



Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of NPA-VAWC Services in Meru District Council.

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ABSTRACT

Violence against children is a serious human rights defilement, development and public health issue in many parts of the world including Tanzania and its consequences can be devastating. This study analyzed the factors influencing the effectiveness of NPA-VAWC services in Meru District Council. An exploratory mixed research design was used to sample 150 parents through convenience sampling procedure and purposive sampling technique was used for Key Informants. Data collection methods involved questionnaire survey and interviews and data were analyzed by using binary logistic regression. The study found that factors influencing the implementation of NPA-VAWC are corruption, traditions, norms and values, inadequate awareness of children's rights, income poverty and lack of awareness of the NPA-VAWC services. The study concludes that practices of corruption, bad traditions, norms and values in the study area, awareness on children rights, income poverty in the community as well as awareness of stakeholders on the operation of NPA-VAWC are important variables on the effective implementation of NPA-VAWC. It is recommended that Government and stakeholders related to child matters should upscale child protection and advocacy interventions to address child risks and violence by putting emphasis on behavioral change because child protection is a behavioral change process. Also, economic empowerment should be prioritized to communities to build economic capacity that will enable them to tackle all issues related violence.

Keywords: Violence Against Children, Child rights, National Plan of Action, Effectiveness

1.0 THE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Violence against children (VAC) happens in almost every place all over the world. VAC is often invisible, because it is hidden behind closed doors, under the skin of culture and norms or because the lack of information and evidence on the affect and consequences of it to a country development. VAC impairs the social, economic and political participation of Children's (Bhriain, 2020; Stein, 2019). Globally, every year, between 500 million and 1.5 billion children worldwide endure some form of violence. WHO explained that many types of violence have a gender dimension, with girls particularly at risk of sexual violence and boys of more severe physical punishment and gang-related violence. For example, of these, 85 million children are exposed to hazardous work that poses a danger to their health and safety (WHO, 2020). According to the ILO, over 11 million girls around the world aged 5-17 years are involved in domestic work (UNICEF, 2017). The domestic worker girls are at high risks of violence due to nature of the work. Cerna-Turoff et al. (2021) pointed that Lower household socioeconomic status, being a girl, and primary education of mothers and adults in the household were associated with emotional violence, and being a girl was associated with sexual violence. However, identified risk factors for occurring VAC, are those associated with maternal age, alcohol and drug use, and parental education level (Pearson, 2022)

In developing countries, violence against children is a significant problem throughout Africa as it is around the world. Both Boy and Girl child of all age are affected by Violence and this occurred in schools, home, street, residential home care and even on Institutions. Traditional systems of rural lifestyles and livelihood are increasingly being eroded. In the context of where families stricken by poverty, natural disaster, civil conflict, displacement, and changing patterns of land ownership and use, many families face significant stress in both social and economic which put children in a risk of harm. Thus, although some of the reasons for violence against children in Africa are grounded in traditional ideas of upbringing, others are to be found in the breakdown of old systems of protection due to social shocks and developmental changes (Pereda and Díaz-Faes, 2020).

The study by the Ministry of Community Development Gender and Children (2017) on the National Response to VAC in Tanzania shows that, nearly one in three females aged 13 to 24 in Tanzania reported experiencing at least one incident of sexual violence before the age of 18. Among males in the same age group, more than one in ten reported experiencing at least one incident of sexual violence prior to the age of 18 (VAC Survey, 2021). Between nearly one in twenty females and males aged 13 to 24 years reported that, they were threatened with abandonment by an adult prior to turning 18 years of age (Kapiga et al., 2019).

