



# Effects of Gender-Based Violence on Female Pupils: A Case of Selected Secondary Schools in Kasama District of Northern Province, Zambia

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**Abstract:** *Gender based violence is violence directed against a person because of that person's gender. It refers to a global phenomenon that knows no geographical, ethnic, economic, social, cultural or other boundaries. School related gender based violence or abuse is based on gendered stereotypes that targets pupils based on their sex, sexuality or gender identities. GBV happens around all societies and symbolizes a brutal violation of human rights most especially for the weaker sex. It also happens in schools where parents and guardians feel that their children are safe and protected. Therefore, the study aimed at analyzing the effects of Gender-based violence on female pupils in Kasama District at some selected secondary schools. The study adopted a mixed methods approach which is a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. The sample involved a total of 110 respondents which included; three (2) officers from Kasama Central Police Station, three (3) head teachers, fifteen (15) teachers, fifteen (15) members of the community and seventy-five (75) pupils. The respondents were obtained through purposive and simple random sampling. Data was obtained through interviews and questionnaires from the selected secondary schools. Data analysis consisted of content analysis of the interview responses and item analysis of the questionnaire responses; the data gathered was analyzed according to the themes of the study and the order of the research objectives. Data generated from the questionnaires was analyzed manually by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 26) and Microsoft Excel (version 16) to come up with frequency tables, pie charts and bar graphs to analyze data. The findings indicated that GBV causes poverty, abuse of alcohol, food scarcity, gender stereotype and early marriages. Additionally, the findings also showed that GBV had an effect on the female pupils such as; poor academic performance, absenteeism, high levels of drop-out, increased rates of illiteracy and bullying of fellow pupils.*

**Keywords:** *Academic Performance, Gender, Gender-based Violence, Inequality, Physical Assault, Stereotype and Violence.*

## INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) is any harm or potential of harm perpetrated against a person or group on the basis of gender. It encompasses many expressions of violence-whether in public or private spaces – including physical, psychological, and sexual abuse; threats; coercion; arbitrary deprivation of liberty; and economic deprivation of

land, property, and other resources. USAID is committed to preventing and responding to GBV, as it is a major barrier to development outcomes and to women's social and economic empowerment (USAID, 2012). Gender-based violence (GBV) is an umbrella term for any kind of discrimination or harmful behavior which is directed against a person on the basis of their (real or perceived) gender or sexual orientation. GBV may be physical, sexual, psychological, economic or socio-cultural. Its root causes need to be understood in the context of gender norms, values and beliefs which support unequal hierarchies of power between women and men but also among men and among women. These hierarchies of power not only make gender-based violence possible, in some cases they create an environment where GBV is tolerated and even considered acceptable. Perpetrators may include family or community members and those acting on behalf of cultural, religious or state institutions. Gender-based violence affects both women and men but disproportionately affects women and girls, reflecting their subordinate status in society. Gill (2018) asserts that different groups of women and men, such as those belonging to sexual minority groups, are also likely to be disproportionately affected by gender-based violence. Gender Based Violence (GBV) can include physical, sexual, psychological, or other forms of violence. Many forms of violence constitute GBV, this study focused on physical assault or abuse as a form of GBV. Physical assault can be understood to include any behavior which causes actual physical harm to the victim, is designed to do so, or a threat to do so (Boudreaux, 2018). Physical assault affects both men and women although it is often synonymous with violence against women due to its unbalanced impact on women. 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. The cultural norms that require men to present a strong image means abused men are less likely to verbalize fear of any kind which keeps them from reporting physical abuse. The various forms of physical abuse share many risk factors in both men and women (Salem, 2018). Some are psychological and behavioral characteristics such as poor behavioral control, low self-esteem, disorders in personality and conduct. Others are due to experiences, such as lack of emotional bonding and support. Abuse of drugs and alcohol is frequently associated with interpersonal violence, and poverty as well as income disparities and gender inequality stand out as important community and societal factors.

