Exploring the Application of Case Data Systems in influencing Sexual Assault Perpetration among Women in Zanzibar

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Abstract

This paper is aimed at exploring the application of case data systems in influencing sexual assault perpetration among women in Zanzibar. The paper specifically explored the use of case data system in gathering, recording and reporting sexual assault information to human service agencies in Zanzibar. The paper also explored the measures taken to reduce challenges of case data system in influencing sexual assault cases among married women. The study was conducted in Unguja Urban West Region in Zanzibar where four service agencies (Bububu Gender Desk, Madema Gender Desk, Department of Women and Children and Zanzibar Female Lawyers Association) were selected. The main target population was the female lawyers, social welfare officers, police officers, and IT technician. The data collection methods which were used included questionnaires, interviews and survey. The main findings of the study revealed that, lack of centralized database system in data gathering, recording and reporting system remains a big problem in the human services agencies. The study also indicated that human service agencies used traditional ways of files in recording, generating and managing sexual assault data. This was attributed to the challenges that sexual assault data were not routinely recorded, gathered or reported using harmonized case data systems, meaning that the data were not consistent and frequently not disaggregated by gender. Hence, this resulted to the increase rate of sexual assault incidences among women in Zanzibar. The study recommended that, there was an urgent need to establish national management information system or centralized database system for gathering, recording and reporting sexual assault data across all human service agencies. Finally, the study recommended for the need of proper coordination among key stakeholders responsible for managing sexual assault cases and attempting to develop a harmonized

systemic and high standard documentation procedures to determine the kind of resources needed to remove such disasters

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Introduction

A case data system generally functions as software system that helps users to collect data, store them and report case information. It can be used by case management systems of law firms, human service organizations, government agencies, and other organizations to manage and track case information. Successful case data systems require extensive data collection, high documentation procedure and recording and quality reporting system (Dawson, 2019). Case data systems use system databases that are accessible to authorized users. This allows for easy sharing of information and quick access to data (Davis, 2014). In human service agencies, case data systems help to improve collaboration which allows users to share information and work together in real-time; it helps in accelerating case progress which allows users to find information quickly, which can speed up the progress of cases; and finally helps in reducing errors of misplaced forms and other errors, hence improving agencies' monitoring and evaluating systems (Daniels *et.al,* 2017). Therefore, a case data system is characterized as a document that outlines the structure and functionality of a digital system designed to store, manage, and analyze information related to individual cases, often used in legal, social service, or healthcare settings, allowing users to track case progress, document interactions, and generate reports based on collected data; essentially providing a centralized repository for all case-related details (Czernich, 2019).

According to Covin *et.al,* (2011), case data systems include data elements such as client demographics, case type, dates of interactions, case status updates, notes from meetings, meetings organized relevant documents, and outcomes. The major functionality of case data systems include data entry which allows users to input detailed case information efficiently; case tracking which monitors the progression of a case through different stages; reporting and analysis which generates reports to identify trends, analyze performance, and inform decision-making and collaboration which enables multiple users to access and update case information simultaneously (Corbetta *et.al,* 2014). Case data systems can be applied in legal system which tracks court cases, managing legal documents, monitoring case timelines; human service agencies which manage sexual violence cases and child protection cases; and healthcare facilities which track patient cases, managing treatment plans, and documenting medical history (Cooper *et.al,* 2020).

In human service agencies in Zanzibar, the case data system is very challenging and fragmented since sexual assault data was not always recorded in complete, consistent and or transparent way (Bakari, 2022). Similarly, in most institutions there was no systematic or consistent method of recording SA incidents something that may contribute to the low documentation of sexual assault cases in human service centers (Masood, 2023). The information is not being routinely collected by institutions and service providers on violence against women or on the different types of sexual assault in Zanzibar (Franklin, 2023). When data is available, it is inconsistent and frequently not disaggregated by gender. Furthermore,

much of the data is not held electronically or when it is, is often not searchable by offence type or publicly available (Nunuu, 2022). This resulted to the lack of a clear picture on sexual assault cases and makes it very challenging to determine the level of magnitude of sexual assault in Zanzibar.

Literature review

In addressing sexual assault incidences, human service agencies play major roles in strengthening monitoring and evaluation unit. According to Victor (2023), many of human service agencies lack practical institutional mechanism for monitoring and evaluating sexual assault cases. This is reflected by limited means of gathering information and analyzing data using formalized tools or system (Robinson, 2015) . Therefore, poor monitoring and evaluation proves failures and   gaps in understanding the scope and magnitude of incidences (Elizabeth, 2022). Under such circumstances, it is very difficult to develop practical policies and strategies that will help in preventing, protecting and responding to sexual assault problems (Windy, 2023).

