Assessment of the Role of Community, Gender and Children's Desk of Urban Police Station in Protecting Children's Right in Unguja-Zanzibar

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Abstract
This study assessed the role of community, gender and children's desk of Urban Police Station in protecting children's rights in Unguja-Zanzibar. The study specifically analyzed the contribution of community, gender and children's desk on children's rights protection and it also identified the challenges of children's rights by the community, gender and children's desk of Urban Police Station. The study employed a mixed approach where a case study design was used. Primary data was collected through interview and questionnaire. The qualitative data obtained was analyzed through content analysis technique while the quantitative data obtained was analyzed through descriptive analysis. The study found that, majority (62%) of the respondents confirmed the contribution of the community to ensure the safeguard of the children considered as the first stage in fighting for children's rights protection. Apart from that, the study revealed that, social corruption comes due to the fact that, the community life develops relations which make it harder for the victims' families to report perpetrators to the legal organs. Therefore, the study recommended that, Community should be educated and raise their awareness on children rights.

Keywords: Community, Child Protection, Gender and Children's Desk, Children's Rights

1. Introduction

Children's rights are a subset of human rights with particular attention to the right of special protection and care accorded to minors (Ligiero, *et.al.,* 2019). Following the devastating aftermath of the World Wars of the 20th century and their psychological and physical impact on the children all over the world, the United Nations (UN) under the Convention on the Rights of Children decided that, the human rights of the children required special protection from all forms of violence for their future development (Tobin and Seow, 2019). The UNCRC consists of 54 articles that set out children's rights and how governments should work together to make them available to all children. Therefore, under the terms of the Convention, governments are required to meet children's basic needs and help them reach their full potential (Byrne & Lundy, 2019)

Globally, most of European Union Legal instruments use the definition of a child as a person below 18 years old (EU, 2020). It is estimated that, up to 1 billion children aged 2-17 years, have experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence or neglect (Fazzi, 2019). Combating child sexual abuse is among the main priorities on the current EU agenda and one of the objectives of the new EU Security Union Strategy for 2020-2025. Moreover, the African Partnership to End Violence against Children (APEVAC), (2021) found that, rates of sexual and physical abuse have grown. Also, the study found that, more than half of the children in Africa experience physical and

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sexual abuse, while some in some parts of the continent, four in 10 girls suffer from sexual violence before the age of 15).

In May, 2009, the Tanzania Police Force inaugurated a project that establish specialized Gender Desks at Police Stations throughout the country, dealing with violence against women and children, seemingly because they were the most vulnerable group to all sorts of abuse in the society. Today, over 400 Police Stations across Tanzania have Police Gender and Children's Desks including seven of Zanzibar's 20 Police Stations (URT, 2012). Moreover, these Desks ensure that, cases of child abuse and violence are processed quickly and the victims receive appropriate medical and psycho-social support (Khamis, 2019).

Evidence shows that, there are still many children in Tanzania who report incidents of sexual violence and abuse whereby, almost three-quarters of both gender experience sexual violence either by adults or partners. Also, nearly 3 in 10 girls and 2 in 7 boys experience sexual violence before reaching the age of 18 (Khamis, 2019). On the other hand, in Zanzibar, there were 1,014 complaints related to sexual abuse on children in both Unguja and Pemba, (875) in Unguja and (139) in Pemba in the year of 2021 (Save the Children, 2021). Based on the cases above, there is little hope of achieving most of the MDGs if children are not protected from all forms of violation including sexual abuse (UNICEF, 2018). Therefore, this study was designed to assess the role of Community, Gender and Children's Desk of Urban Police Station in Unguja-Zanzibar in protecting children's rights.