Government of Tanzania (GoT) has developed NPA-VAWC as guiding principles that addressed both women and children's violence (NPA-VAWC, 2017). To ensure effective implementation of the above initiatives, the government a range of programmes and initiatives including public awareness activities, such as commemoration of 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, the International Day of Families, International Women's Day, the Day of African Child, and International Day of Girl Child. These bring Tanzanian legislation in line with its obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and other international agreements (Bhriain, 2020). Despite the efforts taken by the GoT to improve systems, structure and legal framework for the protection of the rights of children in Tanzania, many children are still vulnerable to abuses, exploitation and neglect (VAC, 2021). Violence erodes the strong foundation that children need for leading healthy and productive live and violates the fundamental right of children to a safe childhood. Studies that have been undertaken in Tanzania indicate that violence against children is a serious concern in which cases of child marriage were reported within one year where by Arusha Region was recorded at 42% (URT, (2017). Therefore, this study aimed at analysing the factors influencing the effectiveness of NPA-VAWC services in Meru District Council.

2.0 THEORETICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

In this study, the theory of Social Justice by John Rawls as developed in 1971 was applied to guide the study (Rawls, 1971). The theory argues that, the society is conceived as a fair system of cooperation overtime from one generation to the next. With above philosophy it means that people can be provided with specific tool to avoid any bias that fuel violence in society (for example plans, guideline) and this can have specific implications in the contemporary society. The theory explained that there is shroud of ignorance within society which can be used at each society advantage to effectively develop way to certain principles to govern a society include plans like NPA- VAWC. The relevance of Rawls theory is that, morally arbitrary factors (for example, the family one is born into) should not determine one's life chances or opportunities. Rawls is also keying on an intuition that a person does not morally deserve their inborn talents; thus that one is not entitled to all the benefits they could possibly receive from them; hence, at least one of the criteria which could provide an alternative to equality in assessing the justice of distributions is eliminated (Chan and Mbogoh, 2016).

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

This study was undertaken in Akeri Ward of Meru District Council found in Arusha Region. The reason for selecting this study area was the area has continued to have multiple events of VAC despite the fact that, the place has well established mechanisms to fight the problem from both the government (Social welfare offices, Police gender desks,) and private institutions (paralegal institutions, NGOs) dealing with children welfare (TAWLA, 2013). It adopted an exploratory mixed research design to gather both quantitative and qualitative information related to factors affecting the effectiveness of NPA-VAWC services in Meru District Council. The study population included Parents/Guardian, Local Government Authorities (WEO), and Ward Community Development Officer (WCDO) whilst the unit of analysis was parents.

3.2 Sample Size

Having established the study population the researcher determines the sample size that represented the whole population. Since, the target population is not known to the researcher, the required sample size is based on Jaquier *et al.* (2011) expressed as follows:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 p x (1 - p)}{e^2}$$

Where:

n =required sample size

Z = the value on the Z table at 95% confidence level is 1.96

e = degree of precision at 8%, $e=0.08$ margin error

P = proportion of the population having the characteristics. In this study P is not known to the researchers $P = 0.5$ which assume a maximum of heterogeneity (i.e. a 50/50 split) $1 - P = 0.5$

Hence from the computation; $n = 150.0625 \approx 150$

3.3 Sampling procedures

In this study convenience sampling technique was used to select 150 parents on the basis of their willingness to take part in the interview, their availability and convenient accessibility since they had tight schedule, while Key Informants (KI) (i.e one WEO and one WCDO) from Akeri ward were selected through purposive sampling technique. They were purposively selected because they are considered to have vital information for the study by virtue of their positions.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

In order to obtain reliable information to address study objectives and questions, this study used mixed methods of data collection involving quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data were collected through Questionnaire survey using both structured and unstructured questionnaire and Qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews with key informants using checklist.

3.5 Data analysis

Quantitative data were analysed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) whereby binary logistic regression was conducted to test that the odds of the factors influencing.