More precisely, the collection of data, including statistical data is fundamental for monitoring the efficacy of human service agencies in relation to sexual assault cases (Jensen, 2021). However, in many human service agencies the collection of statistical data at regular intervals on all forms of sexual assault against women became very limited. Hence, resulting in the increase rate of sexual assault (Brian, 2020).

The diligent collection of medical and forensic evidence is an important duty of public authorities (Cingolani, 2017) . Various countries are applying greater diligence in the collection of evidence in cases of sexual assault, and complainants are increasingly encouraged to access services where they may safely and confidentially preserve medical and forensic evidence (Baumrind and Fowler, 2020).

Human service agencies often delay in gathering sexual assault information and reporting them to Director of Public Prosecutor (DPP) for a case file. Such delays may be due to poor systems, procedures and inappropriate case management of the agency (Terry, 2022). Sometimes, the delays in reporting is caused by lack of access to responsible institutions or resulting from geographically inaccessible DPP office or courts and lack of specialized criminal justice personnel (Brigham, 2020).

Despite these legitimate concerns, delays in the reporting of sexual assault against women are often interpreted as lack of commitment and accountability (Glynis, S & Bailey, D, 2015) . Surveys of interpersonal violence suggest that the DPP, police or courts are less likely to be notified when the offender of sexual assault is a partner or other family member than when the offender is a stranger (Felix et.al, 2021). For example, Felson (2021) examined police notification using data from a violence survey collected in 2010 in Albany, NY. The evidence suggested that assault disputes between who knew each other, particularly couples, were less likely than disputes involving strangers to be reported to the police (Vassil, 2022). Consequently, delays in gathering and reporting influence the increasing rate of sexual assault against women in the community.

Effective case management on sexual assault cases is necessary in facilitating the harmonious working relation between client, social worker and the agency (Davis, 2022). However, sexual assault cases in general are influenced by poor case management in human service agencies (Paglow, 2021). Several studies generally assumed that lack of coordination and

evaluation system, inconsistency monitoring and constant assessment, poor recording system, poor delivery of services and misallocation of resources influence the operation of human services particularly in addressing sexual assault incidences (Gartner, 2023).

On the study of perceptions and dynamics of gender based violence (GBV) in Zanzibar (Edmund, 2022) indicates the aspect of case data systems in monitoring the cases of sexual assault perpetration. The study claims that lack of proper coordination between agencies may result failures in implementing the strategies developed to fight against sexual assault (Carel, 2015) . However, the of study of Mohammed (2022) claims that inability to disaggregated data makes it impossible to monitor the number of incidents, and further, lack of sexual assault specific data affects the capacity of the institution in implementing its strategies towards the fight of violence against women (Sigmund, 2017) . The concept assisted the researcher to scrutinize thoroughly the aspects of case data systems in monitoring the cases reported effectively.

 Also, the wall of silence study in Zanzibar (Liljetrom, 2012) stressed the importance of case data systems in monitoring the sexual assault perpetration. However, the study claims that lack of consistency and systematic mechanism for data utilization may increase the rate of sexual assault incidences, in the sense that it lacks accurate information for further consideration (Leon, 2022). Furthermore, much of the data is not held electronically or when it is, it is often not researchable by offence type or publicly available (Davis, 2021). This lack of a clear picture on violence against women (VAW) makes its very challenging to determine the magnitude and scope of sexual violence and, in turn, to design age appropriate support and legal services for sexual violence survivors.

In addition, the domestic violence study (Nestry, 2021) indicated that poor coordination between police, DPP and courts resulting to lengthy delays in processing women's violence cases.

Moreover, the prevention study in Arusha (Ndowo, 2015) cited by Loi *et al,* 2014 analyzed that sexual assault is indirectly attributed to poor coordination and limited gender protection conferences, improper data collection, reporting, collation, and relevant statistics to the responsible authority (Clifford, 2010) . As noted by Christina (2021) that the organization actors have limited access to ICT systems which would facilitate the collection, collation and analysis of data; hence the limited data hampers the development of policies, programs; resources and creates a challenge for effective monitoring and evaluation of sexual assault cases effectively (Mjombe, 2023).

