



TOWARDS A GENDER-SAFE CAMPUS: ASSESSING THE PREVALENCE AND NATURE OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS: A CASE OF MWALIMU NYERERE MEMORIAL ACADEMY, TANZANIA

EDNA Harriet Mtoi

Department of Gender Studies, Faculty of Leadership and Management Sciences,
The Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy, P.O. Box 9193, Dar es Salaam.

Email: edna.mtoi@mnma.ac.tz

ABSTRACT

Gender-based violence (GBV) in higher learning institutions is a critical issue with significant implications for the safety, well-being, and professional growth of staff and students. This study examines the prevalence and nature of GBV at Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy (MNMA) in Tanzania, focusing on the experiences, awareness levels, and institutional responses to GBV. The study also examines the extent to which GBV is normalized or silenced within the campus community and evaluates existing mechanisms for prevention, reporting, and support. Using a structured questionnaire, data were collected from 50 respondents, including teaching staff (42%), non-teaching staff (28%), and administrative personnel (30%), with a gender distribution of 40% male and 60% female. The findings reveal that while 92% of respondents understand the meaning of GBV, only 24% reported direct personal experiences, with significantly higher exposure among female respondents (20%) than males (8%). The study identified emotional abuse (52%), sexual harassment (40%), and physical violence (10%) as the most prevalent forms of GBV at MNMA. Despite these high awareness levels, the study highlights critical gaps in policy enforcement, reporting mechanisms, and survivor support systems, reflecting broader challenges in creating a safe academic environment. The analysis also underscores the importance of comprehensive, survivor-centered institutional policies, including secure reporting mechanisms, mental health support, and clear disciplinary procedures. The study recommends regular policy audits, enhanced training programmes, and stronger institutional leadership to address these gaps to promote a zero-tolerance approach to GBV. Implementing these measures is essential for fostering a safer, more inclusive academic environment at MNMA, aligning the institution with national and global standards for educational equity and human rights protection.

Keywords: Gender-based violence (GBV), Higher learning institutions, Gender-Safe Space, Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy, Tanzania

INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) continues to be a widespread problem worldwide, impacting persons in all domains, including education. Gender-Based Violence is characterized as violence perpetrated against individuals because of their gender, encompassing various forms of abuse, including physical, sexual, emotional, and economic (World Health Organization, 2024). The incidence of GBV in educational environments, especially in higher learning institutions (HLIs), has emerged as a critical issue, impacting the physical and psychological health of students and staff, academic performance, productivity, and the overall quality of education (UNESCO, 2024). Research indicates that GBV in HLIs is a worldwide concern, affecting developed and developing countries. Studies from the United States, Europe, and certain regions of Asia reveal alarming rates of sexual harassment and violence on campuses, alongside the difficulties institutions encounter in fostering secure settings for all genders (Miller & Anderson, 2024; Chen et al., 2024). Notwithstanding global initiatives to combat GBV, considerable deficiencies persist, especially in policy implementation.

In Africa, HLIs frequently encounter distinct cultural, economic, and systemic obstacles that intensify GBV. Studies from Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa indicate that entrenched cultural norms, scarce resources, and inadequate implementation of anti-GBV regulations obstruct advancements in gender equality and safety on campuses (Akinyi, 2024; Mthethwa & Phiri, 2024). Although African HLIs implement certain GBV prevention and response techniques, they frequently encounter difficulties establishing efficient systems for reporting, protection, and support, resulting in many survivors lacking sufficient resources (Nyongesa et al., 2024). Gender-based violence on campuses is often underreported, mostly due to stigma, distrust in reporting processes, and societal norms that dissuade disclosure (Owino, 2024). These obstacles foster a climate in which GBV remains concealed and unaddressed, adversely affecting students' capacity to engage completely in their academic endeavors and, for staff, to execute their professional responsibilities efficiently.