2. Statement of the Problem

One of the initiatives undertaken by the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar to ensure the children's rights protection is to establish the Community-based Child Protection Mechanisms (CBCPMs) and the Gender and Children's Desks which are considered as a key factor in protecting the children's rights in the Zanzibar (Ligiero, *et.al.,* 2019). There are still many cases of children who experiencing sexual abuse and many of them failing to receive immediate support from responsible agencies. According to the Office of the Chief Government Statistician, (OCGS, 2021), number of cases of sexual abuse in Zanzibar had increased by 7.8 % from 90 cases in November, 2021 to 97 in December, 2021. Furthermore, the proportion of home based incidents per month increased by 17.6 % from 68 cases in November, 2021 to 80 cases in December, 2021.

Sexual abuse is often considered a hidden crime and community often prefers to deal with cases within the household or community. Furthermore, there are low levels of trust in the Police and Courts to deliver justice to the victims. As a result, few victims receive the support that they need to recover and many perpetrators do not face justice, leaving them free to continue committing these crimes against children (Khamis, 2019). From this point of view, the children will never achieve their future development if their rights are not protected from all forms of violation especially sexual abuse. Therefore, this study was designed to assess the role of Community and the Gender and Children's Desk of Urban Police Station in Unguja-Zanzibar in protecting children's rights.

3. Objectives of the Study

The study is guided by the following objectives:
   i.   To analyses the contribution of Community and the Gender and Children's Desk on children's rights protection of Urban Police Station of Unguja-Zanzibar.

ii. To identify the challenges of children's rights protection by Community and the Gender and Children's Desk of Urban Police Station of Unguja-Zanzibar.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Family System Theory

The Family System Theory developed by Murray Bowen in the 1950s. The general assumption of this theory is based on human behavior that argues that, family unit as a complex social system, in which members interact to influence each other's behavior. Also, it reflects the relationship and interdependency within the family without any sort of isolation. This leads to neglect and abuse especially of the children's rights. This Theory states that, "The actions of a family member cannot be understood in isolation. The family comprises of the father, mother and children and sometimes, members of the extended family including grandparents, aunts and uncles."

Therefore, in the family system, there is a hierarchy which sometimes interferes with the family system and child abuse is precipitated. The family hierarchy comes due to family composition which includes grandparents, father, mother and children. Therefore, the decision made at the top should be followed by all members of the family and always the decision is influenced by the cultural background of the family (Alzoubi, 2016).

The application of this theory in this study was to appreciate the functioning that focuses at interaction between people in family and between family's context in which family member is embedded. These interactions may give room for children's rights protection because the positive interaction ensures that all the children are protected in every single minute. The relationship between family members and the children brings much attention to looking after the children. In this case, the demands and needs of the children including their basic rights among other things will be given top priority for their future development.

4.2 Theory of Change

The Theory of Change emerged in the 1990s. A number of prominent theorists contributed to its development such as Huey Chen, Peter Rossi, Michael Quinn and Carlos Weiss. This reflects the changes at various levels that need to occur which lead to the protection of children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and others forms of violence. The theory reflects the current understanding of how change takes place. Thus, child protection across many contexts, with an increasing focus on building confidence on ensuring of way forward on protecting a child.

The Theory of Change provides the basis for a number of aspects of our work. It can help to unite or link the contributions of different sectors and lines of the responsible Ministry to child protection outcomes. This Theory can also be a valuable guide in developing strategy; it can help offices think through the numerous possible entry points to strengthening protective environments and link efforts at different levels into a more coherent strategy (World Vision, 2014).

The application of this Theory emphasizes changes among the community members in regard to how children are treated in our midst. Nowadays, child abuse is a global social problem defined broadly as physical abuse, sexual abuse by adults who are usually family or community members. From this point of view, change is needed in our community; knowledge and awareness among the community will enhance changes to their negative perspective towards the children and final work together to protect the children from all forms of violence.

5. Methodology

This study was conducted at Madema Police Station in Unguja-Zanzibar. This research unit was selected one of its departments; the (Gender and Children's Desk) was actively involved in children's welfare. Kothari (2008), argues that, there are three different research approaches: qualitative, quantitative and mixed method. This study employed both qualitative and quantitative research approaches because this approach ensures reliability and makes the study more informative and comprehensive. A case study design was adopted because it allowed investigators to have better understanding of the issues at this single research unit.