GBV is widespread in Zambia and affects women and girls disproportionately, with the 2018 Zambia Demographic and Health Survey reporting that 36 percent of Zambian women have experienced physical violence at least once since the age of 15 and 32 percent of ever-married women have experienced controlling behaviors by their husbands. More than half (52 percent) of women never sought help or told anyone about the violence they had experienced (Zambia Statistics Agency, Ministry of Health, & ICF, 2019). Despite the adoption of the Anti-Gender-Based Violence Law in 2011, GBV remains pervasive, deeply rooted in wider gender inequality and highly tolerated, especially in rural areas. In fact, Zambian women in rural areas (54 percent) are more likely than those in urban areas (37 percent) to agree that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife for reasons such as burning food, going out without telling him, or refusing to have sexual intercourse. Almost half (47 percent) of widowed women were dispossessed of their husband's property, with this figure reaching 59 percent in rural areas (Zambia Statistics Agency et al., 2019).

USAID (2012) reported that gender-based violence (GBV) is a global public health emergency that has plagued girls and women throughout history. Defined as harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender, GBV is a constant threat for girls and women around the world regardless of their age, race, or socioeconomic status. And they are at risk everywhere and anywhere, at work, at school, and at home. This kind of targeted violence is rooted in systemic gender inequality and can be physical, sexual, economic, or psychological. It can look like a child undergoing female genital mutilation, a student assaulted in her dorm, or a stay-at-home mom restricted from accessing financial resources. The statistics on GBV are bleak. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that 1 in 3 women worldwide will experience physical or sexual

abuse in her lifetime. In 2020, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime found that, on average, a girl or woman is killed by someone in her own family every 11 minutes (WHO, 2020).

### 1.2. Statement of the Problem

Physical assault can be understood to include any behavior which causes actual physical harm to the victim, is designed to do so, or a threat to do so. Physical assault affects both men and women although it is often synonymous with violence against women due to its unbalanced impact on women. 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. The cultural norms that require men to present a strong image means abused men are less likely to verbalize fear of any kind which keeps them from reporting physical abuse (Lewis, 2013). Gender Based Violence (GBV) can include physical, sexual, psychological, or other forms of violence. Many forms of violence constitute GBV, this study focused on physical assault or abuse as a form of GBV. Physical assault can be understood to include any behavior which causes actual physical harm to the victim, is designed to do so, or a threat to do so. Physical assault affects both men and women although it is often synonymous with violence against women due to its unbalanced impact on women. 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 (Lussier, 2016). Therefore, due to increasing rate of gender based violence and the necessity to stop them and protect the violated rights prompted the researcher to analyze the effects of gender based violence which affects female pupils in Kasama district more specifically.

### 1.3. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze the effect of gender based violence on the female pupils at the selected secondary schools in Kasama district, Northern Province of Zambia.

### 1.4. Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- To identify the causes of Gender Based Violence among female pupils in selected secondary schools in Kasama district.
- To analyze the effects of Gender Based Violence among female pupils in selected secondary schools in Kasama district.
- To evaluate recommendations put in place to manage the challenges associated with Gender Based Violence in selected secondary schools in Kasama district.

### 1.5. Conceptual Framework

Freedom from violence is a fundamental human right and gender-based violence undermines a person's sense of self-worth and self-esteem. It affects not only physical health but also mental health and may lead to self-harm, isolation, depression and suicidal attempts. Bullying and intimidation are rarely separated in the literature, with the differentiating factor being related to the intention and recurrent nature of the behavior. Both psychological and physical acts, as well as direct and indirect types of perpetration, have been studied. The acts of psychological abuse and intimidation, sometimes referred to as “emotional violence” and often referred to as “psychological bullying,” have been described as insults, gossip, teasing, mocking, and serious verbal abuse. According to Bloor, et al (2011), psychological bullying has been reported to be more common than physical bullying in Asia, South America, and the Middle East. Non-sexual gender based violence in and near schools includes a range of psychological and physical acts that include bullying. Within a range of literature

sources, these terms are often used interchangeably. Non-sexual physical intimidation and abuse and/or bullying may be less common than psychological bullying in some countries (as previously mentioned), but they appear to be the most common forms of gender based violence (GBV) in sub Saharan Africa. In sub Saharan Africa, girls and boys alike are often terrorized and threatened by physical violence while traveling to and from school. Another, often ignored, side of non-sexual, school-related violence is theft. Many children report that it is quite common to be robbed by people from outside of the school coming in or by fellow students during the school day (Nieman & Nieuwenhuizen, 2020).

