence (GBV) in Zambian societies delves into the intricate interplay between cultural norms, traditions, and societal structures that perpetuate violence against women. Culture therefore in the broadcast sense refers to all human activities, which human beings pass on from one generation to another. Culture is defined as a collaboration of shared meanings or common beliefs among an organization's members (Chanda & Chitondo, 2023). It highlights the significance of patriarchal systems, ingrained gender roles, and power dynamics as fundamental contributors to GBV. Traditional practices such as bride price, initiation rites, and patriarchal inheritance systems often reinforce unequal power relations, leading to the normalization of violence against women. Moreover, societal attitudes that condone or trivialize GBV, coupled with limited access to justice and support services, further exacerbate the issue. This framework underscores the necessity of addressing deep-rooted cultural beliefs and practices, alongside implementing comprehensive interventions that challenge gender norms, empower women, and foster community accountability to effectively combat GBV in Zambian societies.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The study on cultural factors contributing to gender-based violence (GBV) in Zambian societies holds significant importance in several respects. Firstly, it sheds light on the intricate interplay between cultural norms, values, and GBV prevalence, offering crucial insights into the root causes of this pervasive issue. By identifying specific cultural beliefs and practices that perpetuate GBV, the study provides a foundation for targeted interventions and policy reforms aimed at addressing these underlying factors. Moreover, the study's findings have implications for the design and implementation of GBV prevention and intervention programs in Zambia. By understanding the cultural contexts in which GBV occurs, policymakers and practitioners can develop more culturally sensitive and effective strategies for combating this phenomenon. This may involve community-based approaches that engage local leaders and stakeholders in challenging harmful norms and promoting gender equality. Furthermore, the study contributes to broader discussions on the universality versus cultural specificity of GBV dynamics. While GBV is a global issue, its manifestations and underlying drivers can vary significantly across different cultural contexts. By examining these dynamics within Zambian societies, the study enriches our understanding of how cultural factors intersect with gender relations and violence dynamics, highlighting the need for contextually grounded approaches to GBV prevention and response. Additionally, the study underscores the importance of interdisciplinary research collaborations in addressing complex social issues like GBV. By drawing on insights from anthropology, sociology, psychology, and other disciplines, researchers can provide comprehensive analyses of the cultural, social, and psychological factors shaping GBV dynamics. This interdisciplinary approach not only enhances the rigor of the study but also fosters a more holistic understanding of GBV and informs multifaceted interventions.

2. Research methodology

2.1. Study Design

The study adopted a mixed methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative data. Exploratory and descriptive designs were as well considered appropriate as they also allowed for more flexible strategies of data collection in order to answer the research questions. Descriptive design was perceived to be suitable for the study as it regulated and reported the way things are and generally involved assessing attitudes, opinions towards individuals, organizations and procedures.

2.2. Research Site

This study was conducted in Lusaka district, the capital city of Zambia in 5 different communities from which the participants were selected for the study.

2.3. Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure

The population comprised of government officials at the district level who had some responsibility for GBV, police officers from VSU, and Members of the community. The total target population was 1000. The sample size involved a total of 100 respondents which is 10% of the target population. The study included 85 community members, 17 coming from each selected community. 5 government officials, and 10 police officers from VSU, 2 coming from each selected policy station within the 5 communities. The study used purposive sampling to select government officials and police officers while simple random sampling was used to selected community members.

2.4. Data Analysis

This study used descriptive analysis to analyze the data. Qualitative data for this study was analyzed thematically and this process involved the following steps; transcribing of data, cleaning up the data by identifying important aspects that will be necessary in answering the research questions. On the other hand, the quantitative data was analyzed using the analytical tools such as SPSS, tables, figures and charts.

2.5. Ethical Issues

With regard to ethical consideration, permission was sought from the ward councilor's office for the selected 5 communities before the interviews and before giving questionnaires to respondents as one of the ethical demands of any research. Informed consent was sought from the respondents before collecting information from them and guaranteed them with security of the information they provided. Furthermore, the main objective of gathering such information was made clear to the respondents. The study avoided pressuring respondents to take part in the research. In this research, the study was fully conscious of the need to abide by the ethical rule of respecting the privacy of individuals taking part in the research.

3. Results and discussions

The following findings and discussions were presented according to set research objectives:

3.1. Cultural Practices Prevalent in Zambian Societies that Shape Attitudes Towards Gender Roles, Power Dynamics, and Violence

Data collected from the study revealed that in Zambia, like in many African societies, cultural norms, traditions, and beliefs play significant roles in shaping attitudes towards gender roles, power dynamics, and violence. According to the responses from the study, marriage and bride price was spotted to be on the higher side with 25% response rate. In Zambian societies, marriage is deeply ingrained in cultural and social norms, often serving as a cornerstone of community cohesion and familial stability (Chanda et al, 2023). One significant aspect of marriage within these contexts is the tradition of bride price, where the groom or his family provides gifts or payments to the bride's family as part of the marriage arrangement. This practice holds considerable influence over gender roles, power dynamics, and attitudes towards violence within these communities.