It should be noted that, the above reviews are very useful in this study as they raised pertinent points in understanding how case data system influences the increased rate of sexual assault. The studies solely indicated the importance of system coordination and integration of data in the operationalization of human service centers. However, the reviews were very limited in observing the issue of information gathering, recording of data, as well as reporting system on sexual assault incidences. It should be noted that comprehensive data and information management systems on sexual assault against women is part and parcel in ensuring the effective monitoring in the implementation of government efforts in combating sexual assault (SA).

Doing so, it is essential to have timely accurate information for improving coordination and to strategically plan and make responsive implementation decisions. Therefore, lack of

comprehensive baseline data and/ or reliable and consistent national management information systems has limited the responsiveness and impact of SA interventions in Zanzibar. As a result, there is currently no comprehensive data and information management system relating to VAW in Zanzibar and it has not been possible to responsively track emerging trends on sexual assault incidences.

Methodology
The study employed a descriptive research design, which according to Borg and Gall (2011) involve provision of careful descriptions of a phenomenon. The study was carried out in the Unguja Urban west Region in Zanzibar. The target population comprised vast majority of sophisticated elements made up of males and females aged 18 and above. This included female lawyers, social welfare officers, police officers, and IT technicians. The respondents were selected based on their knowledge, experience and exposure regarding to sexual assault incidences. Data was collected using interview method from among the 21 selected respondents. Multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted in the administration of 180 well-structured questionnaires in the study area. Survey research method was adopted and primary data was collected from 301 respondents to collect quantitative data through surveys. The analyses were carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software. Tables and figures were employed in summarizing and describing the data in line with the study objectives.

Study findings
The major findings across a number of areas which were investigated are presented in this section and this forms the core of the research. This part presents, analyzes and discuses findings of this research paper. The researcher set out to find out whether the human service agencies in Zanzibar apply harmonized case database systems in gathering, recording and reporting sexual assault information. The study also set out to explore the measures taken to reduce the challenges of applying case data systems in influencing sexual assault cases in Zanzibar.

The use of database in gathering sexual assault information
Table 1 of the paper shows that gathering sexual assault information using database system is the major problem to human service agencies. About only 4.3% of the respondents reported that human service agencies use database system in gathering sexual assault information, this was attributed to their own capacities and creativities of developing their own databases in collecting data about sexual assault incidences, while the rest of respondents (95.6%) mentioned that human service agencies do not use case database system in gathering sexual assault information.

Table 1: The use of database in gathering SA information

The use of database	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	21	4.3
No	460	95.6

Total	481	100

Source: Field data, 2024

In the interview, key informants gave their experiences, knowledge, views and perceptions about this phenomenon. For example, an IT technician stated:

> *"The responsible agency can take one to four months to make follow up of the cases reported, and these delays can be attributed to poor tools or lack of harmonized national management information system."*

A social welfare officer further clarified that the organizations lack seriousness in gathering information for the DPP procedure. This resulted failure to submit the evidence to the court in time. He said:

> *"It can take three months or more for an organization to conduct a risk assessment for the sake of developing an appropriate intervention plan for the victims."*

Likewise, a police officer from Madema Gender Desk also showed concern about much time spent by the organizations in gathering information. He stated:

> *"An organization may take even two months or more. These are many days in dealing with serious cases such as rape. These delays may be caused by lack of harmonized central database or tools that are used to collect factual information. Every agency has its own complex ways of gathering SA information"*

This statement clearly hints that information gathering is not regarded as a prerequisite stimulus for generating, utilizing and managing data for further consideration by these organizations.

Therefore, the interview and questionnaire findings show that the duration taken by the human service centres to gather information on sexual assault perpetration for the submission to the DPP is very long. The organization takes much time in conducting the risk assessment and social investigation for the ruling on the cases to the court. Human service agencies take a long time in gathering information (social investigation) of the victims of sexual assault cases after the initial report of the cases to the agencies. This results in the loss of evidence and the delay of conviction. The delays are attributed to poor planning and administration, inappropriate monitoring and evaluation system and limited system and procedures in managing the sexual assault perpetration. The given research finding implies that the above existing human service centres dealing with SA cases had not worked effectively and efficiently in the aspects of monitoring and evaluation unit in order to manage sexual assault cases against women in Zanzibar.