The population of this study was 1538 respondents with the following categories; Ministry responsible for child welfare and its departments: Department of Youth Development, Department of Social Welfare and Department of Women and Children's development; Police Gender and Children's Desk, Private organizations such as ZLSC, ZFLA and One-Stop Center; Community participants: Head of Shehia. Sample size was calculated using the Mathematical model that was developed by Yamane (1967) which resulted into 96 sample size. Purposive sampling technique was used to obtain the sample size from the population. Data was collected using interview and questionnaire. The qualitative data obtained was analyzed using content analysis and quantitative data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Scientists. (SPSS) Version 21 to produce descriptive results through frequencies and percentages.

6. Study Findings

6.1 Respondents' Profile

The characteristics of the respondents considered in this study were age, gender, education level and working experience. These characteristics were important because they reflected the nature of the responses or probable reasons for the responses provided by the respondents. The findings on these profiles are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic features of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Age	Valid below 25 years	9	9.4	9.4	9.4
	26-35 years	23	24.0	24.0	33.3
	36-45 years	33	34.4	34.4	67.7
	46-55 years	23	24.0	24.0	91.7
	56 and above	8	8.3	8.3	100.0
		96	100.0	100.0	
Gender	Males	45	46.9	46.9	46.9
	Females	51	53.1	53.1	100.0
Education level	Primary education	5	5.2	5.2	5.2
	Secondary education	22	22.9	22.9	28.1
	Diploma	34	35.4	35.4	63.5
	Degree Master	30	31.3	31.3	94.8
		5	5.2	5.2	100.0
Working experiences	1-3	6	6.3	6.3	6.3
	4-7	28	29.2	29.2	35.4
	8-12	41	42.7	42.7	78.1
	13 and above	21	21.9	21.9	100.0
	Total	96	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field data, 2022

Pertaining to the age of the respondents, Table 1 shows that, the respondents were categorized into five age groups: below 25 years, 26-35 years, 36-45 years, 46-55 years and above 56 years. The Table shows that, 9 respondents equal to (9.4%) were below 25 years, 23 respondents equal to (24%) fell under the age group of 26-35 years, 33 respondents equal to (34.4%) fell under the age group of 36-45years, 23 of the total respondents equal to (24%) also fell under the age group 46-55 years and last 8 respondents equal to (8.3%) were above 56 years. These findings show that, majority of the respondents were between the age group of 36-45 years old, they were well grounded on the information and data required to participate in this study.

Research can provide more valuable data if the questions are asked consciously. Asking gender questions in a research could provide an insight into patterns among different gender categories. In terms of gender, data in Table 1 indicated that, 44 respondents equal to (46.9%) were males, and 51 of the total respondents equal to (53.1%) were females. This implies that, there were more female than male respondents who took part in the study. Gender of the respondents was considered here so as to assess the understanding of the two genders on matters relating to children's rights protection. Gender was also considered for the purpose of gaining insights on gender balance without relying on a single sex.

Education level of the respondents was categorized into five categories, primary education, secondary education, diploma level, degree level and Master level. The study had interest in this aspect of the respondents because normally low level educated employees may not appreciate issues of such importance; role of Community and Gender and Children's Desk in children's rights protection. Therefore, findings in Table 1 showed that 24 equals to (35.4%) had diploma level of education. 5 respondents equal to (5.2%) had completed primary education. While 22 respondents equal to (22.9%) had completed secondary education. 30 respondents equal to (31.3%) had degree and 5 respondents equal to (5.2%) had reached Mater level. This implied that, investigators were satisfied with the level of education as the results obtained implied strong understanding of the theme of children's rights protection.

Working experience is the situation where informants portray good understanding of the requirements of the task at stake; roles in children's rights protection. Findings in Table 1 showed that, 6 respondents had been working as social welfare officers for between 1-3 years which was equal to (6.3%), while 28 respondents had been working for 4-7 years equal to (29.2%) and 41 respondents had been working for 8-12 years equal to (42.7%). Meanwhile, 13 and above years were 21 respondents equal to (21.9%). The respondents demonstrated wealth of experience in protecting children's rights.