Firstly, bride price reinforces traditional gender roles by perpetuating the perception of women as commodities or objects to be exchanged. The payment of bride price symbolizes the transfer of ownership from the bride's family to the groom's family, reinforcing patriarchal structures where women are seen as belonging to men. Consequently, this reinforces expectations of women to fulfill domestic roles, such as caregiving and household management, while men

are often expected to be providers and decision-makers within the family unit (Nichter & Goldmark, 2019). Moreover, the payment of bride price can exacerbate power imbalances within marriages. The groom and his family, having made a significant financial investment, may perceive themselves as having greater authority and control over the bride. This can lead to unequal power dynamics within the relationship, where the bride may feel compelled to comply with the wishes of her husband and in-laws, even if it contradicts her own desires or autonomy. Such power differentials can contribute to instances of domestic violence, as the perceived ownership of the bride may manifest in controlling behaviors and abusive actions by the groom.

Additionally, the practice of bride price can influence attitudes towards violence against women within Zambian societies. In some cases, the payment of bride price may be seen as justification for mistreatment or violence against the bride, as it is perceived that the groom and his family have acquired ownership rights over her. This can contribute to a culture of impunity surrounding violence against women, where abusive behaviors are normalized or excused within the context of marriage. Overall, the prevalence of marriage and bride price in Zambian societies plays a significant role in shaping attitudes towards gender roles, power dynamics, and violence. By reinforcing traditional notions of gender, exacerbating power imbalances within relationships, and influencing perceptions of violence against women, bride price perpetuates harmful dynamics that undermine gender equality and women's rights within these communities. Efforts to address these issues require a multifaceted approach that challenges entrenched cultural norms, promotes gender equitable attitudes, and strengthens legal protections for women's rights (Salem, 2018).

Community members stated that in Zambia, initiation rites and ceremonies (20%) play a significant role in shaping attitudes towards gender roles, power dynamics, and violence within society. These rituals, deeply ingrained in traditional practices, serve as transformative experiences for both boys and girls as they transition into adulthood. Initiation rites are often gender-specific, reinforcing distinct roles and expectations within the community. For boys, initiation ceremonies typically mark the transition from adolescence to manhood. These rituals are designed to instill qualities such as bravery, resilience, and leadership, which are seen as essential for fulfilling traditional male roles within Zambian society (Chanda, 2023c). Through these rites, boys are taught the importance of providing and protecting their families, as well as upholding cultural norms and values. Consequently, masculinity becomes closely associated with authority, dominance, and control, reinforcing power dynamics that privilege men over women.

Conversely, initiation rites for girls emphasize traits like obedience, submission, and nurturing, aligning with traditional notions of femininity and womanhood. Girls are taught domestic skills and the importance of maintaining the family unit, preparing them for their future roles as wives and mothers. These ceremonies often involve teachings on modesty, chastity, and deference to male authority figures, reinforcing gender hierarchies that prioritize male control and female subservience. Chanda (2024) added that decision-making for girls involves weighing the actual and perceived benefits against the known risks of early marriage and other health-related problems, voluntary or forced withdrawal from formal education, truncated personal development, becoming a single child mother, placing an increased burden on parents and families in the event of divorce, inadequate parental care and supervision and increased rates of domestic violence. Moreover, initiation rites in Zambian societies can perpetuate harmful attitudes towards violence, particularly against women and girls. Traditional beliefs may condone practices such as wife-beating or bride abduction, viewing them as legitimate means of asserting male authority and disciplining disobedient women. Through these rituals, young men may internalize notions of entitlement and superiority, which can manifest in abusive behavior towards women in their adult lives. However, it's important to note that the impact of initiation rites on gender roles, power dynamics, and violence in Zambian society is not uniform. Attitudes towards these practices vary across different ethnic groups and regions, and there are ongoing efforts to challenge and redefine traditional gender norms (Gifford, 2015). Increasingly, initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality and combating gender-based violence are gaining traction, challenging the entrenched beliefs perpetuated by initiation rites and ceremonies. Initiation rites and ceremonies in Zambian societies play a significant role in shaping attitudes towards gender roles, power dynamics, and violence. While these rituals reinforce traditional notions of masculinity and femininity, they also perpetuate harmful stereotypes and inequalities. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach that acknowledges the cultural significance of initiation rites while also promoting values of equality, respect, and non-violence.

The community members added that attitudes towards violence (10%) are deeply intertwined with cultural norms, historical legacies, and socio-economic factors, influencing perceptions of gender roles, power dynamics, and the acceptance of violence in various forms. While Zambia has made strides in promoting gender equality and addressing violence through legislative frameworks and grassroots initiatives, underlying attitudes towards violence persist, shaping societal norms and behaviors. One prevalent aspect of attitudes towards violence in Zambian societies is the historical context of colonization and subsequent social upheavals. Colonial rule introduced hierarchical power structures and normalized violence as a means of control, leaving a legacy of entrenched power dynamics that continue

to shape attitudes towards authority and conflict resolution (Chitondo et al, 2023). This history has contributed to a normalization of violence in interpersonal relationships and broader societal interactions.

