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# SAFETY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS AGAINST VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN PUBLIC SPACES IN CHITUNGWIZA, HARARE, ZIMBABWE

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**Abstract:** Introduction: No one should be subjected to any form of violence publicly or privately. The level of Gender Based Violence (GBV) in Zimbabwe remains high and a barrier to women's active participation in development. At least >68% of women in the Southern African Development Community have experienced some form of GBV during their life time. The research aimed at promoting full recognition, realization and protection of the rights of women and girls against all forms of gender-based violence and threats, by advocating for women friendly and safe community environments.

**Methods:** Simple random sampling was used to administer the questionnaires to women and girls, boys and men in the community. Cluster sampling by age and gender was employed first and followed by a random selection within the clusters for focus group participants. Purposive sampling was also used. Focus group discussions, key informant interviews, structured interviews and observation were utilised.

**Results:** Women and girls experienced physical, sexual, psychological and verbal abuse violence in public spaces. Public spaces included bus termini/ ranks, aboard public transport, at market places, shopping centres, beer halls, at stadiums, in the streets and along bushy pathways in and around the communities. Female respondents were harassed without recourse although acutely aware of procedures of reporting cases of violence to the police. Most women experienced police stations as being far away. Normally, authorities did nothing to the perpetrators of domestic violence.

**Conclusion:** Ensuring women and girls safety in public spaces was recommended as government priority area.

Streetlights erection, provision of running water in homes, more public toilets construction, establishment of viable reporting mechanisms for violence and sexual harassment were needed. Women wanted law enforcers and local service providers trained on gender sensitivity and taking reported cases seriously. Guaranteeing the exercise of right freedom of movement, permitting women to carry out their activities without fear is needed.

**Key Word:** Gender Based Violence; Sexual Gender Based Violence; Safe Cities; Violence against Women; Ministry of Women Affairs Gender and Community Development

## I. INTRODUCTION

Violence against Women (VAW) is one of the greatest human rights violations, which when coupled with tolerance of abuse, is high in Zimbabwe. The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) provides a fertile ground for contestations of these human rights violations [1-3]. A baseline survey commissioned in 2013 by the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development and Gender Links indicates that at least 68% of women reported that they had experienced violence during their lifetime and generally, women do not report VAW cases and they do not seek health services because such cases are trivialised by law enforcers due to too many cases handled.

The current population of Zimbabwe in 2022 is 15,331,428, a 1.59% increase from 2021 with the urban population rising rapidly in tandem with becoming sites of growing inequality between men and women which echoes the



inequalities already experienced by women on a daily basis, within their homes and communities in relation to socio-economic and political participation [4]. Safe shelters and perception by the societies and communities surrounding these have also shown that women and girls are not totally safe from gender based violence (GBV) even with this type of protection [5] and teachers have also intoned on the violence seen in schools among students[6].

Violence in public spaces tends to be acceptable that it is hardly ever talked about. Women and girls in urban and peri-urban areas experience life differently from men. Women live with high levels of fear and anticipation of violence and sexual harassment in public spaces. Women and girls are labelled as good or bad depending on their dressing. Harassment of women and girls has been seen as a norm within most men flock of the city or urban.

How the victims and or survivors are responding or have been responding to violence and sexual harassment that they have gone or are going through, how their lives have been impacted require exploration. The possible causes of these acts and suggestions on what women think should be done to solve this problem of violence against them in public spaces is a continuous dilemma requiring ongoing investigations.

The normalization of violence and sexual harassment perpetrated against women and girls in public spaces infringe upon their rights and freedom, as equal citizens, to uninhibited movement and pursuing of various opportunities that enable human development such as education, work or participation in political and social life (Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Act (No.20) Act of 2013). Section 52 of the constitution of Zimbabwe states that, "Every person has the right to bodily and psychological integrity which includes the right to freedom from all forms of violence from public or private source..." (Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Act (No.20) Act of 2013).

In Zimbabwe, cities have been planned, built and services delivered without taking the black men and their women folk's lives and needs into account [7, 8]. Lack of race and gender sensitive responses to community growth has heightened the socioeconomic disparities and inequalities suffered by women. Most cities were built with men-only dormitories and have seen little change in the face of ballooning of an all sexes-population. Women and girls come off the worse for wear and tear and losers in any contests for resources in the black community. Depraved public services including bad roads, inadequate or inexistent street lighting, poor public transport, and inadequate ablution facilities compromise protection and the safety of women from all sorts of abuses. Weak crime control, lack of information, absence of legislation as well as carelessness in implementation of existing legislation also affects and expose women to abuse.

The study sought to identify safe public spaces free from violence and sexual harassment against women and girls

while serving as a point of reference for those intending to move forward with the development, implementation, and evaluation of interventions, as well as with more specific systematic reviews, to fill gaps on the subject. To the extent feasible, this research sought to present operational recommendations from the available evidence that were garnered from the site area to enable the government, and non-governmental institutions to inform their decision making when it comes to investing in interventions to prevent and reduce VAWG. It was hoped that the study would promote full recognition, realization and protection of the rights of women and girls against all forms of gender-based violence (GBV) and threats, by demanding a women friendly and safe community environments.

## **II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Various methodologies were utilised in a mixed method approach as it was important to bring out the various types of violence and sexual harassment faced by different categories of women in public spaces with respect age groups and or type of employment. Awareness by women of the right to freely access public spaces and how the laws and policies in place correspond with the actual reality on the ground was explored. Focus group discussions, guided interviews and self-administered questionnaires were used as data collection tools.

### **2.1 Research Approach**

A largely quantitative approach with qualitative components was adopted in assessing the safety of women and girls in public spaces and their access to justice and social services. The focus areas that the tools sought to enquire included the specific public spaces where women and girls have faced sexual harassment or violence, factors that contribute to women feeling unsafe, the different types of violence and sexual harassment women have faced in public spaces and access to justice and social services as it relates to the creation of safe public spaces.

### **2.2 The population studied**

The geographical area chosen for the research were 13 wards out of the 25 wards in Chitungwiza Dormitory and Satellite City. Research samples were picked from purposively selected wards which were known to have big and busier market places and commuter omnibus ranks such as Makoni Shopping Centre and Huruyadzo Shopping Centre.

### 2.3 Research Site



**Figure 1: Map of Zimbabwe showing location of Chitungwiza**

The survey was carried out in Chitungwiza town which is located about 25 kilometres away from the capital Harare. Chitungwiza is the third largest town in Zimbabwe in terms of population. In the beginning Chitungwiza was a dormitory town of Harare. This means that people would work in Harare and have residences in Chitungwiza as there was not much economic activity in the town. Chitungwiza is a clear example of rapid urbanisation and growing population. The town now boasts its own industrial area and has its own town council and mayor. Chitungwiza City is divided into four main sections Seke North, Seke South, Zengeza and St Marys. The population of Chitungwiza is 397,149 in 2022 according to projections from 2012 at a growth rate of 1.46% per year [9].

### 2.4 Sampling Approach

A street survey was carried out where questionnaires were administered to at least (304 respondents) of which three quarters of them were females, 207 females and 75 males. Three Focus Group Discussions (FDGs) were organized with at least 10 participants in each group to make up 30

participants. Women and girls who participated in the FDGs were categorized according to their age groups which are 16-24, 25 - 35 and 35> years. The women were categorized as such to elucidate more information pertinent to each age group with girls below the age of 15 being the school going age and with experiences somewhat different from those of women between the ages of 25 - 35 who are within the productive age group and most are either engaged in formal or informal employment.