Factors influencing effectiveness of the NPA-VAWC services in the study area were analyzed using a binary logistic regression model in which dependent variable was dichotomous, that is, non-effective services (0) and effective services (1). The model was specified as follows:

$$\text{Logit} \left[\frac{p(x)}{1-p(x)} \right] = \alpha + \beta_1 \chi_1 + \beta_2 \chi_2 + \beta_3 \chi_3 + \beta_n X_n + \varepsilon$$

The formula was adapted from Challa and Tilahun (2014) and Agresti (2002),

Where:

Logit (px) = ln (odds (event)), that is the natural log of the odds of adopting the innovations.

$p(x)$ = prob (event), that is the probability of adopting the innovations.

$1 - p(x)$ = prob (nonevent), that is the probability of not adopting the innovations.

$\text{Log} \left[\frac{p(x)}{1-p(x)} \right]$ = is the logarithm of the ratio of probability of adopting the innovations p(x) to probability of not adopting them 1- p(x).

α = constant of the equation.

$\beta_1 - \beta_n$ = coefficients of the predictor variables.

ε = Error term.

n = number of independent variables.

X_1 =Corruption (1=Persist, 0=Otherwise)

X_2 = Tradition, norms and values (1=Persist, 0=Otherwise)

X_3 = Awareness on Children rights (1=Aware, 0=not aware)

X_4 =Income poverty (TZS)

X_5 = Awareness on the services (1=Aware, 0=not aware)

Analysis of qualitative data was done using content analysis in which the data were analysed through being organised into theme under study.

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Factors influencing the effectiveness of NPA-VAWC services

Binary logistic regression was used to analyze the factors influencing the effectiveness of NPA-VAWC services. Results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Factors influencing the effectiveness of NPA-VAWC services

Variable entered in the model	β	S.E.	Wald	Exp(B)	p-value
Corruption	-3.430	0.715	23.014	1.873	0.000
Tradition, norms and values	-4.743	0.427	14.729	5.156	0.000
Awareness on Children rights	1.073	0.442	5.875	1.342	0.029
Income poverty	-4.180	1.053	12.747	65.374	0.008
Awareness on the NPA-VAWC services	1.037	0.374	7.699	1.247	0.006
constant	-5.298	1.552	11.644	0.005	0.001

Note: significant at 5%

Source: Field data (2024)

From the study, the following results were depicted as factors influencing for the effectiveness of NPA-VAC so as to achieve the general outcome of ending VAC;

Findings indicate that corruption was significant and negatively influencing the effectiveness of NAP-VAWC in Arusha and Meru districts ($\beta = -3.430$; $p = .000$) (Table 1). This means that corruption was among the main reasons ineffective implementations of NPA-VAWC and so for its failure. The results from regression shows that the odds ratio was 1.873 implying that the persistence of corruption practices had almost 1.9 times likelihood to impair operations of ending violence. As it remains a central and serious challenge in the communities in terms of both good governance and for the entire social development. To access service that a community member deserve they must use some element of corruption. The levels of petty and grand corruption identified to be of considerable concern and affect all sectors public service delivery. Similarly, just few of the corruption cases end up being prosecuted in the courts. The study is in harmony to Thoomaszen & Tameon (2018) who suggested that Corruption is one of the factors to fight violence against children especially the lack of understanding of the community in providing anti-corruption value.

Further factor depicted in the current study was tradition, norms and values as it is also significant and negatively affecting the effectiveness of NPA-VAWC ($\beta = -4.743$; $p = .000$) (Table 1). This means that traditions, norms and values are among the cultural beliefs that infringe on the effective implementation of NPA-VAWC. The odds ratio from analysis was 5.156 implying that existence of tradition, norms and values in the community had 5 times more likely to make VAWC services ineffective. This has implication that in some communities in the study area, the implementation of NPA-VWC has been out rightly rejected because it does not conform to the people's custom and tradition and this has slowed down the pace of NPA-VAWC implementation in these areas. It stands to reasoning therefore that traditions and customs have lot of influence on NPA-VAWC implementation and must be considered carefully by individuals and agencies who wish to carry out Child Protection programmes. This study finding is supported by Abdullah et al. (2023) who found that norms of community responsibility for childcare were negatively associated with child neglect frequency ($B = -0.31$, $p < 0.05$)