Gender roles in Zambian societies are often steeped in traditional beliefs and cultural practices that assign distinct roles and responsibilities to men and women. These gender norms can perpetuate unequal power dynamics, with men often holding positions of authority and decision-making while women are expected to fulfill domestic duties and defer to male authority (Chanda, 2023a). Such gendered expectations can fuel attitudes that justify violence as a means of asserting control and maintaining social order, particularly within intimate relationships and family structures. Furthermore, economic disparities and limited access to resources exacerbate vulnerabilities, particularly for women and marginalized communities. Economic instability can fuel tensions and competition for resources, leading to heightened instances of violence, including domestic abuse and community conflicts. In such contexts, attitudes towards violence may be shaped by perceptions of scarcity, competition, and the need for self-preservation, further entrenching cycles of aggression and oppression.

Attitudes towards violence are also influenced by cultural beliefs and social norms that valorize concepts of masculinity and toughness. Traditional notions of masculinity often equate strength with dominance and assertiveness, promoting the use of force as a means of asserting one's manhood and maintaining social status. These cultural expectations can create pressure on men to conform to narrow ideals of masculinity, leading to the normalization of aggressive behaviors and the suppression of emotions or vulnerability. Addressing entrenched attitudes towards violence in Zambian societies requires multifaceted approaches that address underlying socio-economic inequalities, challenge harmful gender norms, and promote non-violent conflict resolution strategies (Chanda, 2023d). Education and awareness-raising efforts play a crucial role in challenging traditional beliefs and promoting gender equality, while providing support services for survivors of violence is essential for breaking the cycle of abuse. Additionally, efforts to empower women economically and politically can help shift power dynamics and promote more equitable relationships, fostering societies where violence is no longer tolerated or normalized.

Police officers from VSU pointed out that in Zambia, as in many societies around the world, patriarchal structures (10%) heavily influence attitudes towards gender roles, power dynamics, and violence. Patriarchy, deeply rooted in cultural norms and traditions, manifests itself in various aspects of Zambian society, shaping perceptions and behaviors. Gender roles in Zambian societies are often deeply entrenched in traditional beliefs that assign specific tasks, responsibilities, and privileges based on gender. Men are typically expected to be the primary breadwinners and decision-makers, while women are relegated to domestic duties and caregiving roles. This division of labor reinforces the notion of male superiority and female subservience, perpetuating a system where men hold more power and authority within the family and community (WHO, 2020). Power dynamics within Zambian societies are inherently skewed in favor of men, owing to patriarchal structures that prioritize male leadership and dominance. In both public and private spheres, men often wield greater influence and control over resources, institutions, and decision-making processes. This imbalance of power not only marginalizes women but also perpetuates a cycle of male privilege and female disenfranchisement.

Violence, particularly gender-based violence, is a pervasive issue in Zambian societies, largely influenced by patriarchal norms and attitudes. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by various forms of violence, including domestic abuse, sexual assault, and harmful traditional practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation (Chanda et al, 2023). Patriarchal values that condone male aggression and control contribute to the normalization of violence against women, creating barriers to seeking justice and support. Moreover, patriarchal attitudes towards masculinity often reinforce harmful notions of dominance, aggression, and entitlement among men, perpetuating a culture of impunity for perpetrators of gender-based violence. This further exacerbates the vulnerability of women and girls, limiting their agency and opportunities for empowerment. Efforts to address patriarchal attitudes and practices in Zambia require a multifaceted approach that addresses both structural inequalities and cultural norms. This includes implementing laws and policies that promote gender equality, providing comprehensive support services for survivors of gender-based violence, and engaging communities in dialogue and education to challenge harmful gender stereotypes and promote respectful relationships based on equality and mutual respect. Only through concerted efforts to dismantle patriarchal systems can Zambia achieve true gender equality and social justice.

The officers proceeded by stating that in Zambian societies, the division of labor (10%) plays a significant role in shaping attitudes towards gender roles, power dynamics, and violence. Traditionally, these societies have exhibited a clear division of labor along gender lines, with men typically engaged in tasks such as hunting, herding, and decision-making, while women are responsible for household chores, childcare, and subsistence farming (USAID, 2012). This division of labor reflects deeply ingrained cultural norms and values, which often perpetuate gender inequalities and hierarchies within communities. Gender roles in Zambian societies are heavily influenced by the division of labor, with men often holding positions of authority and power both within the household and the wider community. This patriarchal system

reinforces the notion of male dominance and female subordination, contributing to the perpetuation of gender-based stereotypes and discrimination. Women are expected to adhere to traditional gender roles, limiting their opportunities for education, economic independence, and participation in decision-making processes.

Power dynamics within Zambian societies are intricately linked to the division of labor, as those who control resources and hold positions of authority are predominantly men. This imbalance of power not only perpetuates gender inequalities but also facilitates the normalization of violence against women and girls (Boudreaux, 2018). In many cases, women lack the social, economic, and legal resources to challenge abusive behavior, further perpetuating cycles of violence and oppression. Violence against women and girls is often justified and normalized within Zambian societies, reflecting broader societal attitudes towards gender roles and power dynamics. The division of labor, which assigns men as the primary providers and decision-makers, can create a sense of entitlement and control over women's bodies and lives. This can manifest in various forms of violence, including domestic abuse, sexual violence, and harmful traditional practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation. Efforts to address gender inequalities and violence in Zambian societies must consider the complex interplay between the division of labor, attitudes towards gender roles, power dynamics, and violence. Promoting gender equality requires challenging traditional norms and stereotypes, empowering women and girls to access education and economic opportunities, and engaging men and boys as allies in the fight against gender-based violence. By addressing the root causes of inequality and discrimination, Zambian societies can work towards creating more just and inclusive communities for all individuals, regardless of gender (Chanda, 2023e).