#### 2.4.1 Sample size estimation

The research used the Raosoft sample size calculator[10] where margin of error was 5%, confidence level was 95%, population size was N, sample size was n, r was the fraction of responses that were selected,  $Z(c/100)$  was the critical value for the confidence level c such that:  $x = Z(c/100)2r(100-r)$ ;  $n = N \times ((N-1)E^2 + x)$ ;  $E = \text{Sqrt} [(N - n) \times n(N-1)]$



## **2.5 Data Collection Methods**

Questionnaires were administered through simple random sampling to women and girls, boys and men in the community. Cluster sampling by age and gender was employed first and this was followed by a random selection within the selected clusters. Purposive sampling was also used for special groups like the police, councilors and officials from the Ministry of Women Affairs Gender and Community Development.

A few predetermined ideas, particularly hypotheses, were built to allow sensitivity during data collection as much as possible. A wide variety of literature and laws on sexual harassment to ascertain and fully understand issues of sexual harassment were examined with desk reviews and structured interviews, key informant interviews, observation and FGDs used to collect data.

### **2.5.1 Desk Review**

A comprehensive review of the literature was conducted to provide the conceptualization of this study. The Constitution of Zimbabwe provides for every Zimbabwean citizen and everyone else who is legally in Zimbabwe the right to move freely when in Zimbabwe. Relevant sections of the Constitution of Zimbabwe that seek to protect and uphold the rights of women and have a bearing on the safety of women and girls to move freely in public spaces were identified and provided the guiding framework under which the study was conducted. Assumptions made in the study were well informed avoiding situations where pre-supposition that a certain law did not exist when in actual fact, they would have been in existence for some time based on the desk review.

Also, the examination of existing legal frameworks, national, regional and international as well as the primary actors who have an influence in policy formulation and implementation was made. This, in one way or the other, had a bearing on understanding the safety of women and girls. A sound framework for assessing the safety of women and girls in public spaces at a local level being useful information on global best practices was thus made.

### **2.5.2 Structured Interviews**

The questions were asked in a standardized order following the interview schedule and rarely probing beyond answers received.

Structured interviews were easy to replicate as questions used were fixed and close ended, thus it was easier to test for reliability. Moreover, structured interviews took less time to conduct and as such many interviews could take place and a large sample could be obtained. Findings were hence more representative and could be generalized to a larger population.

### **2.5.3 Key Informant Interviews**

These were qualitative in-depth interviews conducted with people who were aware of what was going on in the community. These community experts, with their specific knowledge and understanding, were able to provide insight on the nature of problems and gave recommendations for solutions. The police (the Victims Friendly Unit-VFU), Ministry of Women Affairs Gender and Community Development, local government (councillors) participated.

A key informant interview guide focused on their understanding of GBV concept with special reference to violence against women and girls in public spaces. Specifically, the guide comprised of nineteen questions. Focused was on, their responsibility in preventing sexual violence and harassment against women and girls in public spaces as well as their responsibility in providing services for women and girls who face sexual violence and harassment in public spaces. Police officers within the VFU were interviewed to ascertain how violence and sexual harassment cases were dealt with right from the reporting stage to the time a charge is drafted for court.

The questions posed to the interviewees were open-ended to allow clarification of answers devoid of the simplicity of either “yes” or “no”. Broad questions on the subject of sexual harassment were asked at the beginning of the questionnaire and then narrow down the to the area of interest.

### **2.5.4 Observation**

Exclusive notes were generated from observing the safety of women and girls at public spaces such as at the commuter omnibus ranks. The women and girls were not informed who was observing them or when they were observed.

A clearer interpretation of the context and to validate data garnered from the other methods, observations were made and recorded unlike listening to what the participants said. There were ethical problems inherent in observing real life situations for research purposes such as failure to request for consent to observe the participants as this would have compromised the validity of findings with possible bias and self-consciousness being introduced by participants “playing to the gallery”. Also, the role and effect of the observer on the people and situations observed was accounted for having by having more than one observer.

While descriptive information from a naturalistic setting in the research site was gathered, assessment of the processes that, in some instances, ultimately lead to women and girls being sexually harassed were observed. The observations were made right from the way the women and girls and the main perpetrators, (who were usually men) communicated. Of particular note was the interactions when the touts were calling for women passengers to board their commuter omnibuses.



### 2.5.5 Focus Group Discussions (FDGs)

The moderator provided the topics and monitored the discussion in FDGs. Data collected was meant to complement the other research methods. Three FDGs were held categorized according to age groups 16-24, 25-35 and 35 and above with more information pertinent to each age group being elucidated. Guidelines in the FDGs were: (i) main types of violence and insecurities that affected women when moving in public spaces, (ii) the various precautionary measures that women took when going out in public spaces. (iii) the incidences where they had experienced violence or sexual harassment, (iv) and what they had done or what their reactions were.

### 2.6 Data Presentation and Analysis

Data was analyzed based on defined themes (research objectives), violence and sexual harassment of women and girls in public spaces and how they can be curbed.

All responses from the focus group discussions and key informant interviews were read, transcribed, analyzed, interpreted and category headings generated from which themes emerged. Thematic Content Analysis was used for the analysis of qualitative data. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 was used to analyze the quantitative data. Data was presented as frequency tables and graphs.

The findings were presented per each research objective. Recommendations were developed based on these findings with attempt being made to provide context specific findings so as to avoid generalization.

### 2.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct the study was sought and obtained from the Medical Research Council Zimbabwe (MRCZ). Requests, in writing, for gaining entry into the study area were made and obtained from the Health Department of the Chitungwiza Municipality. Privacy and confidentiality of the participants was given in writing in the languages the participants were familiar with (English, Shona and Ndebele). Efforts were made to ensure that

research participants volunteered information willingly without duress with each participant above the age of 18 signing a consent form. These under the age of 18 years had their consent form signed by their parents or guardians while they signed the consent to participate in the study form. The essence of the research to the participants prior to participation was explained to all participants with emphasis on their right to withdraw from the study any time they felt like quitting.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

Study findings were presented and discussed as per emerging themes with efforts made to link the findings and discussion to the rest of the work for consistency. The results are discussed concurrently linking quantitative and qualitative data in the spirit of mixed-method approach of the study.

### 3.1 Safe public spaces for women and girls which are free from violence and sexual harassment

The common consensus among women and girls from the findings is that there are rarely any safe public spaces in which they are free from violence and sexual harassment. As shown in **Table 1** public washrooms or toilets were the only spaces where women were least prone to face sexual harassment and violence. One would attribute it to the fact that most public washrooms or toilets are disaggregated by sex with females using separate ablution facilities from those used by males.

Whilst a greater percentage of women indicated that in most of the public spaces, they are prone to face violence and sexual harassment leaving less room for spaces in which they can freely move without being sexually harassed. The number of women and girls who feel that the city and neighborhoods are not safe spaces is 68.1% translating to 3.14 more chances of experiencing possible GBV in these places and curtailing their actual mobility by the same margin.

