

Analysis of Gender-Based Violence Against Men in Ghana

Forms of Gender-Based Violence Reported Against Men in Ghana

A report by the Ghana Statistical Service shows that about 28% of Ghanaian males have experienced physical or emotional violence exerted by their wives or partner at some point during their lives. From the data analysis, it is evident that respondents reported various forms of violence, including emotional abuse, verbal abuse, physical abuse, and combinations of these forms. Some respondents also reported witnessing financial abuse alongside other types of violence. Additionally, there were instances where respondents indicated N/A, suggesting they did not witness any violence.

Based on the data, the common forms of gender-based violence (GBV) reported against men in Ghana include emotional/psychological abuse, financial abuse, physical violence, and verbal abuse. These types of violence encompass a range of abusive behaviors, including emotional manipulation, insults, threats, intimidation, control over finances, and physical harm.

Community-Based Approaches for Addressing GBV Against Men in Ghana

The data indicates that both the community and law enforcement in Ghana often respond dismissively to male gender-based violence (GBV), displaying ridicule and a lack of reporting. These responses demonstrate a lack of acknowledgment, seriousness, and proper action towards reported cases of violence. Community-based approaches to address GBV against men in Ghana involve several strategies. These include promoting education and awareness campaigns to challenge harmful gender stereotypes and promote gender equality, establishing safe spaces where men can share their experiences and access support, engaging community leaders and influential figures to raise awareness and promote positive gender norms, and collaborating with local healthcare providers and social services to offer specialized care and support to male survivors of GBV. These approaches aim to foster an environment where men feel safe discussing their experiences, challenging detrimental stereotypes, and receiving appropriate assistance. The repetition of these approaches in the data suggests their significance and the emphasis placed on them by survey respondents. In summary, addressing GBV against men in Ghana involves collaborative efforts among community leaders, healthcare providers, and social services to combat violence and promote gender equality.

Impact of Harmful Gender Norms on GBV Against Men in Ghana

The data suggests that gender norms can have a significant and multifaceted impact on GBV against men in Ghana. Harmful gender norms that associate masculinity with strength, dominance, and invulnerability can contribute to shame and emasculation of male victims. Men may hesitate to report or seek help due to fear of being perceived as weak or less masculine. Gender norms that reinforce the idea of men being in control can lead to controlling behaviors that escalate into violence. Cultural expectations that men should be the primary providers for their families can create frustration, anger, and violent behavior if they are unable to fulfill this role. Additionally, cultural norms around masculinity can promote beliefs that men should be entitled to sexual or physical dominance over their partners, which can manifest in violent behaviors. It is important to address these harmful gender norms and promote healthy, non-violent masculinities through education, open conversations, support services, and initiatives aimed at challenging stereotypes and promoting equality.

Societal Beliefs and Attitudes Towards GBV Against Men in Ghana

In the survey, three key aspects related to societal beliefs and gender-based violence (GBV) against men in Ghana were highlighted. These aspects shed light on the societal expectations and stereotypes surrounding masculinity that contribute to shaping attitudes toward male victims of violence.

The first aspect is the reinforcement of the idea that men should be strong and able to defend themselves. Traditional gender norms often dictate that men should exhibit physical strength, toughness, and self-reliance. This expectation can create a barrier for male victims of GBV, as they may face challenges in seeking help or reporting incidents due to the fear of being perceived as weak or incapable of protecting themselves. The societal pressure to conform to these expectations can prevent male victims from coming forward and seeking the support they need.

The second aspect is the perpetuation of the belief that men should be dominant and in control. Cultural norms and expectations often assign men the role of being dominant and in control within relationships and households. This power dynamic can escalate into controlling behaviors and abusive actions. The belief that men should exercise dominance can contribute to justifying or normalizing violent behaviors towards male victims. It further perpetuates the notion that men are not supposed to be victims of violence, as they are expected to be the ones exerting control.

The third aspect is the stigmatization of male victims of GBV as weak or unmanly. Society tends to associate masculinity with strength, invulnerability, and the ability to protect oneself. When men experience violence, they may face social stigma and ridicule, as their victimhood contradicts societal expectations of masculine strength. This stigmatization can lead to the marginalization and isolation of male victims, hindering their willingness to seek help or report incidents of violence.

These three aspects demonstrate the significant role that societal expectations and stereotypes surrounding masculinity play in shaping attitudes towards male victims of GBV in Ghana. The pressure to conform to these expectations can create barriers for male victims, preventing them from seeking assistance and support. Addressing GBV against men requires challenging these harmful beliefs and norms, promoting healthier concepts of masculinity, and creating an environment where male victims feel safe to come forward and access the necessary support services.