Moving on, officials from government observed that in Zambia, education and awareness (10%) play pivotal roles in shaping attitudes towards gender roles, power dynamics, and violence within society. Education serves as a powerful tool for challenging traditional beliefs and fostering gender equality, while awareness campaigns aim to address pervasive issues such as gender-based violence and unequal power structures. These efforts intersect with cultural norms, historical legacies, and socioeconomic factors to shape perceptions and behaviors. Chanda (2023f) added that education serves as a cornerstone for challenging entrenched gender norms and promoting equality. The Zambian government has made significant strides in expanding access to education, particularly for girls, through initiatives such as the Girls' Education and Women's Empowerment and Livelihoods (GEWEL) program. By providing girls with educational opportunities, Zambia seeks to empower them to challenge traditional gender roles and contribute meaningfully to society. Additionally, educational curricula increasingly incorporate gender-sensitive content to raise awareness of gender issues and promote equality from a young age.

However, despite progress in education access, disparities persist, particularly in rural areas where poverty and cultural barriers inhibit girls' enrollment and retention in schools. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that tackles economic barriers, empowers communities to prioritize girls' education, and challenges harmful cultural practices such as early marriage and female genital mutilation (Chanda, 2023g). Awareness campaigns complement educational efforts by raising consciousness about gender-based violence and the underlying power dynamics that perpetuate it. Organizations like the Zambia National Women's Lobby (ZNWL) and the Non-Governmental Organization Coordinating Council (NGOCC) lead advocacy efforts to combat gender-based violence and promote gender equality. Through workshops, media campaigns, and community outreach, these organizations strive to challenge harmful attitudes and behaviors while providing support to survivors.

However, addressing gender-based violence requires not only awareness-raising but also systemic changes in laws, policies, and institutional responses. Zambia has taken steps to strengthen legal frameworks and establish support services for survivors of gender-based violence, yet gaps remain in implementation and access to justice, particularly in rural areas where resources are scarce. Moreover, cultural norms and traditional practices continue to influence attitudes towards gender roles and power dynamics. Patriarchal values often perpetuate unequal power relations between men and women, leading to the normalization of violence and discrimination against women and girls. Challenging these norms requires engaging with community leaders, religious institutions, and traditional authorities to promote alternative, more equitable values. Education and awareness are instrumental in shaping attitudes towards gender roles, power dynamics, and violence in Zambian society. By investing in education, promoting awareness, and challenging harmful norms, Zambia can continue to progress towards gender equality and create a safer, more equitable society for all (Chen, 2017).

The officials further explained that religious influence (15%) holds significant sway over various aspects of life, including attitudes towards gender roles, power dynamics, and violence. Religion, primarily Christianity, plays a pivotal role in shaping societal norms and values, often intertwining with traditional beliefs and practices (Chanda et al, 2023). These dynamics create a complex tapestry that influences individuals' perceptions and behaviors. One prominent aspect of religious influence in Zambia is its impact on gender roles. Christianity, which is the dominant religion, often espouses

traditional patriarchal values, reinforcing the notion of male authority and female subordination. Biblical interpretations emphasizing the submission of women to men and the concept of male headship within the family structure contribute to the perpetuation of gender inequality. This religious framework often assigns distinct roles to men and women, with men typically viewed as the primary breadwinners and decision-makers, while women are expected to fulfill domestic duties and prioritize caregiving roles. These entrenched gender norms shape societal expectations and contribute to the persistence of gender disparities in education, employment, and leadership positions.

Furthermore, religious teachings on power dynamics intersect with gender roles to reinforce existing hierarchies within Zambian societies. Concepts of divine order and obedience to religious authority figures are often intertwined with traditional notions of respect for elders and community leaders. This amalgamation of religious and cultural values can create a climate where power imbalances are normalized and even justified. Consequently, individuals may be less inclined to challenge existing power structures or advocate for social change, as these are perceived to be in accordance with religious teachings. Religious influence also extends to attitudes towards violence, particularly within the context of domestic and interpersonal relationships. While Christianity promotes ideals of love, compassion, and forgiveness, interpretations of scriptures may vary, leading to conflicting messages regarding the acceptability of violence (Ibid, 2023). In some instances, religious teachings may be used to justify or rationalize abusive behavior, particularly towards women and children. Moreover, the stigma surrounding divorce and the emphasis on marital fidelity within religious communities can deter individuals from seeking help or leaving abusive situations, further perpetuating cycles of violence.