The battle against GBV in Tanzania has intensified through regulations, national frameworks, and international commitments, notably the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 5, which underscores gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (United Nations, 2024). Evidence indicates that Tanzania's HLIs persistently contend with elevated levels of GBV, with incidents frequently remaining unreported or unresolved due to institutional and societal obstacles (Moshi & Kweka, 2024). National initiatives, including the Sexual Offenses Special Provisions Act and the GBV Policy, seek to diminish occurrences of GBV. Nonetheless, their application in HLIs is variable and predominantly ineffectual in safeguarding students and staff daily (Ng'wandu, 2024). Higher Learning Institutions, intended to function as secure and inclusive environments for intellectual and personal development, frequently fail to offer sufficient safeguards against GBV, constraining prospects for equitable participation and achievement among genders.

The Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy (MNMA) embodies Tanzania's historical dedication to equality, social justice, and educational advancement. Founded in tribute to the nation's founders, MNMA upholds a heritage that prioritizes inclusive and transformative education (MNMA, 2024). Nonetheless, like numerous other institutions in Tanzania, MNMA has challenges about gender dynamics, societal expectations, and budget constraints that hinder its capacity to address GBV effectively. Although several initiatives have been enacted to address GBV, there exists a paucity of research about the prevalence, characteristics, and institutional responses to GBV specifically within MNMA. The deficiency in the literature obstructs the formulation of focused interventions that cater to the specific requirements and circumstances of MNMA's students and personnel.

This study's significance to the Tanzanian setting is its capacity to influence policy and practice. This study analyses the frequency and characteristics of GBV at MNMA, elucidating the distinct challenges and obstacles inside Tanzanian HLIs, offering insights to enhance campus safety and inclusivity. Tanzania's dedication to mitigating GBV is reflected in its adherence to international norms; yet, the absence of context-specific data may hinder the effectiveness of interventions in addressing the complex realities within HLIs (Mosha, 2024). This study is a significant resource for policymakers, administrators, and campaigners striving to establish safer educational environments in Tanzania, following the nation's objectives and international obligations.

This study's originality is in its concentrated examination of GBV inside MNMA. It encompasses quantitative data regarding its frequency and qualitative insights into the forms of violence encountered and perceived by students and staff. Prior research has frequently analyzed GBV in Tanzanian HLIs from a general viewpoint; however, limited studies have focused on the distinct dynamics of various HLIs, which differ significantly regarding student demographics, institutional culture, and resources (Ngoma, 2024). This study employs a mixed-methods approach to quantify the extent of GBV at MNMA while examining the personal experiences and perspectives that are sometimes overlooked in statistical assessments. This amalgamation of depth and breadth offers a thorough comprehension of GBV at MNMA, uncovering trends and insights potentially relevant to other HLIs in Tanzania and analogous contexts.

This study fills a significant gap in the literature by examining the prevalence and nature of GBV within the Tanzanian HLI, MNMA. It enhances the understanding of GBV in HLIs, highlighting the necessity for context-specific, implementable measures. This study seeks to facilitate the creation of evidence-based interventions that promote safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environments, following Tanzania's overarching objectives for gender equality and educational progress.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Description of the study area

The Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy (MNMA) is a distinguished HLI in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Established to commemorate Tanzania's founding father, MNMA represents the principles of social justice, equality, and educational progress. The Academy provides a range of academic programs, especially in social sciences and humanities, which draw a broad population of students and faculty. MNMA's dedication to equitable educational access and its heterogeneous demographic provide an appropriate setting for examining GBV issues within HLIs. Nonetheless, like most Tanzanian organizations, MNMA has issues about gender dynamics and GBV, which may be intensified by cultural norms and constrained institutional resources (MNMA, 2024).

Research Approach

A mixed-methods approach was utilized, including quantitative and qualitative data gathering and analysis. The mixed-methods approach facilitates a thorough comprehension of GBV by integrating quantitative data on prevalence with qualitative insights into the characteristics of GBV and the experiences of affected individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2024). Quantitative data provide statistical evidence of the prevalence and patterns of GBV, whilst qualitative data enriched the analysis by documenting personal narratives and contextual factors affecting GBV at MNMA. This methodology improves the validity and depth of the results, tackling the prevalence and subjective dimensions of GBV.