The literary interpretation of the findings means that human service agencies encounter various challenges in gathering sexual assault information which includes lack of timely risk and lethality assessment and lack of coordinated response system between stakeholders (Police officers, doctors, social welfare officers, family). The result supports the view that sexual assault cases can take five to eight months or more to be submitted to DPP and file the cases to the court system. Most importantly, it should be noted that these results are also compatible with Saleh (2022) assertion that limited coordinated community responses in the process of gathering information, inappropriate documentation procedures and limited reporting system prove failures to human service centers on submitting sexual assault information to the DPP (MDGWC, 2022).

The findings are also analogous with Barney's (2022) findings that human service agencies are constrained with poor procedures and system, limited social investigation and documentation system on sexual assault cases. Achrol and Stern (2021) discovered that a poor case management system affects the operationalization of human services agencies. The study further established that the increase of sexual assault decreases the ability of the agencies in addressing the cases effectively. The finding also matches Heise's (1998) framework that poor monitoring and evaluation, poor case data systems and coordination may increase the rate of sexual assault perpetration against women, in the sense that the availability of GBV related data is very limited. Consequently, this endorses the view that understanding the scope and magnitude of sexual assault cases for the generation, management and utilization of GBV data for further consideration is fragile.

The use of database in recording sexual assault information
Figure 1 of the paper also shows that the use of case database system in recording sexual assault information is still a big challenge to human service agencies in Zanzibar. About 0.2% of the respondents used harmonized management information system as the major medium of recording sexual assault information. Also, about 4.1% of the respondents relied on their own database system as storage medium, while the majority of respondents 95.6 percent used files as a major medium of recording sexual assault information.
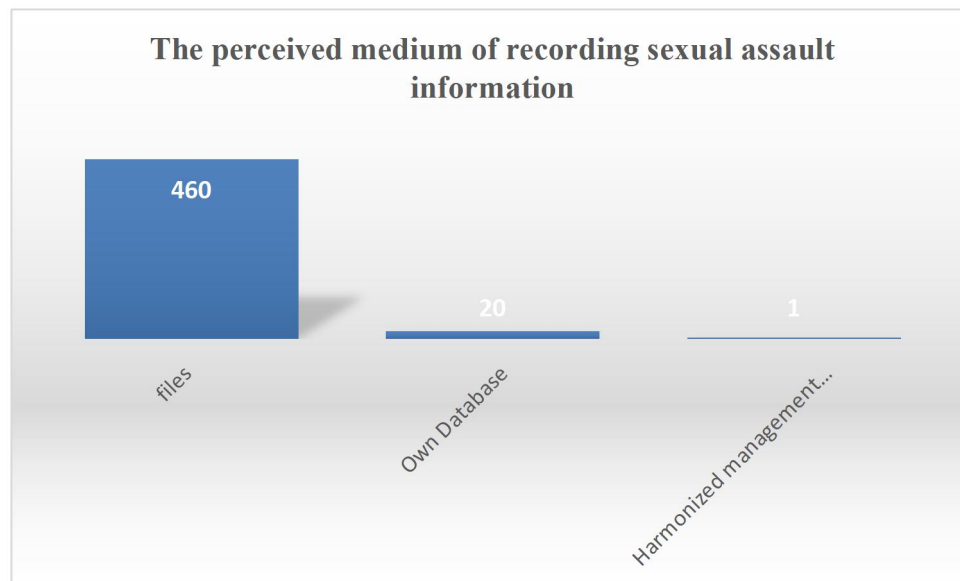
Source: Researcher (2024)
Figure 2: The use of database in recording sexual assault information

Key informants also identified where sexual information is kept as follows: A Police Officer from Madema Gender Desk said:

> *"In my view, there is a lack of official data on incidents of sexual assault. When data is collected, it is often not disaggregated by gender nor by offence; characteristics of victims and/or perpetrators are also recorded inconsistently, and information is typically not recorded electronically."*

An IT technician from ZAFELA stated that sexual assault records are outdated in the sense that sexual assault cases are recorded in physical files. These resulted in the misplacement of important data and make it difficult to access and utilize for a certain purpose. A Social Welfare Officer from the Department of Women and Children also explained that the environment causes poor case data systems. This includes limited access to ICT systems which would facilitate the collection, collation, analysis of data and documentation.

Furthermore, an IT technician from Madema Gender Desk gave his comments on the same point:

> *"There is no systematic or consistent method of recording SA incidents, something that leads to low documentation of SA cases by institutions."*

This is an indication that recording and documention of sexual assault data is not properly administered in human service agencies. This result establishes that agencies lack a national central database system in collecting, recording and documenting sexual assault cases.