**Table 1: Specific public spaces where Sexual Harassment has been witnessed**

| Place                        | Male<br>(n=97; 31.8%) | Female<br>(n=207; 68.1%) | Total (n=304)  |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| Market place***              | 55(56.7%)             | 74(35.7%)                | 129(33.1%) *** |
| Roadside                     | 34(35.1%)             | 55(26.6%)                | 89(22.8%) **   |
| Waiting for public transport | 24(24.7%)             | 35(16.9%)                | 59(15.1%)      |
| Using public transport       | 22(22.7%)             | 36(17.4%)                | 58(14.9%)      |
| Social/Community space       | 22(22.7%)             | 23(11.1%)                | 45(11.5%)      |
| Public washrooms             | 0(0.0%)               | 3(1.4%)                  | 3(0.8%)        |
| Other                        | 1(1.0%)               | 6(2.9%)                  | 7(1.8%)        |
| Total responses              | 158 (12.9%)           | 232 (40.5%)              | 390            |



### **Safe public spaces for women and girls (Table 1):**

Market places and the roadside(55.9%)were the places that most respondents had witnessed sexual harassment against women and girls, followed by when “waiting for public transport and when “using public transport” (30%) combined. Issues to do with transport (roadside, public transport use, waiting for public transport)significantly exposed women and girls 52.8% of the time to harassment and sexual violence [\*\*\*p < 0.05; transport vs other combine spaces].By simple proportional comparison: market place (33.1%)>roadside(22.8%)>public transport waiting (15.1%)>public transport use (14.9%)>Social/Community space(11.5%) [\*\*\*p< 0.05;market place vs other spaces combined; \*\*p < 0.05; roadside vs other spaces combined].

Furthermore, female FDGs revealed the specific market places and roadsides where safety was not felt. Zengeza 2 Shopping Centre where there is a retail for mobile phones, there was mention of a man who sat there daily making sexual innuendos that made women and girls uncomfortable. Town Centre B, beer halls, Unit D shops, Seke 7 road all came up as unsafe places. Women, especially, school girls were kidnapped and sometimes raped in cars that hover around the long stretches of road in the areas.

At Zvido Shops was a man who once said ‘I will rape you to a girl’ and one girl expressed how, “from the time I heard it from my mom it made me feel scared to go to the shops to buy things for the house. I am an only child and have to do the running around, which means no matter how I feel I still have to go to the shops.”

Another respondent verbalised what she saw and experienced when walking from Chigovanyika to St Mary’s “the sewage there is disgusting also men humiliate us by shouting and yelling vulgar things.” At Chikwanha shopping centre one intoned, “I remember when coming from school in our teacher’s car, he stepped out to buy roasted corn and because he did not buy at a stall run by ‘hwindis’ (omnibus touts) they started shouting at us saying we were whores sleeping with him”.

At Pamacheke, close to Zengeza 1, women who do not respond to men who harasses them, faced threats of being beaten.One respondentnarrated her ordeal, “When I was coming from church at night two men started following me and said some things. I kept walking and then they said, ‘If you do not stop, we will run after you’. So, I decided without hesitation to run for my life until a passerby driving his lorry stopped and rescued me.”

At Zengeza 3 High School where water is fetched from a borehole, men remove females’ buckets from the queue and sometimes throw their water away. This occurs also at the Zhidhinaborehole in Chitungwiza.

Some drunken men mock, throw mud at girls(to soil their uniforms), stalk, whistle, jeer and threatento be beat girlswhen passing through the park to or from school. The

men drink alcohol and smoke marijuana openly in the park daily.

Women and girls expressed feeling safer in their homes or at church. However, women and girls are be forced to fetch water for household use from boreholes and wells outside their homes and houses. They are involuntarily exposed to violence and harassment inevitably. Urban houses have in built water reticulation systems for domestic use. Lack of water supply into the houses unnecessarily expose them to GBV at places and areas that do not give them safety and protection.

### **3.2 Categories of women and girls who are vulnerable to violence and sexual harassment in public spaces**

The FDGs sentiments were that public spaces were not safe for all women particularly women in informal trading who spend a greater proportion of their day at the market place. School girls are also prone to victimization on their way to and from school. Around maize fields and despite the time of day, women get robbed and some murdered by robbers hiding there. Mbizi, JD and Gomba areas were cited as places where robbers hid in maize and sugar cane plots and were not safe for women and girls alone. On reporting the cases to the police some women expressed how that “even with police and soldiers around, you can get robbed because it seems the police are working together with these robbers. The police also get paid by the perpetrators not to press a charge that is if you have reported the case and identified the person.”

Promoting safe spaces for women and girls is intertwined with the right to freedom of movement and the ability to unrestrictedly participate in activities encompassed in the spheres of life. When women are hindered from freely engaging in economic activities or rather denied access to their economic rights, which help to sustain their families, it is disheartening for them and their families. One woman’s experience illustrates how “On closing the Eco-Cash shop a man followed me and forcibly took my bags, pointing a knife at me to scare me,” she lost her takings from an Eco-Cash shopwhere she worked as an assistant at Zengeza shopping centre in Chitungwiza.

### **3.3 Identifying current levels of community access to justice and social services available to women and girls in public spaces**

Seeking to know the levels of community access to justice and social services elucidated that most of the services were being poorly maintained. The circumstances affect women and girls’ ability to access these services readily available in public spaces. As shown in the **Table 2**, some areas are devoid of street lights especially the area with market stalls at Zengeza 2 Shopping Centre (Mbizi Area). The area provides a place for informal traders to trade their wares. Women expressed how they are scared to walk through the place because it is dark and moreover the area is not well



maintained also considering that there were noticeable piles of uncollected garbage around.

The lack of clean and sufficient public washrooms or toilets poses women to be at risk to violence and sexual harassment. Without ablutions in the area, women informally trading at the market places expressed how going to squirt in the bushes to relieve themselves exposed them to

violence and or sexual harassment. However, they often seek permission from nearest homes to use their toilets which is an uncomfortable thing to do. Moreover, due to the unavailability of sanitary facilities, these women are also forced to watch men relieving themselves against beerhall walls which is sexual harassment in itself.

**Table 2: Community access to social services**

| Contributing parameter or factor                                                           | Male (n=97;<br>31.9%) | Female (n=207;<br>51.8%) | Total (n=304) |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Lack of respect for women from men (LRWM)</b>                                           | 24(24.7%)             | 94(45.4%)                | 118(38.8%)*   |
| <b>Poor lighting(PL).</b> **                                                               | 27(27.8%)             | 71(34.3%)                | 98(32.2%)*    |
| <b>Poor maintenance of public spaces (PMPS)</b>                                            | 27(27.8%)             | 43(20.8%)                | 70(23.0%)     |
| <b>Lack of effective/visible security surveillance by police, community leaders (LESS)</b> | 27(27.8%)             | 55(26.6%)                | 82(27.0%) **  |
| <b>Lack of clean safe public washrooms, latrines (LCSPW)</b>                               | 26(26.8%)             | 42(20.3%)                | 68(22.3%)     |
| <b>Crowded public transport, bus stops or stations (CPTS)</b>                              | 30(30.9%)             | 51(24.6%)                | 81(26.6%)*    |
| <b>Intimidating groups presence (IGP)</b>                                                  | 16(16.5%)             | 57(27.5%)                | 73(24.0%)     |
| <b>Deserted public areas/ spaces (DPS)</b>                                                 | 5(1%)                 | 6(2.9%)                  | 11(3.6%)      |
| <b>Lack of /poor signage information (LPSI)</b>                                            | 16(16.5%)             | 27(13.0%)                | 43(14.1%)     |
| <b>Other factors (OF)</b>                                                                  | 13(13.4%)             | 12(5.8%)                 | 25(8.2%)      |

**Key:** [A] represents the amenities group; \*\*p<0.05 is level of statistical significance

Factors contributing to poor community social service accessibility compare as:

Lack of respect for women from men (38.8%)>poor lighting (32.2%)>lack of effective/visible security surveillance(27.0%)> Crowded public transport/bus stops/stations (26.6%)> presence of intimidating groups (24.0%)> poor maintenance of public spaces (23.0%).