Despite these challenges, religious institutions also serve as potential agents of change in addressing gender inequality and violence. Many faith-based organizations in Zambia are actively engaged in community outreach programs, advocacy efforts, and educational initiatives aimed at promoting gender equity, empowering women, and combating domestic violence (Chanda, 2024b). By leveraging their moral authority and extensive networks, religious leaders and organizations can play a crucial role in challenging harmful norms, promoting gender-sensitive interpretations of religious texts, and fostering inclusive communities that prioritize respect, dignity, and equality for all individuals (Musongole, 2010). Religious influence permeates various aspects of Zambian societies, shaping attitudes towards gender roles, power dynamics, and violence. While religious teachings may perpetuate existing inequalities and norms, they also present opportunities for positive change and social transformation. By fostering dialogue, collaboration, and critical reflection within religious communities, it is possible to harness the potential of religion as a force for promoting gender justice and creating more equitable and peaceful societies in Zambia.
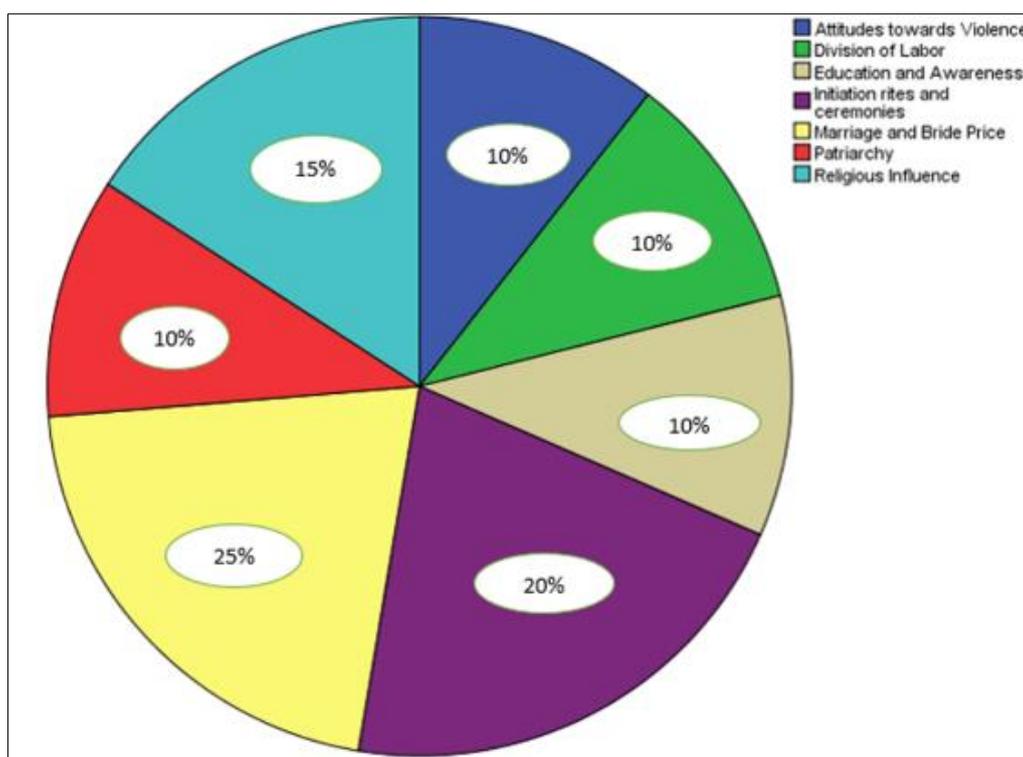

Figure 1 Cultural Practices Prevalent in Zambian Societies that Shape Attitudes Towards Gender Roles, Power Dynamics, and Violence

3.2. Various Intersecting Identities that Intersect with Gender to Exacerbate or Mitigate the Risk of Gender-based Violence

Gender-based violence is a complex issue influenced by various intersecting identities. The study therefore found that there are various intersecting identities that intersect with gender to exacerbate or mitigate the risk of gender-based violence. Table 1below shows some of these identities.

Table 1 Various Intersecting Identities that Intersect with Gender to Exacerbate or Mitigate the Risk of Gender-based Violence

Responses	Percentage
Race/Ethnicity	15%
Sexual Orientation	20%
Disability	10%
Socioeconomic Status	20%
Religion	10%
Location/Geography	10%
Age	15%
Total	100

According to the study findings, race/ethnicity intersects with gender in complex ways, significantly impacting the risk of experiencing gender-based violence. This intersectionality underscores how individuals' identities are shaped not by one aspect alone but by the interplay of multiple factors, such as race, ethnicity, and gender. Firstly, racial and ethnic minorities often face unique challenges related to gender-based violence due to systemic inequalities and historical marginalization (Chitondo et al, 2023). For instance, Black women in the United States are disproportionately affected by intimate partner violence compared to their white counterparts. This can be attributed to a combination of factors including economic disparities, lack of access to resources, and discriminatory practices within law enforcement and judicial systems. Moreover, cultural norms and stereotypes surrounding race and ethnicity can exacerbate or mitigate the risk of gender-based violence. For example, hypersexualization of women of color in media can contribute to the objectification and devaluation of their bodies, increasing vulnerability to sexual violence. On the other hand, cultural norms within certain communities may promote strong familial and community support networks that serve as protective factors against gender-based violence. Intersectionality also influences the response of institutions and society to gender-based violence. Racial and ethnic minorities may encounter additional barriers when seeking help or justice, such as language barriers, mistrust of authorities due to past experiences of discrimination, and cultural insensitivity within service providers (O'Brien, 2006). This can result in underreporting of incidents and further marginalization of survivors.