One of the social welafre officers from Unguja West District associated the inefficient sexual assault records in Zanzibar to poor coordination, poor policies and regulations, lack of case data systems.

Above all, the results from both interview and questionnaire imply that human service agencies dealing with SA cases have poor case data systems and limited coordination, which limit them from the proper recording of SA cases. The study indicates that poor case data systems is caused by poor systems for data collection, under coverage of data, and lack of a systematic or consistent method of recording SA incidents.

The results suggest that limited means of recording and documenting sexual assault cases makes it very difficult to monitor incidents of VAW and any other SA related issues effectively. Precisely, the results of this study are analogous with Spender *et al.* (2021) findings which show that many of the human service agencies lack high standard documentation procedures, in the sense that most of them use files on the recording of cases. This means that there is a lack of uniformity of data recording and reporting.

Further, Vahlne, 2019) established that human service centres still use files in recording sexual assault cases. This signifies that, for instance, the general police register is being used to register and document all cases, thus making it difficult to disaggregate sexual assault cases from other cases. The results are also consistent with Karande *et al.'s* (2022) and other studies reported in the literature (Goodman and Dion, 2021; Kim, 2022) as well the theoretical argument of Heise (1998) that inability of disaggregated data in the human service agencies makes difficult to identify and monitor the data on time. The statement literary means that any person in need of such information has to go through a register and manually look at all cases and extracts those which are SA related.

The information is not being routinely collected by institutions and service providers on violence against women or on the different type of sexual assault perpetration in Zanzibar. When data is available, it is inconsistent and frequently not disaggregated by gender. Furthermore, much of the data is not held electronically or, when it is, is often not searchable by offence type or publicly available (Smee, 2022).

The use of database in reporting sexual assault cases

Table 2 of the paper finally shows that the use of case database system in reporting sexual assault information still remains a challenge to human service agencies in Zanzibar.   Table 2 shows that about 97.2 percent of respondents were in agreement that human service agencies do not use case database system in reporting sexual assault cases. While the rest of respondents 2.7 percent said human service agencies apply case database system in reporting sexual assault information.

Table 2: *The use of database in reporting sexual assault cases*

The use of database	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	13	2.7
No	468	97.2
Total	**481**	**100**

Source: Field data, 2024

The interview method was conducted to add in-depth richer insights into the quantitative strand of this study from key informants about the use of database system in reporting sexual assault information to DPP. A female lawyer from Zanzibar Female Lawyers Association stated**:**

> *"I don't know exactly, but usually from two months or more. This is because there is no specific database which is used for reporting sexual assault information. When victims make a follow-up of their cases in the police or any other agency, they are always told that the system is incomplete or insufficient for submitting to DPP."*

This supports a number of commitment studies where system and procedures were reported to influence the operationalization of human service agencies (Coote *et al.,* 2021; Morgan and Hunt, 2023; Selness, 2023).

Further, a Social Welfare Officer from Mnazi Mmoja One Stop Centre clarified that the human service agencies lack seriousness in conducting assessment and social investigation in order to capture enough evidence and information for the cases. This was attributed to lack of harmonized national management information system. This signifies that every agency has different database for gathering, recording and reporting sexual assault information. One of the female lawyers from Zanzibar Female Lawyers Association during the interview showed very good concern on the same:

> *"An organization may take even four months or more. These are many days in dealing with serious cases such as rape. The delay is caused by a lack of cooperation between police or any other responsible officer with witnesses and family members."*

A police officer from Bububu Gender Desk explained the situation that makes the agencies to take much time in reporting the assault information to DPP, saying that**:**

> *"Many human service centres in Zanzibar, particularly legal agencies, are not effective enough to address these crimes. Their efforts in the fight against GBV are*

> *hampered by the limited case database system for medical personnel to use it. This condition leads to the delay in submitting evidence to the DPP office for a conviction at the court."*

Therefore, data from interview and questionnaire show that the legal and administrative institutions, including gender desks and one stop centers face several challenges in reporting sexual assault cases. The challenges are directly attributed to limted use of database ssytem in collecting sexual assault data. Hence, this resulted to lack of complete evidence, lack of commitment to legal personnel, and lack of cooperation between the personnel and witness or family members. This delays the process of submitting victims' information to DPP for filing a case. The statement literary means that human service agencies are not effective enough in the reporting system using harmonized central database system.

This result validates Makame's (2022) argument that criticism has been made to the PF3 form, which is used to record an offence, on the basis that it is not specific enough to capture sexual assault incidents.