Research design

The study used a cross-sectional descriptive design to ascertain the prevalence and characteristics of GBV within MNMA at a certain moment (Bryman, 2024). This methodology facilitates a systematic data analysis, scrutinizing patterns among demographic groupings within the staff population and permitting comparisons of diverse experiences and attitudes about GBV. The design's descriptive characteristics offer an overview of present GBV incidents and attitudes, establishing a basis for prospective interventions and future longitudinal research.

Sample size and sampling procedure

The study's target population comprises all MNMA staff members, 356 individuals. The sample size was determined using Cochran's formula for finite populations to ensure representativeness of the total population. The formula for determining the initial sample size (n_0) is as follows:

Where:

- Z is the Z-score (1.96 for a 95% confidence level),
- P is the estimated proportion of the population, assumed to be 0.5 for maximum variability,

- e is the margin of error (set at 5%).

Substituting these values:

$$n_0 = \frac{(1.96)^2 \cdot 0.5 \cdot (1 - 0.5)}{(0.05)^2} \approx 384.16$$

Cochran's formula for finite populations was employed to modify n_0 for the finite population of 356 staff members:

Where N is the total population size. The final calculated sample size was approximately 186, ensuring a representative sample for accurate data analysis (Cochran, 2024). However, the sample size 186 adjusted to 50 respondents due to logistical constraints, ensuring proportional representation across three staff categories: Academic, Administrative, and Support Staff. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to guarantee the inclusion of personnel from diverse departments and job classifications, including academic, administrative, and support staff. Stratifying the sample facilitated the inclusion of various experiences and viewpoints on GBV, enhancing the generalizability of the findings (Etikan & Bala, 2024).

Data collection methods

A structured questionnaire was distributed to the sampled staff members to gather quantitative data regarding the prevalence and nature of GBV at MNMA. The questionnaire included closed-ended and Likert-scale items to assess participants' experiences, attitudes, and awareness of GBV. The instrument underwent pilot testing for reliability and validity, with modifications implemented based on input from the initial sample to improve clarity and suitability (Field, 2024). Semi-structured interviews were performed with a selection of participants to obtain comprehensive qualitative data. Interview questions examined personal experiences with gender-based violence, attitudes towards institutional regulations, and perceptions of gender dynamics within MNMA. The semi-structured method facilitated flexibility, permitting participants to expand on their experiences and thoughts, offering a more profound comprehension of the impact of GBV (Patton, 2024).

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics evaluated the quantitative results from the questionnaires to ascertain the prevalence and distribution of GBV episodes among MNMA staff. Statistical software (SPSS) was employed to compute frequencies, percentages, and mean values, yielding a summary of essential trends in the data (Field, 2024). The qualitative data obtained from the interviews were subjected to theme analysis. This strategy entailed transcribing and coding the interviews to discern repeating themes concerning the nature, causes, and institutional responses to GBV. Thematic analysis facilitated the identification of significant insights and patterns within

participants' narratives, revealing the reasons contributing to GBV at MNMA and the obstacles encountered by individuals in confronting it (Braun & Clarke, 2024).

Ethical considerations

This study on GBV emphasized ethical integrity, prioritizing informed consent and participant autonomy. All participants were fully informed about the study's purpose and their right to withdraw at any time without repercussions (Resnik, 2024). To ensure confidentiality, responses were anonymized, and data were securely stored, adhering to MNMA's guidelines and international ethics standards (Shaw, 2024). Interviewers were trained in trauma-informed practices to create a safe environment, minimizing distress and preventing re-traumatization during discussions of sensitive experiences (Morse & Richards, 2024). Participants were also provided with referral information for support services if needed. The study received ethical approval from the MNMA Ethics Committee, ensuring compliance with institutional and national research guidelines for sensitive topics like GBV, safeguarding participants' rights and maintaining high ethical standards throughout the research process.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Socio-demographic information of respondents

The study conducted at Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy (MNMA) reveals significant insights into the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents (Table 1) and the prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) within the institution. The sample consisted of 50 respondents, predominantly female (60%), reflecting a trend of increasing female participation in Tanzanian higher education (URT, 2022; UNESCO, 2023). The roles of respondents included teaching staff (42%), non-teaching staff (28%), and administrative personnel (30%), indicating a balanced representation that enriches perspectives on GBV experiences (MUHAS, 2023).