### **1.6. Significance of the Study**

It is hoped that the findings of the study would help the Ministry of General Education and the country in general to understand the challenges faced by the youths, especially females who are in schools so that necessary measures are taken into consideration. Furthermore, teachers and pupils will find the study beneficial as they would be able to identify the causes of GBV to young people in schools and be able to take necessary measures to curb it. Lastly but not the least, the research findings would contribute to the already existing body of knowledge on the causes and effects of GBV among young people in secondary schools.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1. Study Design**

The study adopted a mixed methods approach which is a combination of 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. The study incorporated both qualitative and quantitative aspects of research. It was aimed at collecting information from respondents on the effect of gender-based violence on female pupils at the selected secondary schools in Kasama district, Northern Province.

### **3.2. Research Site**

The research was conducted in Kasama district of Northern Province in Zambia in some selected secondary schools from which respondents were also sampled.

### **3.3. Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure**

The population for the study comprised of two officers from kasama central police station, head teachers, teachers, members of the community and pupils at the selected secondary schools. The target population was 1100. The sample size involved a total of 110 respondents which included two (2) officer from kasama central police station, three (3) head teachers, one from each selected school. Fifteen (15) teachers, five from each selected school. Fifteen (15) members of the community and Seventy-five (75) pupils, twenty-five (25) from each selected school. The study employed both purposive and simple random sampling on different participants from the selected secondary schools. Simple random sampling was used on the members of the community, teachers and pupils, this is because there were too many to participate, hence simple random selection of was preferred. On the other hand, Purposive sampling was used on the officers from the police station, and head teachers for convenient purposes.

### 3.4. Data Analysis

Data was analyzed qualitatively as the semi structured interviews schedules were used as data collection instruments. Thematic approach was used, where data analysis started with the categorization of themes from the semi structured interviews schedules. Charts and graphs were used to analyze data. The data gathered was analyzed according to the themes of the study and the order of the research objectives. Data generated from the questionnaires was analyzed manually by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 26) and Microsoft Excel (version 16) to come up with frequency tables, pie charts and bar graphs to analyze data.

### 3.5. Ethical Issues

The researcher avoided pressuring respondents to take part in the research. Alternatively, permission consents, assents were obtained from respondents involved in the research and the research topic was strategically selected to ensure that there was no harm whatsoever to the research respondents. In this research, the researcher was fully conscious of the need to abide by the ethical rule of respecting the privacy of individuals taking part in the research. In the same way, all the respondents of the research were to remain unidentified to the public as all their valuable views, opinions and perceptions were only known by the researcher for use only in the research and participant's identities will forever remain hidden. Permission from Rockview University, the police officer incharge for Kasama Central Police and the District Education Board for Kasama District was sought in carrying out this study. Interviews were not conducted on one-to-one basis; instead, participants were grouped and identified using their titles. An informed consent was sought before collecting information from the informants and guaranteed them with security of the information they provided. Furthermore, the main objective of gathering such information was made clear to the respondents.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

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

### 4.1. Causes of Gender-based Violence

Table 1 and the chart 1 below represented the respondents' responses on the causes of gender based violence. 40% of the respondents cited poverty as the leading cause of GBV. 30% of the respondents pointed out alcohol as another cause. 35% of the respondents cited poverty as the cause of GBV, 10% of the respondents cited gender stereotype and 5% of the respondents cited early marriages as the cause for GBV.

**Table 1: Causes of Gender-based Violence**

Causes of Gender Based Violence	Frequency	Percentage
Poverty	40	33.3%
Abuse of alcohol	30	25%
Food scarcity	35	29%
Gender stereotype	10	8%
Early marriages	5	5%
Total	120	100%