Lack of respect for women from men significantly ranked higher when compared to average amenities provision and security concerns of women and girls [\*\*\*p<0.005; LRWM vs (PMPS+LESS+LP+ LCSPW+ CPTS)/4]. This shows that respect for women by men will increase public lighting, cause public places to be maintained well, cause security to increase for protection, influence less crowding at bus stops and generally make women feel safe wherever they are.

Combined effect of poor lighting (PL-32.2%), lack of effective/visible security surveillance by police, community leaders (LESS-27.0%), crowded public transport, bus stops or stations (CPTS-26.6%) had a significantly higher impact on induction of feeling and experiencing violence and harassment to women and girls as compared to combined effect of deserted public areas, spaces (DPS-3.6%),

intimidating groups presence (IGP-24.0%),lack of /poor signage information(LPSI)-14.1%),other factors (OF-8.2%) [\*\*\*p<0.05; (PL+LESS+CPTS)/3 vs (DPS+LPSI+IGP+OF)/4].

### 3.4 Reasons why women did not report incidents

Access to social services, access to justice available to women and girls is hindered by the lack of effective or visible surveillance by the security apparatus. The police highlighted those women and girl were free to report incidences of violence or sexual harassment they might encounter in public spaces. Women (**Table 3**)were reluctant to go and report these incidences to the police. The police trivialized or were thought to play down reported cases to do with harassment of women. Resultantly, women ended up not reporting and they feel their issues are not serious enough to report seeing that nothing was done to apprehend the perpetrators.

Security apparatus associated factors “not taken serious enough (NSE-38.2%)”, “afraid to approach the police (AAP-9.8%)”and “police would not do anything anyhow (PDNA-25.5%)”were frequently aired as statistically



significant influences on harassment and violent incidences

not being reported as compared other factors [\*\*\*p<0.005].

**Table 3: Influence on women not reporting incidents of harassment or violence**

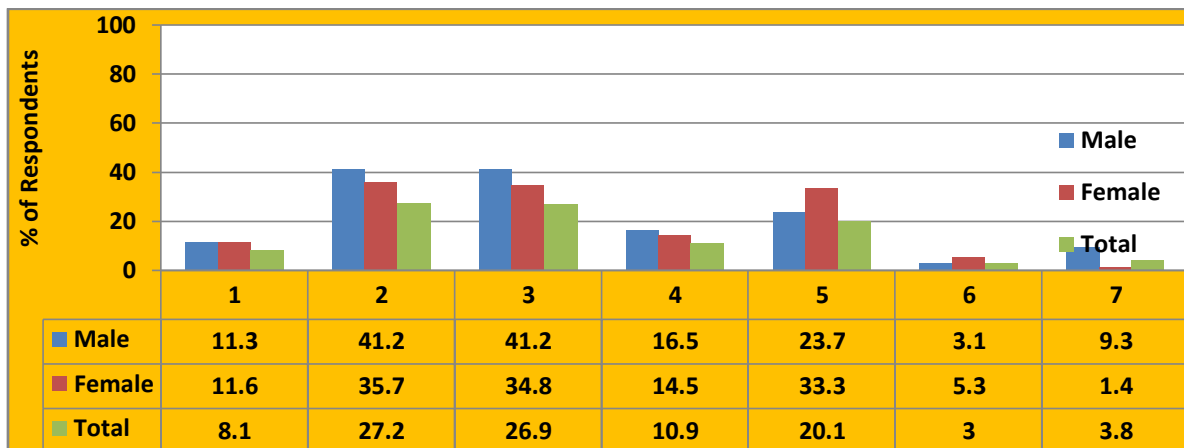
| Factors influencing Case Reporting to the Security Apparatus | Frequency (n=102) | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Not serious enough (NSE). ***                                | 39                | 38,2%***       |
| Police would not do anything anyhow (PDNA)                   | 26                | 25.5%**        |
| Police would blame me (PWBm). [B]                            | 6                 | 5.9%           |
| Afraid to approach the police (AAP)                          | 10                | 9,8%           |
| Process too tedious (PTT)                                    | 10                | 9.8%           |
| Reported all incidents (RAI)                                 | 3                 | 2.9.0%         |
| Other Factors (OF)                                           | 8                 | 7.8%           |

**Key:** \*\*p<0.05 level of significancy. [B] indicate security apparatus related influences. Parenthesis indicate abbreviations for factors for description purposes only.

The feeling or experience that one would not be taken seriously when reporting violence or harassment in public spaces is independently and significantly represented amongst the all the frequencies [\*\*\*p<0.05; NSE vs All frequencies] showing that the security apparatus may have a strong play in turning a blind eye to these crimes for their own reason or the other seeing that the frequency of actual cases was small (RAI-2.9%). **Table 3.** Due to the increased number of incidences of violence against women and girls seem to be taking place and the work available, the police may be inundated with work. Subsequently, may possibly take lightly cases where someone reported having been verbally abused as compared to cases of robbery and injury. The low salaries and bad working conditions in the public and uniformed services[11, 12] may also contribute to disinterest in some of the cases although this inevitably affect the victims beyond repair. Such attitudes in the security sector require urgent attention [13].

### 3.4.1 Types of Violence and Harassment:

The female respondents (35.7%) noted sexual harassment, annoying and teasing behaviour as the most common types of harassment which they fear most in public spaces. While (41.2 %) of the male respondents noted that the most type of harassment that they witnessed against women and girls was also sexual harassment, hassling and teasing. Stalking, flashing and staring was highlighted by (34.8%) of women and girls as the second most common type of harassment that they experienced in public spaces. Robbery or having money or possessions stolen and murder were rated third by (33.3%) of the female respondents and (23.7%) males. Sexual assault or rape was the fourth major concern for the personal safety of women and girls in public spaces (**Figure 1**).