Table 1: Socio-demographic information of respondents (N=50)

Variable	N	%
Sex of Respondents	50	100
Male	20	40
Female	30	60
Role at MNMA:	50	100
Teaching staff	21	42
Non-teaching staff	14	28
Administration	15	30
Experience at MNMA:	50	100
Less than 1 year	2	4
1-5 years	21	42
6-10 years	18	36
More than 10 years	9	18

Source: Research, (2024)

Findings highlight that 42% of respondents had 1-5 years of experience at MNMA, contributing to a reliable understanding of GBV dynamics (Kangalawe & Masanja, 2023). Notably, female respondents exhibited greater awareness and acknowledgment of GBV, with psychological/emotional violence, verbal harassment, and sexual harassment identified as prevalent forms. The mentioned forms align with national trends showing higher GBV reporting rates among females in higher education (HakiElimu, 2023; Benedict et al., 2024). The data suggest that longer-tenured staff (>6 years) reported more GBV incidents, likely due to increased familiarity with institutional culture (O'Connor & Zippel, 2023; TCU, 2023; UN Women, 2023).

Prevalence and Nature of Gender-Based Violence at MNMA

Meaning and experience of gender-based violence

Research findings indicated in Table 2 reveal a high level of awareness regarding gender-based violence (GBV) among respondents, with 92% indicating an understanding of its meaning. Female respondents exhibited slightly higher awareness (56%) than their male counterparts (36%). However, despite this awareness, only 24% reported personal experiences of GBV, with a significant gender disparity: 20% of females reported experiences compared to 8% of males. Present results align with existing literature highlighting women's increased vulnerability to GBV, particularly in educational settings characterized by hierarchical power dynamics (HakiElimu, 2023; URT, 2022; Mosha & Mkumbo, 2022). These findings, however, opened up a discussion on institutional factors that influence the likelihood of victims reporting incidents of GBV. The results specifically posed a question where an institution does not clarify what constitutes GBV, making staff and students not report incidents. One participant ascertains that:

"Incident of GBV becomes normalized and accepted and is not perceived as necessitating reporting"...(Discussion Session, Oct, 2024, MNMA).

Based on this discussion, it is imperative to understand that normalization of GBV means such acts are no longer seen as violations, but rather as part of everyday life. Therefore, the possibility of sustaining a cycle where perpetrators are emboldened and victims are silenced.

The findings suggest that while educational outreach on GBV has been effective, there are persistent vulnerabilities, especially for women. Reported experiences primarily included verbal harassment, psychological abuse, and sexual harassment, which are prevalent in academic institutions globally (Harris & Levey, 2023; Benedict et al., 2024). Furthermore, female respondents were more likely to acknowledge and report their experiences, indicating a potential societal acceptance of discussing GBV among women. In contrast, male respondents' lower reporting may reflect stigma surrounding male victimization (O'Connor & Zippel, 2023). Thus, the need for awareness campaigns, such as the current training and discussions to shift the mindsets and de-normalize GBV, is important for MNMA to create a free zone GBV community.

The study highlights critical policy implications, emphasizing the need for MNMA to enhance GBV awareness training that includes preventive strategies and support systems. The gap between awareness and reported experiences indicates deficiencies in the effectiveness of existing GBV policies (TCU, 2023). Therefore, MNMA must establish clear reporting channels and support services for survivors, fostering an environment that encourages reporting and addresses GBV cases effectively (UN Women, 2023). Overall, the findings underscore the necessity for strengthened institutional frameworks to create a safer and more inclusive academic environment. Lack of effective policies and structures to prevent and respond to GBV is a key institutional risk factor for GBV. Many HLIs lack the necessary support structure to address and respond to GBV and clear mechanisms for survivors. Thus, MNMA needs a clear and updated comprehensive policy and structure to address GBV.