Negative Effects Experienced by Male Survivors of GBV in Ghana

The survey responses indicate that male survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) in Ghana may experience various negative effects that can significantly impact their well-being and overall quality of life. It is crucial to understand and address these effects when providing support and assistance to male survivors. Here are some of the key effects highlighted in the survey:

1. **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Anxiety Disorders:** Male survivors of GBV may develop PTSD, which is characterized by intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, nightmares, and heightened anxiety. They may also experience other anxiety disorders, such as generalized anxiety disorder or panic disorder, as a result of the traumatic experiences they have endured.
2. **Depression and Suicidal Thoughts:** The trauma of GBV can lead to feelings of hopelessness, sadness, and despair, potentially leading to depression. Male survivors may also experience

thoughts of self-harm or suicide due to the emotional distress and difficulties they face in coping with their experiences.

3. **Substance Abuse and Addiction:** Some male survivors may turn to substance abuse as a way to cope with the emotional pain and distress caused by GBV. Substance abuse can further exacerbate mental health issues and create additional challenges in the recovery process.
4. **Difficulty in Maintaining Healthy Relationships and Trust Issues:** The impact of GBV can make it challenging for male survivors to form and maintain healthy relationships. Trust issues may arise, as they may struggle to trust others or fear experiencing further victimization. These difficulties can affect their ability to build intimate relationships and establish a support network.
5. **Social Isolation and Stigma:** Male survivors of GBV may face social isolation and stigma due to societal beliefs and stereotypes surrounding masculinity. The fear of judgment, ridicule, or not being taken seriously may lead to survivors withdrawing from social interactions, feeling misunderstood, and experiencing a sense of isolation.

Addressing these negative effects requires a comprehensive and individualized approach that considers the unique circumstances and needs of each survivor. Providing specialized support services, such as trauma-informed therapy, counseling, and support groups, can help male survivors cope with the emotional and psychological aftermath of GBV. It is crucial to create safe and non-judgmental spaces where survivors can share their experiences, find validation, and receive the necessary support.

Additionally, raising awareness about GBV against men, challenging harmful gender stereotypes, and promoting positive masculinity can help reduce social stigma and facilitate a more supportive environment for male survivors. Collaboration between community leaders, healthcare providers, social services, and NGOs is vital to ensure that comprehensive support systems are in place to address the unique needs of male survivors and facilitate their healing and recovery processes.

Perceptions of the Legal Response to GBV Against Men in Ghana

The survey responses highlighted the perceptions of respondents regarding the legal response to gender-based violence (GBV) against men in Ghana. The data indicated that the legal response was perceived as inadequate and unclear. Respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the existing laws and policies, suggesting they are insufficient in addressing GBV and providing justice for male survivors.

To begin with, Article 12 of the 1992 Constitution guarantees the fundamental human rights and freedoms of every person in Ghana, including the right to personal liberty, dignity, and protection from torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. By invoking Article 12, it can be argued that men have the right to be protected from GBV and that the legal response should extend to male survivors as well. Article 17 of the 1992 Constitution guarantees the equality of all individuals before the law and prohibits discrimination, including on the basis of sex. By invoking Article 17, it can be argued that GBV against men should be recognized and addressed to ensure equal protection and access to justice for all survivors, regardless of gender. Article 28 of the 1992 Constitution ensures the dignity and worth of the individual and protects the rights of every child, including protection from all forms of violence, abuse, and exploitation. While specifically referring to children, it reflects a commitment to

protecting individuals from violence. By drawing attention to Article 28, it can be argued that the rights of men to be protected from GBV should be upheld. Article 39 of the 1992 Constitution recognizes the right to health, which encompasses physical and mental well-being. GBV can have severe health consequences for male survivors, including physical injuries and mental health issues. By invoking Article 39, it can be argued that male survivors of GBV should have access to healthcare and support services to address their specific needs.

Furthermore, arguments for improving the legal response to GBV against men in Ghana can be made based on specific provisions within the Criminal Offenses Act and the Domestic Violence Act. The Criminal Offenses Act highlights Assault in Section 84. It can be argued that the provisions on assault should be applied to cases where men are victims of physical violence, ensuring equal protection under the law.

The threat of Harm under Section 75 should be used to address cases where men are subjected to threats that cause fear and emotional distress, recognizing their vulnerability to psychological abuse. The legal system acknowledges the harm caused by psychological abuse and emphasizes the importance of protecting individuals from such forms of violence. It sends a clear message that threats, regardless of the gender of the victim, are unacceptable and can have serious consequences on the well-being and safety of individuals.