**Figure 1: Sexual Harassment and violence faced by women and girls in public spaces**



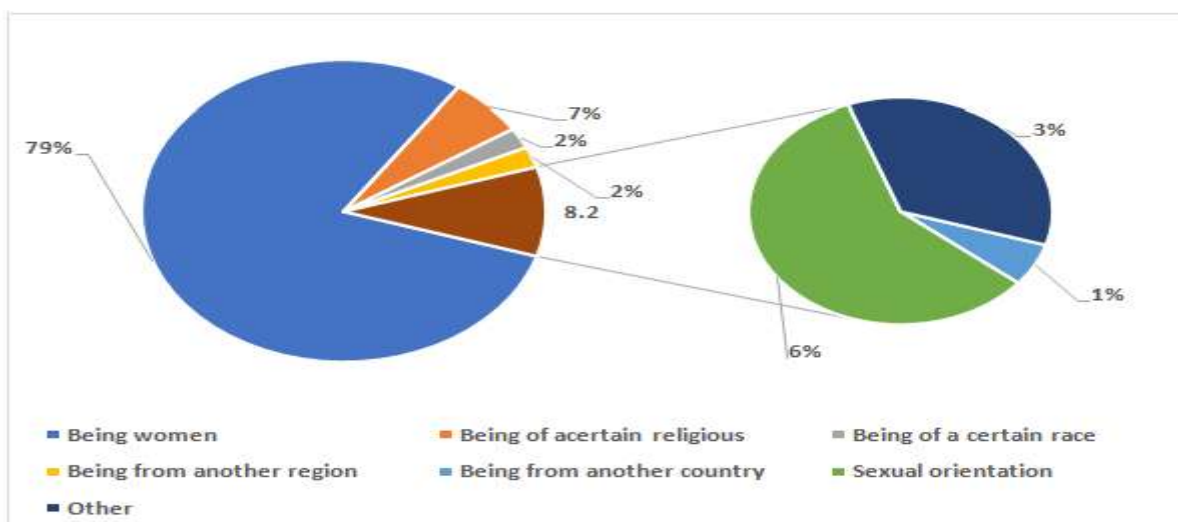
**Key:** 1. None, I have no concerns 2. Sexual harassment, hassling teasing 3. Stalking, touching, flashing, staring 4. Sexual assault or rape 5. Robbery or having money or possessions stolen 6. Murder 7. Other

As informed by a significant number of men, women were more likely to be sexually harassed, hassled, teased, touched, flashed or stared at in public places. This was corroborated by women themselves who added that >30% of the times they were also robbed or have their money and or possession stolen by force or violently (**Figure 1**).

### 3.5 Factors affecting personal safety of women

The **Figure 2** shows the representation of the factors that affect the personnel safety of women in Chitungwiza.

Female respondents (79%) echoed that being a woman affected their personal safety the most. Religion was the second most common reason that affected the personal safety of women in Chitungwiza. In essence, simply being a woman poses most risk to one's personal safety. Women are at most risk as they physically weaker than men and as such are easily targeted. Sexual orientation of women stood out prominently as a risk factor for sexual harassment, was the same level as being of certain religion while being from another country posed the least risk of sexual harassment in Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe. Certain races are usually the Caucasian race which is usually venerated by black people in Zimbabwe [14] and Zimbabweans generally tolerate foreigners.



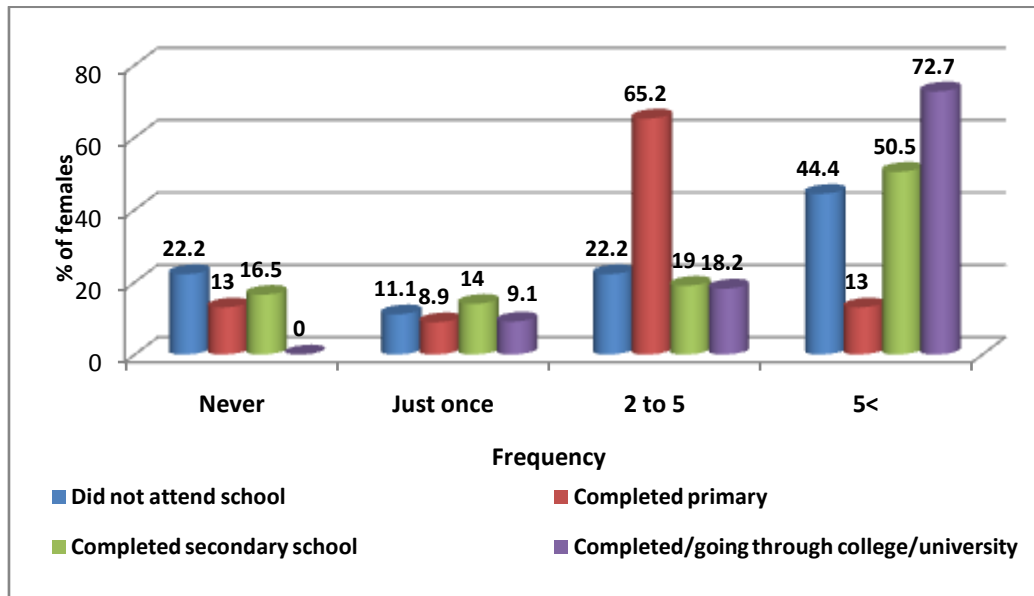
**Figure 2: Factors affecting personal safety of women in the area**

Being of a certain race other than being black seemed to be protective against sexual harassment. The issue of religion as a factor social harassment is being raised in other human right agendas as well [15, 16].

### 3.6 Prevalence of sexual harassment according to education

**Figure 3** depicts the existence of any significant differences existing between educational level attained by the women and the frequency of harassment. A chi-square for independence revealed a statistically significant difference between the two (Chi-square (9) =26.778,  $p=0.002$ ). Those

females who completed or going through college and university had been harassed for at least five times in a year. This could be that these female respondents have been in public spaces more and thus exposed to such incidences as compared to the other female counterparts. Similar findings have also been reported Elsewhere, education tend to expose women to sexual harassment as much as the general women at large [17]. Educated women suffer psychological violence whilst uneducated and nonworking women bear physical violence more[18].

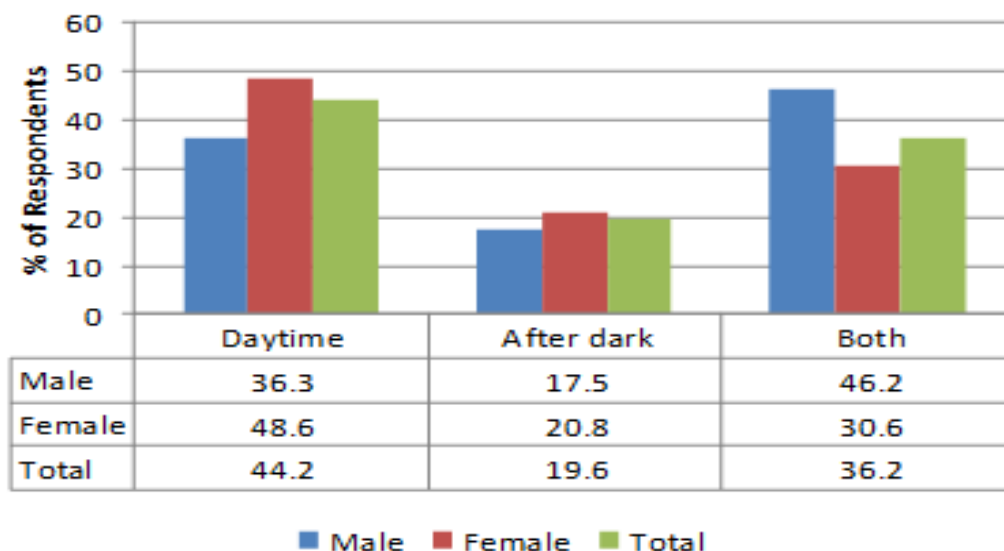


**Figure 3: Prevalence of sexual harassment according to education status (n=207)**

It will be instructive that women with higher education qualifications (completed or going through college or university (72.7%) will be the most likely to be protected against harassment and violence but **Figure 3** shows that they were more likely to be targets of the violence to almost equal capacities with those who had completed primary education at 72.7% and 65.2%, respectively. The observation that attending school of any type increased the risk of harassment 5-fold when compared to those who had never had a single case of gender-based violence or who had suffered it just once, shows that women needed to be protected when attending school.