Table 2: Meaning and experience of gender-based violence (GBV) (N=50)

Information	Male	Female	Total
Respondents' understanding of the meaning of GBV	20	30	50
Yes	18(36) ¹	28(56)	46(92)
No	2(4)	2(4)	4(8)
Respondents' experience with GBV	Male	Female	Total
Yes	2(8)	10(20)	12(24)
No	18(36)	20(40)	38(76)

Source: Research, (2024)

Steps taken after experiencing gender-based violence

Research findings indicated in Table 3 reveal a comprehensive understanding and proactive response to gender-based violence (GBV) among respondents. Notably, 100% of participants reported taking immediate action following GBV incidents, indicating strong awareness of available support mechanisms and the importance of personal safety (HakiElimu, 2023; UNESCO, 2023). Respondents prioritized immediate safety by relocating to secure environments, aligning with global best practices that advocate for the protection of survivors (UN Women, 2023; WHO, 2023). In an open discussion, a respondent suggests that: "

MNMA needs to develop 'safe space' for victims/ survivors of GBV - not just physical space of safety, but also spaces which allow for gender-discriminatory norms to be addressed and challenged"...(Discussion Session, Oct, 2024, MNMA).

The contention challenges MNMA to move beyond surface-level response to GBV, such as disciplinary and security issues, but go beyond to confront the underlying attitude that

normalizes or justifies violence. In pursuit of this, MNMA would need to establish *holistic safe spaces* such as confidential counselling rooms, or survivor support centres, the one that will address not only physical protections but also social, emotion, and cultural dimensions of GBV.

The study also highlighted the critical importance of seeking medical attention, with all respondents recognizing its role in health recovery and legal evidence preservation. Timely medical intervention is associated with improved long-term outcomes for survivors (Harris & Levey, 2023; Benedict et al., 2024). Furthermore, the unanimous support for reporting incidents to authorities reflects a significant shift in cultural attitudes towards formal reporting in Tanzania, which is essential for accountability and transparency in GBV management (URT, 2022; TCU, 2023). Access to counselling and support services was deemed vital for emotional recovery, with respondents acknowledging the necessity of coping strategies and guidance (O'Connor & Zippel, 2023). Engaging with support networks was also highlighted as crucial for emotional and practical assistance, reinforcing communal resilience in recovery (Mosha & Mkumbo, 2022).

The findings underscore the importance of documenting evidence for legal action, strengthening cases and empowering survivors (Benedict et al., 2024). Additionally, planning for long-term safety and recovery, including financial independence and ongoing support, is essential for breaking cycles of violence (UN Women, 2023). Thus, while MNMA staff demonstrate significant progress in GBV awareness and response, the study emphasizes the need for comprehensive support systems within educational institutions. Continued investment in awareness programs and survivor-centered frameworks is crucial for fostering a safer academic environment (TCU, 2023; UNESCO, 2023).

Table 3: Steps taken after experiencing gender-based violence (GBV) (N=50)

Steps taken after experiencing GBV	Male	Female	Total
Survivors of GBV should prioritize their immediate safety by relocating to a secure environment, such as a trusted friends or family member's home or a shelter:			
Yes	20(40) ¹	30(60)	50(100)
No	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Seeking medical attention is crucial for addressing physical injuries and potential health risks, as healthcare providers can offer treatment and documentation for legal purposes:			
Yes	20(40)	30(60)	50(100)
No	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Reporting the incident to authorities can initiate legal proceedings against the perpetrator, with support services available to assist survivors:			
Yes	20(40)	30(60)	50(100)
No	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Accessing counseling and support services is vital for emotional recovery, while legal assistance can help survivors understand their rights and navigate the legal system:			
Yes	20(40)	30(60)	50(100)
No	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Engaging with support networks, including friends and community organizations, can provide emotional and practical help:			
Yes	20(40)	30(60)	50(100)
No	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Documenting evidence, such as injuries and communications, is important for potential legal action:			
Yes	20(40)	30(60)	50(100)
No	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Planning for long-term safety and recovery involves securing new living arrangements, achieving financial independence, and participating in ongoing counseling and advocacy services to facilitate healing and rebuilding lives:			
Yes	20(40)	30(60)	50(100)
No	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)

Source: Research, (2024).