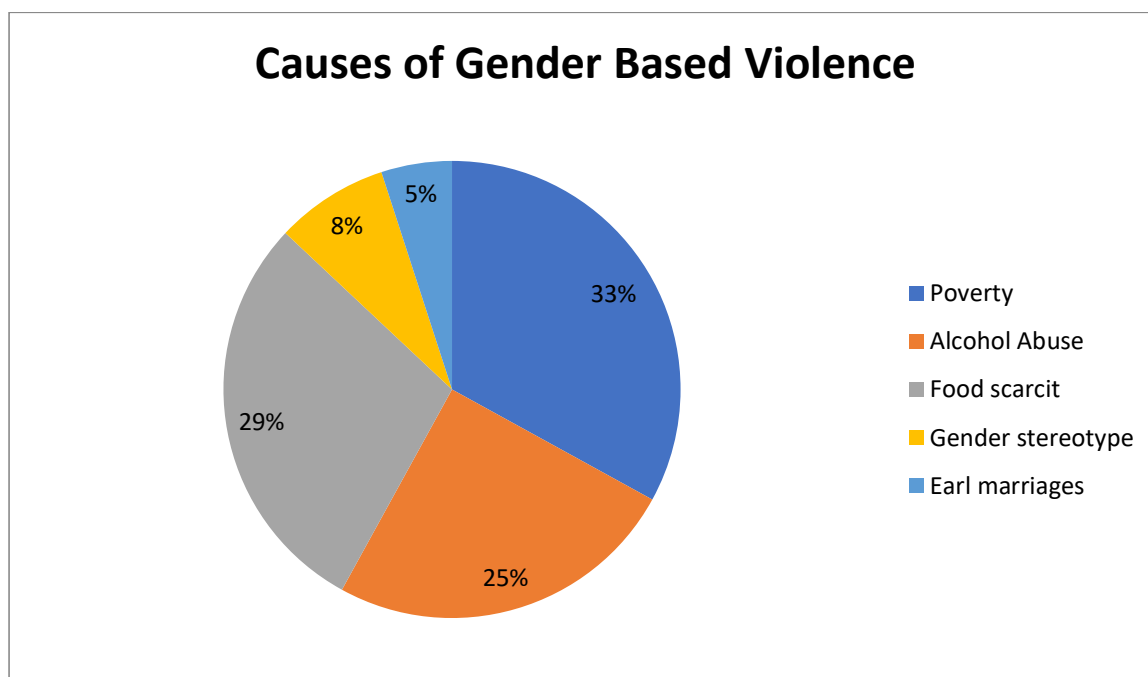
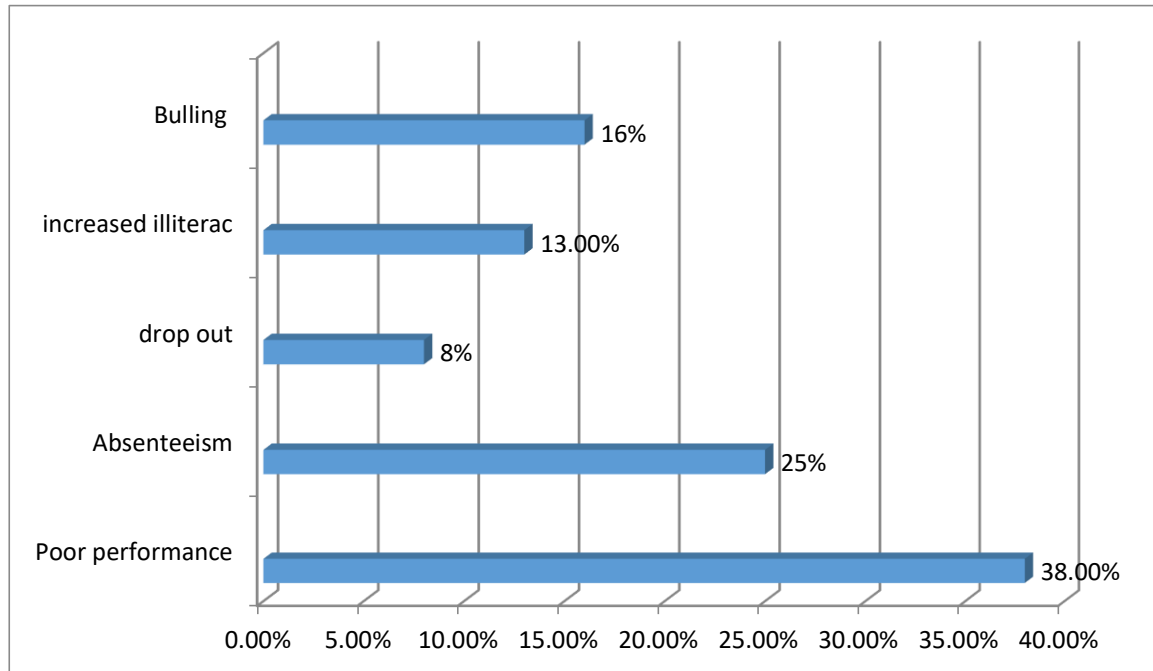
**Chart 1: Causes of Gender-based Violence****4.2. Effects of Gender-based Violence**