The results of this study are also harmonious with Hunt and Morgan's (2020) findings that lack of timely risk and lethality assessment and rapid social investigation using specific toools or database affect the reporting mechanism of particular human service agencies. It may also be inferred from these findings that the reporting system from human service centers is influenced by poor procedures and system in the process of gathering sexual assault information. This supports a number of commitment studies where system and procedures were reported to influence the operationalization of human service agencies (Coote *et al.,* 2021; Morgan and Hunt, 2022; Selness, 2023). All of these empirical findings are based on observing the notion of the agency system and procedures in the process of reporting sexual assault information to the authority.

Above all, the results from the above interviews and questionnaire imply that the legal and administrative institution such as gender desks and one stop centers face several challenges that make them take long time in reporting sexual assault information. The challenges are directly attributed to limited use of harmonized management information system that delays the completion of sexual assault cases.

Perceived measures taken to reduce challenges of applying case data systems in influencing sexual assault cases

Table 3 of the paper shows that there is an urgent need to reduce the challenges of using case data systems to human service agencies in Zanzibar. About 46.7 percent of the respondents mentioned national management information system as a major strategy to reduce case data systems challenges. Also, about 8.5 percent of respondents said proper coordination among key stakeholders while 20.1 percent of the respondents mentioned adoption of harmonized systemic and high standard documentation procedure. Another 15.8 percent of the respondents mentioned improvement of case management systems while only about 8.7 percent of the respondents said monitoring and evaluation structures. Summary of these results are presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Perceived measures taken to reduce challenges of applying case data systems in influencing sexual assault cases

Perceived measures	Responses	
	Frequency	Percent %
Establishment of national management information system	225	46.7
Proper coordination among the key stakeholders	41	8.5
Harmonized systemic and high standard documentation procedure	97	20.1
Improvement of SA case management systems	76	15.8
Improvement of monitoring and evaluation structures	42	8.7
Total	**481**	**100**

Source: Field data, 2024

The results above signify that to reduce the problem of sexual assault incidences to women in Zanzibar, different measures pertaining to the use of case data systems need to be taken into account by the government law firms, human service agencies and other related organizations. This means that establishment of national management information systems and initiation of high standard documentation procedures could improve quality documentation and fast tracking systems to sexual assault cases. The results above concur with Alex et.al (2022) study which indicated that comprehensive data and information management systems on sexual assault against women is part and parcel in ensuring effective monitoring of status and trends in the implementation of government efforts in combating SA.

Doing so, it is essential to have timely accurate information for improving coordination and to strategically plan and make responsive implementation decisions. Therefore, lack of comprehensive baseline data and/ or reliable and consistent evaluation systems limit the responsiveness of intervention dedicated to combat SA cases in Zanzibar.

Conclusion
Currently, the problem of sexual assault continues to be highly prevalent in Zanzibar despite efforts in technology, monitoring and evaluation systems at different levels. The weaknesses in case data systems and the use of technology could be cited as an exceptional reasons for this problem. This is because lack of national management information system or central database system applicable under SA in Zanzibar are quite fragile and challenging. This lays foundation that sexual assault data is not always recorded in a complete, consistent and or transparent way in Zanzibar.

Similarly, in most human service centers, there is no systematic or consistent method of recording sexual assault information, something which results to the poor documentation of sexual assault data. Moreover, the information is not being routinely collected and traced by institutions and service providers on assault against women or on the different types of sexual assault. When data is available, it is inconsistent and frequently not disaggregated by gender. Furthermore, much of the data is not held electronically or when it is, is often not searchable

by offence type or publicly available. This was attributed to lack of harmonized central database system for gathering, recording, reporting, generating, and retrieving of sexual assault data in Zanzibar. Consequently, this resulted to lack of a clear picture of sexual assault data and makes it very challenging to determine the scope and magnitude of such particular assaults and, in turn, to design age-appropriate support and legal services for sexual assault survivors.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the paper recommends the introduction of a national central database system for collecting and recording sexual assault data across all institutions; proper coordination among the key players with an emphasis on local shelters movement, criminal justice systems, human service programs and other law enforcers; need to have a harmonized systemic and high standard documentation procedure; improvement of SA case management systems and strengthened monitoring and evaluation structures across all sectors and institutions dealing with sexual assault cases in Zanzibar.

Finally it is better to conduct an action research to see what are the factors behind the increasing of sexual assault in Zanzibar.

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