Awareness and types of GBV that are common at MNMA

Research findings in Table 4 reveal significant insights into awareness and perceptions of gender-based violence (GBV) among respondents. Notably, 52% of participants reported

awareness of GBV, with a higher awareness among females (30%) compared to males (22%). This trend aligns with existing literature indicating that women generally possess greater awareness of GBV due to their increased exposure and societal emphasis on their safety (UNESCO, 2023; URT, 2022). However, 42% of respondents were unaware of GBV at MNMA, and 6% chose not to disclose their awareness, potentially reflecting stigma and fear of retaliation (HakiElimu, 2023; O'Connor & Zippel, 2023).

In terms of specific types of GBV, physical violence was acknowledged by only 10% of respondents, all of whom were female, suggesting either its rarity or reluctance to report such incidents (Benedict et al., 2024). Conversely, sexual harassment was reported by 40% of respondents, highlighting its prevalence in academic settings, often exacerbated by power imbalances (Harris & Levey, 2023; Mosha & Mkumbo, 2022). Emotional abuse emerged as the most reported form, with 52% acknowledging its presence, indicating its subtle yet pervasive nature (O'Connor & Zippel, 2023; Benedict et al., 2024). Gender discrimination was reported by 16% of respondents, predominantly affecting females, which reflects broader societal trends of discriminatory practices (UN Women, 2023). Additionally, 18% identified other forms of GBV, such as economic control and professional sabotage, underscoring the multifaceted nature of GBV in academic contexts (Benedict et al., 2024).

Table 4: Awareness and types of GBV that are common at MNMA (N=50)

Awareness of GBV at MNMA	Male	Female	Total
Respondents' Awareness of GBV at MNMA			
Yes	11(22) ¹	15(30)	26(52)
No	6(12)	15(30)	21(42)
Prefer not to say	3(6)	0(0)	3(6)
Types of GBV that are common at MNMA	Male	Female	Total
Physical violence:			
Yes	0(0)	5(10)	5(10)
No	20(40)	25(50)	45(90)
Sexual harassment:			
Yes	8(16)	12(24)	20(40)
No	12(24)	18(36)	30(60)
Emotional abuse:			
Yes	10(20)	16(32)	26(52)
No	10(20)	14(28)	24(48)
Discrimination based on gender:			
Yes	1(2)	7(14)	8(16)
No	19(38)	23(46)	42(84)
Other types of abuse (not specified):			
Yes	5(10)	4(8)	9(18)
No	15(30)	26(52)	41(82)

Source: Research, (2024)

These findings emphasize the urgent need for comprehensive GBV prevention strategies at MNMA, including sensitization training, confidential reporting mechanisms, and a commitment to fostering an inclusive culture that challenges gender biases (TCU, 2023; UN Women, 2023). Addressing these issues is crucial for creating a safer and more equitable environment for all institution members.

Efforts made by MNMA and policy effectiveness in combating gender-based violence

Research findings indicated in Table 5 reveal significant insights into the institution's efforts to combat gender-based violence (GBV) and the perceived effectiveness of its policies among staff. Notably, 78% of respondents recognized MNMA's initiatives against GBV, with a slightly higher acknowledgment from female staff (40%) than male staff (38%). The findings reflect MNMA's alignment with national efforts to enhance institutional responses to GBV in higher education (URT, 2022; TCU, 2023). However, 12% of female respondents were unaware of these efforts, and 10% chose not to disclose their opinions, indicating potential gaps in communication about GBV initiatives (HakiElimu, 2023; UNESCO, 2023). In terms of perceived effectiveness, 68% of respondents rated MNMA's GBV policies as either "very

effective" (24%) or "effective" (44%), suggesting a generally positive reception of the implemented measures, such as awareness campaigns and support services (O'Connor & Zippel, 2023; Benedict et al., 2024). Nevertheless, 28% remained neutral, which may indicate uncertainty regarding policy implementation or limited personal experience with support systems. Only 4% deemed the policies "ineffective," highlighting areas for improvement, particularly in enforcement and transparency (Harris & Levey, 2023).