Recognizing the vulnerability of men to psychological abuse is crucial in addressing gender-based violence comprehensively. It challenges the misconception that only women can be victims of psychological abuse and highlights the need for gender-inclusive approaches to combating violence.

Applying Section 75 to cases where men are subjected to threats of harm also helps in destigmatizing male victimization and encourages male survivors to come forward, report incidents, and seek legal remedies. It contributes to raising awareness about the diverse forms of violence that men can experience and promotes a more accurate understanding of the dynamics of gender-based violence.

Moreover, by addressing threats of harm against men, the legal system can play a significant role in preventing further acts of violence. Early intervention and legal consequences for perpetrators of psychological abuse can deter future acts and provide a sense of security for survivors.

Also, Rape and Defilement in sections 97 to 102 should be applied to cases of sexual violence against men, acknowledging that men can also be victims of non-consensual sexual acts. Sexual violence knows no gender boundaries, and men can be subjected to acts of rape and defilement, which involve engaging in sexual activities without their consent. By applying these provisions to cases of sexual violence against men, the legal system can ensure that all survivors, regardless of gender, are protected and have access to justice.

Applying sections 97 to 102 to cases of sexual violence against men sends a clear message that sexual violence is a serious crime that should be prosecuted irrespective of the gender of the victim. It helps challenge the harmful notion that only women can be victims of such acts and breaks the silence and stigma surrounding male survivors.

Acknowledging and addressing sexual violence against men within the legal framework is crucial for several reasons.

Domestic Violence Act defines domestic violence section 1 and It can be argued that the definition of domestic violence should explicitly include violence against men within intimate relationships or households, ensuring their protection under the act.

In addition, the Protection Orders in sections 11 to 16 should be accessible to male survivors, allowing them to obtain protection orders and seek immediate relief from further acts of violence. By ensuring that male survivors have equal access to these legal remedies, the act can effectively protect and provide immediate relief to all survivors, regardless of their gender. Protection Orders play a crucial role in preventing further acts of violence and providing immediate protection to victims of domestic violence. These orders can include provisions such as restraining the perpetrator from contacting or approaching the survivor, granting temporary custody or access to children, and ordering the perpetrator to vacate the shared residence. By obtaining a protection order, survivors can secure their safety and seek legal intervention to address the violence they have experienced.

Domestic Violence Support Units (DVSUs) should be equipped to provide support and assistance to male survivors, ensuring their safety, well-being, and access to resources such as counseling and shelters as seen in section 31.

Legal Impact of GBV Against Men in Ghana

To improve the legal response to gender-based violence (GBV) against men in Ghana, the following steps can be taken:

1. **Sensitization and Training:** Providing training to legal professionals, law enforcement agencies, and the judiciary is essential to enhance their understanding of the unique experiences and needs of male survivors. This training should focus on building sensitivity, empathy, and effective handling of GBV cases involving men.
2. **Reporting and Documentation:** Encouraging male survivors to report incidents of GBV is crucial. Establishing mechanisms to ensure accurate documentation of these cases can help gather data and raise awareness about the extent of the issue. This information can inform policies and interventions aimed at addressing GBV against men.
3. **Access to Support Services:** Strengthening support services for male survivors is essential for their recovery and well-being. These services can include counseling, medical assistance, shelters, and helplines. Ensuring that these resources are accessible and tailored to the specific needs of male survivors will contribute to their healing process.
4. **Awareness and Education:** Conducting awareness campaigns is vital in challenging societal norms and stereotypes surrounding gender roles and violence. These campaigns should target both men and women, promoting a culture of gender equality, respect, and non-violence. By addressing deep-rooted attitudes and beliefs, such initiatives can contribute to preventing GBV against men and women.
5. **Collaboration and Partnerships:** Building collaborations between government agencies, civil society organizations, and community-based initiatives is crucial in establishing a comprehensive support network for male survivors of GBV. This network should include legal aid and advocacy services to ensure that male survivors receive the necessary assistance and protection.

By recognizing the rights of male survivors, addressing gaps in existing legislation, and implementing comprehensive measures, Ghana can significantly improve the legal response to GBV against men. This involves creating an environment where male survivors feel safe, supported, and empowered to seek justice and heal from their experiences. It also requires a collective effort from various stakeholders, including government bodies, civil society, communities, and individuals, to challenge and overcome the barriers that prevent effective responses to GBV against men. Ultimately, these steps aim to ensure that all survivors of GBV, regardless of their gender, receive the necessary protection, support, and justice they deserve.