The current study also found that the awareness on child right was significant and negatively associated with effectiveness of the NPA-VAWC ($\beta = 1.073$; $p = .029$) (Table 1). However, analysis presented the odds ratio of 1.342 which means that being aware on child rights had 1.3 times more likelihood to enhance implementation of the NPA-VAWC services and vice versa is true. This implies that lack of knowledge of child rights has been seen as a challenge for NPA-VAWC implementation. In fact, being not aware of children's right, the majority face bullying, harassment, verbal, physical abuse, and other being witnessed to cases of domestic violence, or seen fights breaking out between alcoholics.

This discussion is complimented by the interview with WCDO from Arusha District who added that;

"...Each school should implement Child Protection Guideline for schools to safeguard the rights of the children. "It is also suggested that children should be heard by adults and their opinions valued. Their right to participation should be encouraged. Schools along with organizations working in the field of child protection should conduct sessions on child rights, safety, and abuse so that children are empowered and more willing to come forward to seek help rather than retreating into a shell.... teachers and parents should also be sensitized towards the safety and protection of children. Parents and neighbors can also play an important role in ensuring that children do not feel unsafe in communities. Adults can be sensitized so that they understand the issues from children's point of view and act responsibly" (WCDO-Arusha DC, 11/10/2024).

The analysis also indicated there was significant and negative relationship between income poverty and implementation of NPA-VAWC services ($\beta = -4.180$; $p = .008$) (Table 1). However, the odds ratio was 65.374 indicating that, increase in income poverty weaken the implementation of the services by almost 65 times. These results imply that children from poor families and living in poor neighbourhoods are at greater risk of child labour, abandonment, unintended pregnancies and child marriage largely due to poverty and lower expectations of future economic success. Poverty puts girl child at greater risk of sexual violence, as it forces them into transactional relationships, most often with adult men. Income poverty also limit family of victim to follow up on case when a child has been abused for example attending court session which most of those judicial service is located far from community as indicated. This is in line to the study by Cerna-Turoff et al. (2021) who found that lower household socioeconomic status exposes children to emotional violence and sexual violence.

This in line with the feedback from all key informant, who referred;

"...poverty is a primary source of children violence including child labour, teenage pregnancy and child marriage" (WEO, WCDO-17/September/2024).

Though the awareness on the NPA-VAWC services was significant and depicted positive relationship with the implementation of the services ($\beta = -1.037$; $p = .003$) (Table 1). The odds ratio was 1.247 which reflect that community members being aware about the operations of the NPA-VAWC were 1.2 more likely to fight against violence. These results imply that members of the community including children themselves once are knowledgeable of the operations of NPA-VAWC can significantly take measures to fight violence against children. Such measures include reporting incidences of violence to the respective authorities like police departments, media and local government authorities.

An interview WEO stated that;

“... a big challenge in the implementation of NPA-VAWC was lack of public awareness about the existence of the plan and appealed to the government and CSOs to move all around the country and educate members of the public about the plan. And where NPA-VAWC is known, there is no budget for running the committees to protect children because they haven't seen the importance of doing so” (WEO/Mwandet/17/September/2024).

Conclusion

Built on the findings of the study it is concluded that, practices of corruption, bad traditions, norms and values in the study area, awareness on children rights, income poverty in the community as well as awareness of stakeholders on the operation of **NPA-VAWC** are important variables on the effective implementation of **NPA-VAWC**.

Recommendations

In order to eradicate violence against children, Government and stakeholders related to child matters should upscale child protection and advocacy interventions to address child risks and violence by putting emphasis on behavioral change because child protection is a behavioral change process. Also, economic empowerment should be prioritized to communities to build economic capacity that will enable them to tackle all issues related violence.

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