### 3.7 Times of the incidence harassment occurred

Significant proportion of the female respondents (48.6%) concurred that they usually face harassment during the daytime as highlighted in **Figure 4**. Male respondents (46.2%) often witness women and girls being harassed both during daytime and after dark as they usually frequented the late hours of the day more than women. Most incidents of harassment experienced by women and girls have been noted to occur mostly during the daytime is because they avoid by all means going out at night. This invariably means that women and girls are infringed on freedom of movement at night even when they choose to.



**Figure 4: Number of times of the incidence harassment occur (Female, n=207 and Male, n=97)**



### 3.8 Employment status of Respondents

Both men and women were self-employed(ST-29.9%) as compared to those formerly employed(FE-4.3%) showing a statistically significant difference [ $**p<0.05$  SF vs EF](Table 5). The unemployed (UE-65.8%)were statistically a significant majority compared to both the SF and FE groups [ $***p<0.05$ ; UE vs SF+FE]. This may be attributed to the cumulative economic conditions with daily increases in unemployment which could be the cause of anger in the community[19-21]. Women are most likely to

face sexual harassment and violence within places they spend most of their time trying to access their economic rights and should be generally be safe places for irking livelihoods. Curtailing such movement to fend for oneself then not only prohibits freedom of movement only but also other freedoms like self-sufficiency, self-sustenance leading to crimes of prostitution and drug abuse, poverty and powerlessness and voicelessness which need to be exposed and removed [22-24].

**Table 5: Employment status of respondents**

| Employment status        | Male      | Female      | Total         |
|--------------------------|-----------|-------------|---------------|
| Unemployed formally (UE) | 40(41.2%) | 160(77.2%)  | 200(65.8%)*** |
| Employed formerly (EF)   | 10(10.3%) | 3(1.5%)     | 13(4.3%)      |
| Self-employed (SF)       | 47(48.5%) | 44(21.3%)   | 91(29.9%)**   |
| Total                    | 97(100.0) | 207(100.0%) | 304(100.0%)   |

**Key:**  $**p<0.05$ ; Parenthesis indicate abbreviations for parameters to make descriptions easier.

A statistically significant number of respondents were self-employed as compared to those employed formerly even though Chitungwiza boast of a huge industrial hub and was built essentially to house its workers [ $**p<0.05$ ; SF vs EF].

### 3.9 Reasons why respondent is in the area

The Table 6 illustrates the various reasons and or activities why the respondents are in the profile area. Relative or proportional representation showed that women had a higher chance of being dwellers of the areas than men with a ratio of 93.4:23.3 with 4.2 chances of being in the area [ $***p<0.05$ ; Women (LT) vs Men LT)]. This also gives them an equal unenvied exposure to harassment and violence by men who have less chances of dwelling there and are assumed to be there for the very purpose to molest women and girls. Proportional statistically significant representation showed that women had a higher chance of

being workers of the areas than men with a ratio of 74.2:13.7 with 5.4 chances of being at work in the area than men [ $**p<0.05$ ; Women (WT) vs Men WT)]. This indicates that the women and girls had nowhere else to be at the time the harassment took place or was observed taking place. Perpetrators of the violence picked up the particular area to carryout their heinous acts well aware of meeting their victims, which could be premediated actions. These timed operations may be mitigated by empowerment to eradicate poverty in women and girls allowing them to stand up for themselves against violence and harassment [25]. Statistically significance variance existed between the combined effect of work (WT) and dwelling place (LT) compared to all other factors [ $***p<0.05$ ; (LT)+(WT) vs (ST)+ (TTFT)+(ST)+(LS)+(OF)] showing that dwelling space and employment exposed the women and girls to harassment and violence[26].

**Table 6: Reasons why respondents are in the area**

| Reason                          | Male (n=97)         | Female (n=207)          | Total (n=304)     |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Living there(LT).***<br>A       | 73(75.3%)<br>[23.3] | 143(69.0%)<br>[93.3]    | 216(48.0%)<br>*** |
| Works there (WT)                | 43(44.3%)<br>[13.7] | 109(52.0%)***<br>[74.2] | 152(33.8%)        |
| Studies there (ST)              | 4(4.1%) [1.3]       | 7(3.4%) [4.77]          | 11(2.4%)          |
| Travel to and from there (TTFT) | 2(2.1%) [0.64]      | 5(2.4%) [3.41]          | 7(1.6%)           |
| Shops there(ST)                 | 9(9.3%) [2.79]      | 21(10%) [14.3]          | 30(6.7%)          |
| Leisure/social (LS)             | 13(13.4%) [4.0]     | 18(8.7%) [12.3]         | 31(6.9%)          |
| Other Factors (OF)              | 1(1.0%)             | 2(1.0%)                 | 3(0.7%)           |

**Key:**  $**p<0.05$ ; Parenthesis indicate abbreviations for parameters to make descriptions easier. Square brackets indicate proportionally adjusted participants numbers. A is a label for combined parameters.



### 3.10 Reactions to occurrences of incidences of sexual harassment and violence against women and girls

#### 3.10.1 Frequency of incidents of harassment that have happened to women

The majority of female respondents (46.3%) have been subjected to some form of violence and or sexual harassment in public spaces. The male respondents also concurred with the female respondents that they had witnessed women being harassed in public spaces more than five times.

Emerging is that many incidences of sexual abuse go unreported and among the few women who have taken action, confronting the perpetrator is more common than informing the police or asking for public help. When faced with a situation that one cannot refer effectively to someone, also not expect to receive one's desired results, people tend to stand up for and defend themselves with possible escalation of violence or stemming of the menace. However,

one sure way of eradicating women and girls harassment is through eradicating poverty, reducing gender inequality, increasing empowerment [27].

Confrontation is a knee-jerk reaction which creates vicious cycle of violence begetting violence, women may be trained in finding none violent reaction in defending themselves.

Police and security presence may be prudent ways of dissuading would-be women violators. Above all, financially empowering women and girls through entrepreneurial business development has the potential of reducing women harassment as most perpetrators have a low sense of esteem of themselves and rarely approach to harass women and girls who look self-confident and less vulnerable [28]. Predators by nature prey on the weak and vulnerable. Naturally, the most common type of "reaction" was that women did nothing in response (44%) of violence having concluded the superiority of those who violated them [29](Table 7).