Challenges and Support for Male GBV Survivors in Ghana

Stigma and shame surrounding GBV can significantly discourage male survivors from seeking help or reporting incidents. The Domestic Violence Act 2007 recognizes the importance of addressing these barriers and encourages a supportive environment for all survivors. Section 3 of the Act acknowledges the detrimental effects of domestic violence, irrespective of gender, and calls for comprehensive measures to raise awareness, challenge societal norms, and eliminate stigmatization associated with GBV. By promoting awareness and education campaigns, the Act aims to combat cultural beliefs that perpetuate violence and encourage a more inclusive and supportive society.

Male survivors of GBV may require specialized care and support that caters to their specific needs. Under Section 31, mandates the establishment of Domestic Violence Support Units (DVSUs) within the Ghana Police Service. These units should be adequately equipped and trained to provide appropriate assistance to all survivors, including male survivors. Specialized care may include trauma-informed counseling, medical assistance, and access to safe shelters that consider the unique experiences of male survivors. The Act emphasizes the importance of providing such support services, ensuring they are accessible and responsive to the needs of all survivors.

Act 732 aims to promote a culture of respect and non-violence by challenging harmful gender norms and societal attitudes. Section 1 of the Act defines domestic violence broadly, encompassing violence against both men and women. By recognizing that all individuals have the right to live free from violence, the Act contributes to reshaping cultural beliefs and fostering an environment that values respect and non-violence. It provides a legal framework to address GBV, promotes gender equality, and encourages the development of a society that upholds these principles.

By aligning with the provisions of the Act, Ghana can effectively address the issues of stigma, shame, cultural beliefs, specialized care and support, and the promotion of a culture of respect and non-violence. The Act provides a legal foundation to challenge harmful norms, eliminate stigmatization, and ensure that specialized services and support are available for all survivors, regardless of their gender. It emphasizes the importance of creating a society that upholds the rights and dignity of all individuals, ultimately working towards the prevention and eradication of GBV.

Legal and Policy Reforms for GBV Against Men in Ghana

A part of the survey explored responses regarding legal and policy reforms for GBV against men in Ghana. It indicated the importance of promoting positive gender norms, ensuring equal access to justice, providing specialized services and support, and including male survivors in national and local programs. These findings highlight the need for legal and policy reforms and comprehensive support services to

address GBV against men effectively taking into account the provisions in the Domestic Violence Act 2007 (Act 732), Criminal Offences Act 1960 (Act 29), and the 1992 Constitution.

First and foremost, the promotion of Positive Gender Norms. Act 732 recognizes the significance of promoting positive gender norms to prevent and address GBV. Section 1 of the Act defines domestic violence broadly, encompassing violence against men and women. By promoting gender equality and challenging harmful stereotypes, the Act encourages reforms that reshape societal attitudes and behaviors, fostering a culture of non-violence and respect.

In addition, the Constitution guarantees equal access to justice for all individuals, regardless of gender, as stated in Article 17. This constitutional provision supports the need for legal reforms that ensure male survivors of GBV have equal access to justice, protection, and redress. It emphasizes the importance of addressing any discriminatory practices or barriers in the legal system to ensure fairness and equality. Act 732 emphasizes the provision of specialized services and support for all survivors of domestic violence, including male survivors. Section 31 mandates the establishment of Domestic Violence Support Units (DVSUs) within the Ghana Police Service, which should be equipped to cater to the specific needs of male survivors. This includes providing counseling, medical assistance, shelters, and helplines that are accessible and responsive to their requirements. The survey findings highlight the importance of including male survivors in national and local programs addressing GBV. In accordance with the Domestic Violence Act and Criminal Offences Act, it is crucial to ensure that these programs are gender-inclusive and address the specific experiences and needs of male survivors. This inclusion can be achieved through targeted awareness campaigns, capacity-building initiatives, and support services that specifically cater to male survivors.

Additionally, Act 29 provides provisions that can be utilized to address GBV against men. For example The provisions on assault should be applied to cases where men are victims of physical violence, ensuring equal protection under the law. Section 75 of Act 29 can be used to address cases where men are subjected to threats that cause fear and emotional distress, recognizing their vulnerability to psychological abuse. Sections 97 to 102 can be applied to cases of sexual violence against men, acknowledging that men can also be victims of non-consensual sexual acts.

By aligning legal and policy reforms with the Domestic Violence Act, Criminal Offences Act, and the constitutional provisions, Ghana can strengthen its response to GBV against men. This involves promoting positive gender norms, ensuring equal access to justice, providing specialized services and support, and including male survivors in national and local programs. These comprehensive efforts will contribute to addressing GBV effectively and creating a society that upholds the rights and well-being of all individuals, regardless of gender