Additionally, intersectionality highlights the importance of considering the diverse experiences and needs of individuals within marginalized communities. One-size-fits-all approaches to addressing gender-based violence are insufficient and may overlook the specific challenges faced by racial and ethnic minorities. It is essential for interventions and policies to be culturally competent and inclusive, taking into account the intersecting identities of survivors and acknowledging the unique dynamics at play. Race/ethnicity intersecting with gender significantly influences the risk of experiencing gender-based violence. Understanding and addressing these intersections are crucial for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies that recognize the diverse experiences of individuals and promote justice and equality for all.

Police officers from VSU said that sexual orientation intersects with gender identity in complex ways, shaping individuals' experiences of gender-based violence (GBV). One aspect of this intersectionality is how societal norms and expectations regarding both sexual orientation and gender identity can exacerbate or mitigate the risk of GBV. For individuals whose sexual orientation falls outside the heteronormative spectrum, such as those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer (LGBQ+), the risk of GBV can be heightened due to societal stigma and discrimination. This stigma often stems from traditional gender roles and expectations, where deviation from heterosexual norms is perceived as a challenge to established gender binaries (Nieman et al, 2020). Consequently, LGBQ+ individuals may face various forms

of violence, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as a means to enforce conformity to heterosexual norms and punish perceived deviations.

Moreover, the intersection of sexual orientation and gender identity can magnify the risk of GBV for transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) individuals. Transphobia and cisnormativity, which privilege cisgender identities over transgender identities, contribute to the marginalization and discrimination faced by TGNC individuals. This discrimination is compounded when intersecting with sexual orientation, particularly for transgender individuals whose sexual orientation is not heterosexual. For example, transgender women who are attracted to other women may face not only transphobic violence but also lesbophobic violence, further exposing them to GBV. Conversely, some aspects of sexual orientation and gender identity can serve as protective factors against GBV. In supportive environments that celebrate diversity and embrace non-heteronormative identities, individuals may find greater acceptance and protection from violence. Additionally, for some individuals, the empowerment that comes from embracing their sexual orientation and gender identity can lead to resilience against GBV. When individuals are affirmed in their identities and have access to supportive communities and resources, they may be better equipped to challenge and resist violence (Kamuwanga, 2015. Addressing the intersection of sexual orientation and gender identity in efforts to prevent GBV requires comprehensive strategies that recognize the unique challenges faced by LGBQ+ and TGNC individuals. This includes implementing policies and programs that promote inclusivity, challenge discriminatory attitudes, and provide support services tailored to the specific needs of these communities. By acknowledging and addressing the intersecting identities of individuals, society can work towards creating safer and more equitable environments for all.

The officers added that from their experiences in those positions, age intersects with gender in complex ways, significantly impacting the risk of gender-based violence (GBV). The experiences of individuals vary depending on their age and gender, with certain age groups facing heightened vulnerability or resilience to GBV. In understanding this intersectionality, it's crucial to recognize how societal norms, power dynamics, and systemic inequalities influence these dynamics. Young girls, especially adolescents, are particularly susceptible to GBV due to their age and gender. They may encounter sexual harassment, exploitation, or early marriage, perpetuated by patriarchal structures that objectify and control women's bodies (Chanda, 2023h). Cultural practices and norms often exacerbate these risks, limiting young girls' agency and subjecting them to harmful traditional practices.

Conversely, older women may also face distinct challenges regarding GBV, including elder abuse and neglect. Ageism intersects with gender bias, resulting in marginalized treatment and increased vulnerability among older women. Socioeconomic factors, such as poverty and lack of social support, further exacerbate their risk, as older women may lack resources to escape abusive situations or seek help (Chanda, 2023i). Intersectionality also shapes the experiences of transgender and non-binary individuals across different age groups. Discrimination and transphobia intersect with age-related vulnerabilities, exposing them to heightened risks of violence, particularly in environments where acceptance and support are lacking. Additionally, older transgender individuals may face unique challenges related to accessing healthcare and social services, further compounding their vulnerability to GBV. Mitigating the risk of GBV requires multifaceted interventions that address intersecting identities. Empowering young girls through education, mentorship, and comprehensive sexuality education can challenge harmful gender norms and enhance their resilience to violence (MoE, 1996). Similarly, programs aimed at promoting gender equality and women's rights across the lifespan can empower older women and reduce their vulnerability to GBV. Furthermore, initiatives must be inclusive of transgender and non-binary individuals, recognizing their unique needs and experiences (Mpolomoka et al, 2019). This involves creating safe spaces, providing access to affirming healthcare, and combating discrimination at all levels. Advocacy efforts should prioritize intersectional approaches that address the complex interplay of age, gender, and other identity factors in shaping experiences of GBV. Overall, recognizing age as an intersecting identity with gender is essential for understanding and addressing the root causes of GBV. By adopting an intersectional lens, interventions can better target vulnerable populations, challenge systemic inequalities, and promote environments of safety, respect, and dignity for all individuals, regardless of age or gender.