**Table 7: Reactions towards sexual harassment of women**

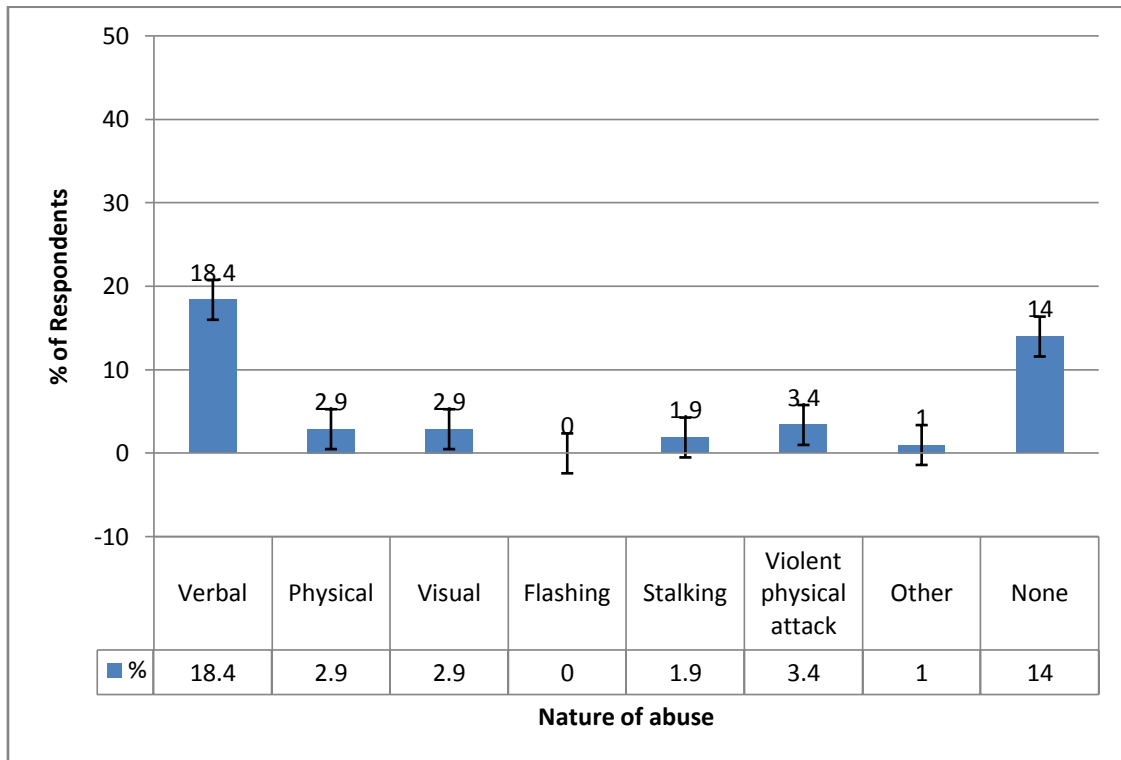
| Place                                               | Male (n=97)     | Female (n=207)    | Total (n=304) |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|
| <b>Did Nothing (DN)</b>                             | 50(51.5%) [16]  | 91(44.0%) [62] ** | 141(55.1%)    |
| <b>Confronted the perpetrator (CTP)</b>             | 16(16.5%) [5.1] | 22(10.6%) [15]    | 38(14.8%)     |
| <b>Reported it to the police</b>                    | 15(15.5%) [4.8] | 8(3.9%) [6]       | 23(9.0%)      |
| <b>Asked bystanders for help</b>                    | 5(5.2%) [1.59]  | 8(3.9%)           | 13(5.1%)      |
| <b>Reported it to a helpline/to another service</b> | 1(1.0%)         | 2(1.0%)           | 3(1.1%)       |
| <b>Told/ asked for help from family</b>             | 5(5.2%)         | 8(3.9%)           | 13(5.1%)      |
| <b>Told/ asked for help from a friend</b>           | 4(4.1%)         | 12(5.8%)          | 16(6.3%)      |
| <b>Other</b>                                        | 2(2.1%)         | 7(3.4%)           | 9(3.5%)       |

#### 3.10.2 Nature of most recent incidences of abuses reported

The respondents were asked on a broad range of violence or sexual harassment they have experienced and which they reported the most divided into six categories verbal, physical, visual, flashing (exposing of men's genitalia), stalking and violent physical attack (**Figure 6**). They have all experienced some kind of abuse and the most have reported verbal abuse (18.4%). Verbal abuse inducing stigma is common as it is the easiest activity people would do during their idle times although it has substantial effect on the one it is targeted at[30]. Little or no energy is expended when one uses verbal onslaught on the other although with a strong and long lasting impact on its target worse than physical abuse as verbal abuse play on the victim's emotional state longer and with a higher degree of permanency[31, 32].

Where the women and girls did make a report, the process of having a case investigated and offenders arrested were

cumbersome, irregular and not standardized according to the respondents. The majority of participants (53.4%) said the route of reporting case of SGBV was that of Police-Hospital-Legal AID-Counseling, while 34.4% said it was Hospital-Police-Counseling-Legal AID and yet others said Counseling-Police-Hospital-Legal AID (9.9%) and Police-Legal AID-Counseling-Hospital (2.3%) (**Table 8**). The mixed understanding of how complaints of violence and harassment of women and girls by would be victims shows that the easiest route would normally not to do anything. Women and girls normally would not want to be pushed from pillar to post when they are emotionally and possibly physically strained in trying to find help. In cases where no physical harm has been done to the women and girls, proving a case of harassment and or violence will be difficult even with legal aid support and counselling. Support like legal aid and counselling normally is not readily available and requires time which most victims do not have as they have to fend for their livelihoods.



**Figure 6: Nature of most recent incidences of abuses reported (n=207)**

**Table 8: Referral Path for reporting SGBV**

| Reason                                      | Male      | Female    | Total     |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Police---Hospital---legal AID--- Counseling | 23(48.9%) | 47(56.0%) | 70(53.4%) |
| Hospital---Police---Counseling--- Legal AID | 15(31.9%) | 30(35.7%) | 45(34.4%) |
| Counseling---Police---Hospital--- Legal AID | 7(14.9%)  | 6(7.1%)   | 13(9.9%)  |
| Police---Legal AID---Counseling--- Hospital | 2(4.3%)   | 1(1.2%)   | 3(2.3%)   |

### 3.10.3 Ways of Preventing Harassment

Women and girls' mobility has been reduced for fear of harassment. **Table 10** indicates women (44.9%;  $**p<0.05$ ) avoiding a number of places or time zones and men concurring 33.3% [ $**p<0.05$ ] with a combined effect of 78.0% [ $***p<0.05$ ; (AGAAD) vs All other factors]. Both males and females concurred (92.7%) avoiding wearing

certain clothes [ $**p<0.05$ ; (AWCC) vs All other factors]. In the true spirit of exercising ones right to freedom of movement and expression, women and girls' rights are being stifled. Women (1.9%) felt it was alright for one to carry weapons for protection, implicitly that women are not protected or feel unsafe in the public places.



**Table 10: Precautionary measures taken by women:**

| Action Suggested                              | Male              | Female              | Total      |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------|
| Avoid specific public spaces entirely (ASPAE) | 14(14.4%)         | 43(20.8%)           | 57(11.0%)  |
| Avoid going out alone at all times (AGOAAT)   | 4(4.1%)           | 41(19.8%)           | 45(8.7%)   |
| Avoid using public transport (AUPT)           | 3(3.1%)           | 17(8.2%)            | 20(3.9%)   |
| Avoid going out alone after dark (AGAAD)      | 32(33.3%) **<br>A | 93(44.9%) **<br>*** | 125(24.1%) |
| Avoid going to crowded places (AGCP)          | 9(9.3%)           | 30(14.5%)           | 39(7.5%)   |
| Avoid going to isolated places (AGIP)         | 11(11.3%)         | 44(21.3%)           | 55(10.6%)  |
| Avoid wearing certain clothes (AWCC)          | 52(53.6%) **<br>A | 81(39.1%) **<br>*** | 133(25.7%) |
| Carry items to protect oneself (CIPO)         | 0(0.0%)           | 4(1.9%)             | 4(0.8%)    |
| No, I don't do anything (NDA)                 | 10(10.3%)         | 18(8.7%)            | 28(5.4%)   |
| Other Factors (OF)                            | 6(6.3%)           | 6(2.9%)             | 12(2.3%)   |

**Key:** \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; Parenthesis indicate abbreviations for parameters to make descriptions easier. Square brackets indicate proportionally adjusted participants numbers. A is a label for combined parameters.