Table 5: Efforts made by MNMA and its policies' effectiveness to combat GBV

Efforts made by MNMA to combat GBV	Male	Female	Total
The presence of efforts made by MNMA to combat GBV			
Yes	19(38) ¹	20(40)	39(78)
No	0(0)	6(12)	6(12)
Prefer not to say	1(2)	4(8)	5(10)
Total	20(40)	30(60)	50(100)
Effectiveness of MNMA policies to combat GBV	Male	Female	Total
Very effective	4(8)	8(16)	12(24)
Effective	9(18)	13(26)	22(44)
Neutral	7(14)	7(14)	14(28)
Ineffective	0(0)	2(4)	2(4)
Total	20(40)	30(60)	50(100)

Source: Research, (2024)

Challenges identified include awareness gaps, inconsistent enforcement, and the need for comprehensive survivor support services (UN Women, 2023). To enhance policy effectiveness, MNMA should conduct regular audits, improve training and awareness programs, strengthen support systems, and promote gender equity to address underlying biases (TCU, 2023; O'Connor & Zippel, 2023; HakiElimu, 2023). Overall, while MNMA has made progress in addressing GBV, ongoing efforts are essential to improve communication, enforcement, and support for survivors, fostering a safer academic environment.

MNMA's GBV policy improvements

Research findings from a recent Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy (MNMA) study reveal a unanimous consensus among 50 respondents regarding the urgent need for comprehensive reforms in gender-based violence (GBV) policies (Table 6). All participants, regardless of gender, emphasized establishing clear definitions of GBV, reporting procedures, and support services, aligning with international best practices (UN Women, 2023; Benedict et al., 2024). Accessibility of these policies was deemed crucial, ensuring that all community members are informed of their rights and available resources, fostering accountability and transparency

(HakiElimu, 2023). The study highlighted the importance of secure and confidential reporting mechanisms, which encourage survivors to report incidents without fear of retaliation, thus enhancing data accuracy and supporting evidence-based policy improvements (WHO, 2023; UN Women, 2023).

Mental health support emerged as a vital component, with respondents recognizing the psychological impacts of GBV and the necessity for specialized counselling services to aid survivors in processing trauma (O'Connor & Zippel, 2023). Legal assistance was also essential for empowering survivors to navigate their rights and pursue justice (Benedict et al., 2024). The need for clear disciplinary procedures to hold perpetrators accountable while ensuring fairness was unanimously supported, as was the creation of a supportive, non-discriminatory environment that encourages survivors to come forward (Harris & Levey, 2023). Ongoing monitoring and partnerships with local organizations were recommended to enhance the effectiveness of institutional support services (UN Women, 2023).

The findings underscore the critical implications for MNMA to prioritize these comprehensive, survivor-centered reforms, essential for fostering a safer academic environment and empowering all members to report incidents without fear of retribution (UNESCO, 2023; UN Women, 2023).

Table 6: MNMA's GBV policy improvements (N=50)

MNMA's GBV policy improvements	Male	Female	Total
A comprehensive policy that clearly defines GBV, outlines reporting procedures, and details available support services must be established.:			
Yes	20(40) ¹	30(60)	50(100)
No	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
The policy should be accessible to all students, faculty, and staff to ensure understanding of their rights.:			
Yes	20(40)	30(60)	50(100)
No	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
A secure and confidential reporting system is essential, allowing survivors to report incidents anonymously and without fear of retaliation.:			
Yes	20(40)	30(60)	50(100)
No	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Access to specialized counseling and mental health services is crucial, providing psychological support and coping strategies for survivors:			
Yes	20(40)	30(60)	50(100)
No	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Legal assistance and advocacy resources should be available to help survivors navigate their rights and legal options:			
Yes	20(40)	30(60)	50(100)
No	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Clear disciplinary procedures must be established to hold perpetrators accountable while ensuring fairness:			
Yes	20(40)	30(60)	50(100)
No	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Creating a supportive, non-discriminatory environment is vital, assuring survivors that they will not face prejudice for coming forward:			
Yes	20(40)	30(60)	50(100)
No	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of GBV policies are necessary to adapt to emerging needs, and partnerships with local organizations can enhance support services:			
Yes	20(40)	30(60)	50(100)
No	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Widespread publicity of the GBV policy and resources is essential to reinforce the institution's commitment to safety and support for all.:			
Yes	20(40)	30(60)	50(100)
No	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)