Community members noted that socioeconomic status (SES) serves as a critical lens through which to understand the dynamics of gender-based violence (GBV), as it intersects with various identities, particularly gender, exacerbating or mitigating the risk of violence. At its core, SES encompasses a range of factors including income, education, occupation, and access to resources, all of which shape individuals' experiences within societal structures. Within this framework, the intersection of SES with gender can significantly influence one's vulnerability to GBV. Women and marginalized gender identities facing economic hardship often encounter heightened risks of violence due to intersecting inequalities (Chanda, 2023j). For instance, individuals with lower SES may lack financial independence, making it difficult to leave abusive relationships or access support services. Economic dependence can thus perpetuate cycles of violence, trapping survivors in harmful situations. Furthermore, the interaction between gender and SES intersects with other identity

markers such as race, ethnicity, and sexuality, compounding vulnerabilities. For example, women of color and LGBTQ+ individuals from lower SES backgrounds may face compounded discrimination, increasing their risk of experiencing GBV. Additionally, systemic inequalities in access to education and employment opportunities further marginalize already vulnerable populations, limiting their ability to escape or prevent violence.

Conversely, higher SES can serve as a protective factor against GBV for some individuals. Greater financial resources may provide access to legal support, secure housing, and therapeutic services, offering avenues for survivors to seek help and rebuild their lives. Additionally, education and awareness campaigns targeting affluent communities can challenge harmful gender norms and promote healthier relationships, potentially reducing the prevalence of GBV (Chanda, 2024). However, it's essential to recognize that SES alone does not determine one's experience of GBV. Intersectionality underscores the interconnected nature of various social identities and the unique ways they shape individuals' lives. Thus, interventions addressing GBV must adopt an intersectional approach that considers how factors such as gender, race, class, and sexuality intersect to produce differential experiences of violence. The intersection of socioeconomic status with gender plays a crucial role in shaping the risk of GBV. While individuals from lower SES backgrounds may face heightened vulnerabilities due to economic insecurity and systemic inequalities, those with higher SES may have access to resources that mitigate their risk Chanda (2023) also added that teenage pregnancies are also related to SES, including lower educational levels, poverty and culture. Teenage pregnancy in developed countries is usually outside of marriage and is often associated with a social stigma. Addressing GBV requires a holistic understanding of intersecting identities and structural barriers to ensure comprehensive support and prevention strategies for all individuals, regardless of their socioeconomic status (Boudreaux, 2018).

The respondents also pointed out that in many societies, geographical settings delineate power dynamics, access to resources, and social norms that can either exacerbate or mitigate the prevalence of gender-based violence. Rural areas often embody traditional gender roles, where patriarchal structures dominate. Women in these settings may face heightened risks of gender-based violence due to limited access to support systems, law enforcement, and healthcare facilities (Chanda, 2023a). Geographic isolation can exacerbate this vulnerability, as perpetrators may exploit the lack of community oversight and intervention. Conversely, urban environments may offer greater access to support networks and legal recourse, which can mitigate the risk of gender-based violence to some extent. However, urban spaces also present their own challenges, such as overcrowding, poverty, and anonymity, which can exacerbate the prevalence of violence against marginalized groups, including women and gender minorities.

Furthermore, specific geographic features such as conflict zones, refugee camps, or disaster-stricken areas intensify the risk of gender-based violence (Chitondo et al, 2024). In these contexts, breakdowns in social order, displacement, and humanitarian crises amplify vulnerabilities, with women and gender minorities often bearing the brunt of such violence. Intersectionality further complicates this relationship between location, geography, and gender-based violence. For instance, indigenous women living in remote areas may face compounded risks due to historical marginalization, lack of access to essential services, and cultural factors that perpetuate violence. Additionally, socioeconomic disparities intersect with geographic location to influence the risk of gender-based violence. Marginalized communities residing in impoverished or neglected areas are often disproportionately affected, lacking adequate resources for protection, legal recourse, and rehabilitation. Mitigating the risk of gender-based violence requires comprehensive approaches that address the intersecting factors of location, geography, and gender identity. This includes improving access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and legal protection in both rural and urban settings. Moreover, community-based interventions, advocacy for gender equality, and addressing root causes of violence are essential for creating safer environments for all individuals, regardless of their geographic location or identity.

Government officials narrated that disability, as a facet of identity, intersects with gender in complex ways that both exacerbate and mitigate the risk of gender-based violence. The intersectionality of disability and gender highlights how individuals experience unique vulnerabilities and privileges within societal structures (Chikopela et al, 2017). When examining this intersection, it's crucial to recognize how societal norms, stereotypes, and systemic inequalities intersect to shape experiences of violence and marginalization. One significant aspect of this intersection is the heightened vulnerability of disabled individuals, particularly women and gender minorities, to various forms of violence. Disability can intersect with gender to create multiple layers of marginalization, rendering individuals more susceptible to abuse, exploitation, and discrimination. For instance, disabled women may face increased risks of intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and other forms of gender-based violence due to factors such as dependency, limited mobility, communication barriers, and societal perceptions of vulnerability.

Moreover, disabled individuals often encounter systemic barriers that exacerbate their risk of experiencing gender-based violence. These barriers can include inadequate access to support services, inaccessible physical environments, and discriminatory attitudes within law enforcement and judicial systems. For example, disabled women may encounter

challenges in accessing shelters or receiving appropriate accommodations during legal proceedings, further compounding their vulnerability to violence. At the same time, disability can also intersect with gender in ways that mitigate the risk of gender-based violence for some individuals. For instance, disabled women who are part of strong support networks within disability communities may find solidarity and protection against violence. Additionally, disability rights advocacy movements have increasingly highlighted the intersecting forms of oppression experienced by disabled individuals, including gender-based violence, leading to greater awareness and activism.