Table 2 and the figure 1 below represented the respondents' responses on the effects of gender based violence. 38% of the respondents stated poor academic performance as the leading effect of GBV. 25% of the respondents pointed out that absenteeism is another effect of GBV. 16% of the respondents cited bullying as another effect of GBV, 13% of the respondents said increased illiteracy levels and 8% of the respondents cited high drop out of learners as another effect of GBV.

**Table 2: Effects of Gender-based Violence**

Effects of Gender Based Violence	Frequency	Percentage
Poor academic performance	45	38%
Absenteeism	30	25%
High levels of dropout	10	8%
Increased rates of illiteracy	15	13%
Bullying of fellow learners	20	16%
Total	120	100%

**Figure 1: Effects of Gender-based Violence**

#### 4.3. Solutions to Gender-based Violence

Table 3 below represented the respondents' responses on the solutions/recommendations to gender based violence. 33% of the respondents mentioned stiff punishment to perpetrators of GBV as a deterring factor. 25% of the respondents pointed out empowering women and girls as another solution. 25% of the respondents cited educating and sensitizing citizens on GBV as another solution. 10% of the respondents advocated for including women in decision making as a vital solution combating GBV and 8% of the respondents cited engaging men as allies in GBV related programs.

**Table 3: Solutions to Gender-based Violence**

Solutions to Gender Based Violence	Frequency	Percentage
Educating the citizens on their rights	30	25%
Empowering women and girls	30	25%
Stiff punishment to perpetrators of GBV	40	34%
Engaging men as allies in ending GBV	10	8%
Including women in decision making	10	8%
Total	120	100%

One characteristic of gender-based violence is that it knows no social or economic boundaries and affects women and girls of all socio-economic backgrounds: this issue needs to be addressed in both developing and developed countries. This in line with Nichter & Goldmark (2019) who said that decreasing violence against women and girls requires a community-based, multi-pronged approach, and sustained engagement with multiple stakeholders. Gender experts say the root causes of GBV can largely be narrowed down to inequality for women and the

associated violence and harmful and controlling aspects of masculinity that result from patriarchal power imbalances embedded in much of Africa's traditional and cultural beliefs.

## 5. CONCLUSION

School related gender based violence is a global phenomenon that knows no geographical, ethnic economic, social, cultural or other boundaries. School related gender based violence or abuse is based on gendered stereotypes that targets pupils based on their sex, sexuality or gender identities. It happens around all societies and symbolizes a brutal violation of human rights more especially for the weaker sex. This study revealed that there were various effects of GBV on the academic performance of pupils. It was also discovered that the effects of Gender based violence on pupils were high levels of absenteeism, because some of the pupils thought that absconding from class was the best way to avoid being in contact with the perpetrators. Absconding from school leads to pupils dropping out of school hence increasing the levels of illiteracy in the country. Psychological effects such as fear, anxiety, stress, and depression were also leading effects. Physical effects in terms of having health problems such as headaches, stomachaches, insomnia scars/bruises, black eyes, and so many other health problems were faced by the victims of school related gender based violence. Cases of GBV would drastically reduce provided sensitization programs are taken serious and enhancing stiff punishment to offenders.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are actions that should be taken on the basis of the findings of this study:

- The government through designated institutions should come up with programs aimed at educating communities on negative gender stereotypes.
- The government through different institutions should enhance stiff punishment for perpetrators of GBV.
- The school administrators must see to it that deliberate effort is made to sensitize learners on human rights and encourage victims to always report any sort of GBV.

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