#### 3.10.4 Responses from police after women made reports

The police service ( $n = 42$ ), had inputs corroborating that woman did suffer from these ills of society. Most police officers were well informed about gender-based violence against women and girls but did indicate that in most cases (24.1%) nothing was done as cases were difficult to investigate due to limited resources and evidence. Offenders were arrested in 15.1% of the cases after investigations were carried out (15.2%). Most case were not recorded even though reported with only 13.6% showing being recorded. The police officers did indicate the difficulty of investigating cases of reported incidences as there was very little information to work on as the victims failed to describe the perpetrators or identify them. Victims were scared of mentioning the names of the violators for fear of backlashes that may occur after reporting as the police were not able to monitor all the areas where violence occurred. Counselling and advice not to use or visit the areas with apotential of being harassed was the best option in the absence of compelling evidence leading to an arrest. Ongoing public awareness of gender-based violence was afoot and much was being done in the area said the police service.

#### 3.11 Broader Issues from the Focus Group Discussions

Three FGDs were conducted with women and girls categorized according to age groups 16-19, 20-35 and 35+. All the 13 wards where the street survey was also carried participated with themes emerging from questions described below.

##### 3.11.1 What are the main types of violence and insecurity that affect your ability to move about in public spaces?

The following were the main types of violence and insecurity that women and girls in the FGDs highlighted as affecting their ability to move about in public spaces sexual harassment, whistling, passing on of derogatory words, physical (touching and feeling up), stalking, murder and robbery. Citing their fear to use the Mubvumira road to Chikwanha because of robbers who wait along the road even during the day, one of the respondents said “As Catholics we fear now going for early mass service which begins at six in the morning, the young men will be waiting on the road to rob us.”

Moreover, they also expressed that they avoided moving around with their mobile phones out of fear of being robbed because once the phone rings the young men who wait along the road will then follow and grab them from the women and girls. “Even the Chikwanha area you can’t send a girl alone yet it’s our biggest vendors market and everyone goes to that area. I have been a victim on my way to hoard items to sell. I encountered some young boys who had just murdered someone. That area is a no-go zone,” Women avoided public and crowded places like market or bus ranks as they felt unsafe, e.g.,..... “men come close to you sometimes feeling up on you, there are also no tower lights on the streets and it makes me feel scared in the evenings.” Nyatsime fields were a red-flag-area as women were prone to rape. Using public transport (Emergency taxis) made women and girls felt disrespected by touts who grab and touch them anyhow.

Lack of public toilets left women feeling vulnerable to violence and abuse in the public spaces. Drunken men

urinated publicly exposing themselves to everyone. Women and girls also succumbed to verbal abuse when idle youths blocked the road as a way to instilling fear into them. Drug abusers often chanted out vulgar words and disrespected women. Moreover, women often faced physical violence because of their dressing as..... “if you wear a short skirt, they might rip it off”.....while making fun of the women and yelling out derogatory words such as ‘big butt’ or ‘skinny butt’ “whore.” At Chikwanha shopping area girls expressed how they did not feel safe to walk past the area as they were verbally harassed by men sitting along the streets who stalked them on their way to and from school. “Sometimes when you ignore them, they answer back or they wait for you in the corn fields,” explained one of the respondents.

**3.11.2 Do you take any precautions when you go out?  
For example, do you carry something for protection or  
avoid certain areas?**

Women and girls said they avoided walking alone at night or adjust their activity times to avoid encountering harassment or any violent attacks. Men around their neighborhoods had organized neighborhood-watch with dogs to protect them. Women expressed how they resorted to using a different pathway and how..... “We are forced to dress down and sometimes even dress like older women in a head wrap and a Zambia (African print material) so that they stop nagging us,” in a bid for them to avoid being harassed for their dressing. Most of the women walked with male escorts as a precaution. Some girls shared that they walked while wearing earphones to avoid being bothered by men.....“I wear them all the time when I leave the house.” Women often remained silent when verbally attacked as they felt answering back would make the perpetrator more agitated.



**Figure 8: FGD participants, age group 20 -35years**Source: Photo having obtained consent by respondents. The women group seemed to be participatory (**Figure 8**), raised hands, showing the women were attentive and wanted to contribute to issues affecting their livelihoods.



**Figure 9: FGD participants, age group 16-19years**

Source: Photo having been given consent by respondents. The FDGs seem to have gathered girls from different backgrounds showing a possible exhaustive representation. The dressing expression by the in the red inscribed “Love living” seem to capture the essence of the girl child that nobody should interfere with them as they loved to be alive in peace (**Figure 9**).

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Sexual harassment and violence against women and girls in public spaces is sadly a reality and constituting face to face violence or sexual harassment when at market places, along roadsides, in public washrooms or toilets. Most women and girls echoed the need to have more police presence and surveillance in public spaces which was corroborated by the police citing inadequate resources to be in every part of the city. In addition, when women and girls report cases of violence and sexual harassment that they face in public spaces (to include verbal, visual, violent physical attack, stalking and flashing) they should be taken serious by the law enforcers. Women and girls have been avoiding reporting cases of violence and sexual harassment against them because their reports may not be not taken seriously by law enforcers and this has had a negative impact on the current levels of community access to justice.

**4.1 Governmental officials to provide and make public spaces safer for women**

**4.1.2 Reporting mechanisms for violence against women and girls need to be simple and offer privacy to victims**

##### **4.1.3 Street-lighting to be made available at all times**

Furthermore, the government represented by the local council as the primary public service provider should ensure

that malfunctioning tower and streetlights are fixed and new ones are erected in places where there are not there. This will ensure that perpetrators do not take advantage of the dark and moreover with proper lighting it gives women and girls the confidence to move around as they are currently vulnerable to being robbed or raped.

**4.1.4 Access to clean running water to be made available in all houses and homes**

**4.1.5 Security surveillance through Police Service presence at all times in public spaces.**

**4.1.6 Rehabilitation for perpetrators to discourage them from being repeat offenders and to engage in such crimes as perpetrating violence against women and girls while creating of employment for the idle youths within the community**

#### **4.2 Intervention strategies for consideration by programmers**

The recommendations raised can be considered for reflective purposes and in planning for program activities by various development actors as summarized below;

**4.2.1 Raising awareness of the rights of women with emphasis on issues to do with their safety in public spaces.**

**4.2.2 More organized meetings of engagement between local leaders and the community as most of the community members seemed disengaged or lacked awareness**

**4.2.3 Capacity building for women and girls to advocate for gender responsive public services**

**4.2.4 Fixing of non-functional street lights and installing additional ones at some points.**

**4.2.5 Community collective action in advocating for frequent collection of garbage.**

**4.2.6 More Zebra crossing or speed humps within the community especially in areas with much traffic**



4.2.7 Need for more community boreholes to be sunk with water directed to houses and homes

4.2.8 There is need for educating members of the public on individual freedom of movement, no matter one's gender or social class.

4.2.9 Local authority officials must create enabling environments for all members of the community to do their activities without fear.

4.2.10 Law enforcement agents' presence must be felt 24 hours a day

4.2.11 Stricter measures to ensure public transport operators respect and uphold the freedoms of commuters from all forms of violence must be enforced.



**Figure 10: Huruyadzo Shopping Centre, Chitungwiza**

Source: Photo by researcher having been given consent by respondents.

The staring by the man in the picture at the women walking at the shopping Centre seem to be saying a lot (**Figure 10**) and may constitute harassment in one form or the other.

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