Furthermore, disabled individuals may develop resilience and coping strategies that enable them to navigate gender-based violence within their unique circumstances. These strategies can include assertiveness training, peer support, and empowerment initiatives tailored to the needs of disabled women and gender minorities (Ibid, 2017). By amplifying the voices and agency of disabled individuals, efforts to address gender-based violence can become more inclusive and effective. The intersection of disability and gender significantly shapes experiences of vulnerability and resilience concerning gender-based violence. Understanding this intersectionality is essential for developing comprehensive strategies to prevent violence, provide support to survivors, and challenge systemic inequalities. By recognizing the diverse experiences and needs of disabled individuals, society can work towards creating more inclusive and equitable responses to gender-based violence.

The officials further said that religion serves as a significant component of individual and collective identity, influencing beliefs, behaviors, and societal norms. When examining how religion intersects with gender identity, it becomes apparent that these intersections can either exacerbate or mitigate the risk of gender-based violence (GBV). Detailed exploration of this topic reveals complex dynamics shaped by cultural, social, and theological factors. In many societies, religious teachings and interpretations play a pivotal role in shaping gender roles and expectations. Traditional religious doctrines often prescribe specific roles and behaviors for men and women, reinforcing patriarchal structures that prioritize male dominance and control (Simuchimba, 2005). These gender norms can perpetuate attitudes and behaviors conducive to GBV, such as misogyny, sexism, and the objectification of women. For instance, interpretations of certain religious texts may justify violence against women, either explicitly or implicitly, thereby exacerbating the risk of GBV within religious communities.

Moreover, religious institutions may maintain power dynamics that marginalize and disempower women, limiting their autonomy and perpetuating cycles of abuse. The hierarchical structure of many religious organizations often places men in positions of authority, further entrenching gender inequalities (Chanda et al, 2023). Consequently, women may face barriers to seeking help or justice when experiencing GBV within religious contexts, fearing stigma, ostracism, or retaliation. Conversely, religion can also serve as a source of empowerment and resistance against GBV. Many religious traditions contain principles of justice, compassion, and equality that, when emphasized, can challenge patriarchal interpretations and practices. Religious leaders and communities committed to gender equality may reinterpret sacred texts and teachings to promote respect for women's rights and dignity, fostering environments that reject GBV. Furthermore, religious communities can provide vital support networks for survivors of GBV, offering counseling, shelter, and advocacy services. Faith-based organizations often collaborate with secular institutions and grassroots movements to address GBV comprehensively, leveraging religious teachings to promote gender justice and social change.

Intersectionality adds another layer of complexity to the relationship between religion, gender, and GBV. Women from marginalized religious or cultural backgrounds may face compounded forms of discrimination and violence due to intersecting identities. For example, Muslim women wearing hijab may experience Islamophobia alongside gender-based discrimination, making them more vulnerable to hate crimes and harassment. The intersection of religion and gender identity significantly influences the risk of GBV, with religious teachings and practices serving as both contributors to and potential mitigators of violence (Chanda, 2023). Addressing GBV within religious contexts requires challenging harmful interpretations of religious texts, promoting gender equality within religious institutions, and fostering partnerships between religious and secular actors to support survivors and promote social change.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study established that cultural factors contributing to gender-based violence (GBV) in Zambian societies reveals a complex interplay of traditional norms, societal expectations, and power dynamics. The patriarchal structure entrenched in many Zambian communities perpetuates unequal gender relations, where men are often granted greater authority and control over women. Cultural practices such as bride price, inheritance customs, and initiation ceremonies can reinforce these power imbalances and contribute to the normalization of violence against women. Additionally, harmful beliefs and stereotypes regarding gender roles and masculinity further exacerbate the problem. Efforts to address GBV in Zambia must not only focus on legal and policy reforms but also on challenging

deeply ingrained cultural norms and promoting gender equality through education, community engagement, and empowerment initiatives.

Recommendations

Addressing cultural factors contributing to gender-based violence in Zambian societies requires a multi-faceted approach that involves raising awareness, promoting gender equality, and changing harmful social norms. The following are actions that should be taken on the basis of the findings of this study:

- The government should conduct community dialogues and workshops to raise awareness about gender-based violence (GBV), its impact, and its roots in cultural beliefs and norms.
- The government should ensure that legal frameworks are culturally sensitive and take into account the specific needs of different communities in Zambia.
- The government should ensure that support services are accessible to all survivors, including those in rural and remote areas, and tailor them to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of diverse communities.
- The government should promote economic empowerment initiatives for women and girls, such as vocational training, microfinance programs, and entrepreneurship opportunities, to reduce their vulnerability to GBV.
- The government through community leaders should provide training for men and boys on gender equality, consent, and bystander intervention, empowering them to take action to prevent violence in their communities.
- Community leaders should utilize mass media campaigns, social media, and community radio programs to challenge harmful gender stereotypes, promote positive role models, and raise awareness about GBV.
- The government should collaborate with local leaders, elders, and influencers to advocate for change and challenge harmful traditional practices.

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Author's Short Biography

Chanda Chansa Thelma specializes in Education, Social and Political Sciences. She has lectured and still lecturing at the University level under the school of Humanities, and Social Sciences Education..