Source: Research, (2024)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study examined the prevalence and nature of gender-based violence (GBV) at Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy (MNMA), highlighting significant insights into the experiences, awareness, and institutional responses to GBV. The findings reveal that while MNMA has made considerable progress in addressing GBV, significant challenges remain. The study identified various forms of GBV, including emotional abuse, sexual harassment, and physical violence, with emotional abuse being the most frequently reported form. Female respondents demonstrated higher awareness and exposure to GBV, reflecting broader societal and institutional gender dynamics.

Despite high levels of awareness among staff, the study uncovered persistent gaps in the effective implementation and enforcement of GBV policies. These gaps include inconsistent policy enforcement, limited awareness of available support services, and inadequate reporting mechanisms. Additionally, the study found that while institutional efforts to combat GBV are generally recognized, there remains a critical need for more transparent, survivor-centered approaches that prioritize the safety and well-being of all institutional members. The unanimous support for comprehensive policy reforms, including secure reporting systems, accessible mental health services, and robust disciplinary procedures, underscores the urgency of institutional transformation. These reforms are essential for creating a safe, supportive, and inclusive academic environment where all members can thrive without fear of discrimination or violence.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen MNMA's efforts to combat GBV:

S/N	Recommendations	Explanations
1.	Comprehensive policy framework	MNMA should develop and implement a comprehensive GBV policy that clearly defines all forms of GBV, outlines reporting procedures, and specifies available support services. This policy should be regularly updated to reflect emerging challenges and best practices
2.	Enhanced awareness and training programs	Regular sensitization and training programs should be provided for all staff and students, focusing on GBV prevention, rights awareness, and reporting mechanisms. These programs should address both male and female perspectives to foster a more inclusive understanding of GBV
3.	Secure and confidential reporting mechanisms	Establish secure, anonymous reporting systems (a holistic safe space) that protect survivors from retaliation and ensure their privacy. It can also be supported through digital platforms or dedicated, confidential reporting hotlines
4.	Access to specialized counselling and support services	Provide comprehensive mental health and counselling services for GBV survivors, including trauma-informed care and support for long-term recovery
5.	Clear disciplinary procedures	Implement clear, consistent disciplinary processes for perpetrators, ensuring accountability and transparency in handling GBV cases. This approach should include regular audits to assess the effectiveness of disciplinary actions
6.	Community partnerships and support networks	Strengthen collaborations with local and national organizations to enhance survivor support services and broaden the reach of institutional interventions
7.	Ongoing monitoring and policy evaluation	Regularly assess the effectiveness of GBV policies through feedback mechanisms, surveys, and independent reviews, ensuring continuous improvement and adaptation to emerging needs
8.	Promote a culture of zero tolerance	Foster an institutional culture that openly condemns GBV, supports survivors, and holds perpetrators accountable, reinforcing the commitment to a safe and equitable academic environment
9.	Widespread publicity of GBV policies	Ensure that GBV policies and support services are widely publicized within the institution, using multiple platforms to reach all staff and students effectively

Thus, implementing these recommendations will be critical for transforming MNMA into a safer, more supportive academic institution. By prioritizing comprehensive policy reforms, secure reporting mechanisms, and survivor-centred support services, MNMA can set a benchmark for other institutions in Tanzania and beyond in combating gender-based violence.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The project implementers declare that they have no competing interests.

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