6.2 Contribution of community and children's Gender desk on children's rights protection
Here, investigators desired to appreciate the extent to which stakeholders contributed to the role of protecting children's rights. The results are reflected in Table 2.

Table 2: Contribution of community and gender and children's Gender desk in children's rights protection

Result	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strong disagreed	4	4.2	4.2	4.2
Disagreed	13	13.5	13.5	17.7
Valid Neutral	17	17.7	17.7	35.4
Agreed	38	39.6	39.6	75.0
Strong Agreed	24	25.0	25.0	
Total	96	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Field data, 2022

The first specific objective of the study focused at the contribution of community and gender and children's Gender desk in children's rights protection. The respondents had various responses as seen in Table 2:

The findings in Table 2 showed that, 4 respondents equal to (4.2%) strongly disagreed with the statement that, the community and gender desk had a great role to play in the protection of children's rights especially from abuse. 13 respondents equal to (13.5%) also disagreed. 17 respondents equal to (17.7%) reported to be neutral while 38 of the total respondents equal to (39.6%) agreed that, community and gender desk had greater role to play in the protection of children's rights and finally, 24 respondents equal to (25%) strongly agreed on the role played by the community and gender and children's gender desk in protecting children's rights. This implies that, to a large extent, the respondents affirmatively knew that, children were safe within communities and the Gender Desks play vital roles.

The findings are in the same line with the results obtained by Reuben, Mohamed and Mutasa (2022) who conducted a study on the effects of community-based child protection mechanisms on sexual violence against children in Rombo District, Tanzania and found that, sexual violence against children was in existence and numerous cases that were reported to the Police by community members were incredibly many. Thus, calling upon authorities to take action as a way of the fulfillment of the requirements of the Law of the Child Act of 2009. It also confirms that, CBCPMs have had an impact in addressing sexual violence. As the findings from FGDs indicated further that, the establishment and interventions of CBCPMS have increased awareness and the results have increased the number of reported cases to the Police. For example, many communities in the study area, in collaboration with CBCPMs have established a secret mechanism whereby any member of the community can report an incidence through a phone call.

6.3 Challenges facing community and children's Gender Desk on children's rights protection
It was found that, the community was faced with many challenges regarding community involvement in the protection of children against violence and abuse. Thus, the government laws and regulations have the long hierarchical process which some time lead the community to lose much in terms of time and money to manage the plight of children. Not only that, but also, some times, the community may be ready to testify before the court but because of the much time spent profiling and handling the cases, evidence might become outdated. To worsen the situation, in most cases court demands for actual evidence which most often than not, may be too hard to be adduced by the community members. Interviewee 1 had this to say;

> ……*Some of the abused cases did not proceed up to Police level, if one did not provide bribe, one's case may remain in Police Registration books, hence, rendering it easier for the family members of the abuser to provide bribe to the authorities who end up reporting loss of the case file. People use number of days to go to police or court for handling the case but usually cases are prolonged until they give up or stop following up the case that is over dragging in courts of law, also, some times, the court needs actual evidence of the abused child but because of prolonged time of adducing evidence, more often than not, evidence and records are distorted.* (Interviewee 1, 2022).

The views of this interviewee tally with the findings obtained by Barry et.al., (2015) in Zanzibar where violence against children is very common but evidence is too hard to be adduced. Also, another impediment is lack of trust in the reporting system that fear to the whistle blowers.

Findings from interview sessions also indicate that, misconception on the real meaning of the concept of children's rights protection. This is because many of them are not aware of the strategies for protecting children from all forms or all types of violence. Respondent 2 argued that: -

> *...for what I know is that, children's rights protection is any action which can directly or indirectly ensure that, the girl or boy child remains safe from sexual harassment or rape. Failure to do so may lead to child abuse by even relatives or closest friends* (interviewee, 2022).

Again, this study revealed that, women are not ready to testify against perpetuators of children's rights violation because of the culture of Zanzibar where women feel shy testifying to this effect. Interviewee 3 explained thus:-

> *...there is lack of trust for survivors to report the crime, the problem is more common in rural areas, women were not ready to testify the case because of fear of being revenged and socially isolated"* (Interviewee 3, 2022).

It is arguably true that, community-based child protection mechanisms are the cornerstone of augmenting prevention efforts and that, collective planning among actors on behalf of vulnerable children create a high sense of ownership and sustainable support among children (Wessells, 2015). Despite the achievements recorded in terms of ensuring sustainable child protection services, this study identified some challenges affecting sustainable support such as a lack of resources (especially finances) to support these interventions, inadequate skills on sexual violence and child protection and the unequal power relationship between government officials and representatives of the marginalized groups such as the disabled in terms of access to information and inability to raise voice to question some of the decisions. This was confirmed by interviewee 4 who argued that:-

> *...all cases from the Police Stations are reported to the Police Gender and Children's Desk (PGCD) at the district level. However, the FGDs participants believed that, corruption is likely to compromise the Police effort of handling cases (*Interviewee 4, 2022).

A similar experience is reported in Kenya, where perpetrators of crimes such as rape and child abuse are often not prosecuted even after the availability of strong and glaring evidence against such perpetrators because of bribery and corruption within the Police force which led to case dismissal. Thus, bribes discourage community members from reporting similar cases to the Police (Wessells, 2015). Similar studies in some Asian countries indicate the prevalence of high levels of corruption among members of the Police Force and the Ministry of Justice Officials exacerbating the problem of abuse and sexual violence among children (Plan International, 2017).

Khamis, (2019) noted that, nearly 3 and out of 10 girls and 1 in 7 boys in Tanzania experience sexual abuse and more than 7 out 10 children experience physical violence before age of 18. Most children never tell anyone about their experience and relatively few cases are reported to the Police because of stigma, shame, family and community pressure, or the threat of family separation. On the other hand, the justice system in our society is not practiced to its fullest potential. This was confirmed by respondent 5 who asserted that:-

> *...there is low level of trust in the Police and Courts of law to deliver justice to the victims. As a result, few victims receive the support that they need to recover and many perpetrators do not face justice, leaving them free to continue committing these crimes against children* (Interviewee 5, 2022).

Similar view was aired by Interviewee 1 who lamented that:-

> *...Yet in many countries around the world, there is little or no local or national government with capacity and commitment to protect children and as a result, children's rights are violated on a daily basis. This lack of commitment is reflected through inadequate resources, a poorly qualified workforce and limited local services to meet children's needs* (Interviewee 1, 2022).

7.0 Conclusion
Basing on the objectives and findings of this study, it was concluded that, community and gender and children's desk had great role to play in protecting children's rights. Community-based child protection groups are a vital part of child protection systems. They have a particularly significant role to play in settings where other children's protection services and systems as well as groups are weak or non-existent.

8.0 Recommendations
Again, basing on the study objectives as well as the findings from the field, it was recommended as follows; in the first place, communities in the study unit should be educated and have their awareness raised pertaining to children's rights protection. The Ministry responsible for child protection in conjunction with local and international organizations in Zanzibar may team up and organize workshops on good parenting style and the importance of reporting of violence and abuse against children. Also, the Police Force and Courts of law in the country should serve society in reducing the multiple challenges communities are facing when fighting for the rights of the children in our society by covering up the whistle blowers of the perpetrators of crimes against children. Communities should also be sensitized to report cases and practices of child rights abuse without fear or favour. This may help reduce cases of child rights abuse in communities. Furthermore, the low level of trust in the Police and Courts of law should be enhanced through deliver justice to the victims. Hence, regaining confidence to report cases of abuse to the authorities. Thus, perpetrators aligned up to face justice other than leaving them free to continue committing these crimes against children specifically and against humanity generally.

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