

**EXPLORING THE CONTRIBUTION OF GENDER-SENSITIVE TRAINING
IN REDUCING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: A CASE OF THE POLICE
GENDER DESK IN DODOMA CITY**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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STUDIES**

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CERTIFICATION

The undersigned certify that have read and hereby recommend for acceptance by the Open University of Tanzania a dissertation entitled: **“Exploring the Contribution of Gender-Sensitive Training in Reducing Gender-Based Violence: A Case of the Police Gender Desk in Dodoma City”**, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Gender Studies of the Open University of Tanzania.

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I, **Asha Ndomba**, declare that this dissertation is my original work. It has never been presented to any other University or Institution. Where other people's works have been used, references have been provided. It is in this regard that I declare this work as originally mine. It is hereby presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Gender Studies of the Open University of Tanzania.

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Signature

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Date

DEDICATION

This work is lovingly dedicated to my dear husband, Idrisa Iddi Said. Your unwavering support, patience, and encouragement have been my strength throughout this academic journey. Thank you for believing in me, standing by my side, and making countless sacrifices to see this dream come true. This achievement is as much yours as it is mine

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To all who contributed to this work in one way or another, I am truly grateful. May God bless you abundantly.

ABSTRACT

This study explored the contribution of gender-sensitive training in reducing gender-based violence (GBV), focusing on the Police Gender Desk in Dodoma City. Despite the establishment of Gender Desks and specialized training, GBV remains a persistent challenge in Tanzania, raising questions about the effectiveness of these interventions. Guided by three objectives, the study examined how gender-sensitive training influences police officers' understanding of GBV, enhances their responses, and the challenges encountered in applying the training. The study adopted a qualitative research design under the interpretivist paradigm, using a case study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with trained officers and GBV survivors, selected purposively. Thematic analysis supported by NVivo was employed, while Feminist Legal Theory (FLT) provided the framework. Findings revealed that training broadened officers' understanding of GBV, improved professional responses, and fostered survivor-centered practices. Institutional resistance, limited resources, and inadequate follow-up training hindered consistent application. The study concludes that gender-sensitive training is vital in improving police responses to GBV, but its potential requires continuous capacity building, institutional support, and community sensitization. It recommends refresher training, adequate resourcing of Gender Desks, stronger inter-agency collaboration, and accountability mechanisms to ensure survivor-centered policing.

Keywords: *Gender-based violence, gender-sensitive training, Police Gender Desk, qualitative research, purposive sampling, Feminist Legal Theory, Dodoma City.*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GBV	Gender-Based Violence
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IDI	In-Depth Interview
VAW	Violence Against Women
UN	United Nations
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
FLT	Feminist Legal Theory
DCI	Dodoma City (Municipal)
PF3	Police Form Number 3 (Medical Examination Form)
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
MoHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
SWO	Social Welfare Officer
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This study explores how gender-sensitive training contributes to reducing gender-based violence (GBV) through the Police Gender Desk in Dodoma City. It examines the effectiveness of training in enhancing police responses, fostering victim support, and promoting gender-sensitive law enforcement practices.

1.2 Background to the Problem

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains one of the most pervasive human rights violations globally, with the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) estimating that one in three women experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the prevalence is even higher, exacerbated by entrenched gender inequalities, socio-cultural norms, and weak institutional responses (African Union, 2020). Despite decades of advocacy and policy reform, GBV continues to undermine women's safety, health, and socio-economic well-being, highlighting the urgent need for effective interventions at both institutional and community levels.

In Tanzania, GBV remains a critical concern. According to the Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey (TDHS, 2022), 40% of ever-married women aged 15–49 have experienced physical violence, while 17% have faced sexual violence by intimate partners. Police records in Dodoma Region indicate an alarming increase in reported GBV cases, from 1,342 in 2021 to 1,478 in 2022 (Police Gender and Children Desk Report, 2023). These statistics underscore the persistent and

escalating nature of the problem, despite ongoing policy interventions such as the establishment of Police Gender Desks and the introduction of gender-sensitive training aimed at transforming law enforcement practices.

Globally, evidence suggests that gender-sensitive training enhances officers' capacity to recognize and appropriately respond to GBV by fostering survivor-centered approaches and improving legal and procedural responses (Pillay, 2019; UN Women, 2021). However, in Tanzania, while gender-sensitive training has been rolled out, there is limited empirical evidence on how effectively it is applied in practice, particularly within Police Gender Desks. Existing studies, such as those by Mori and Mbwambo (2021) and Kapinga (2022), have broadly examined police responsiveness to GBV but have not provided in-depth analysis of how training influences officers' knowledge, attitudes, and day-to-day practices, nor have they examined survivors' perspectives on the effectiveness of these interventions.

This lack of context-specific evidence represents a significant knowledge gap. Without localized, evidence-based insights into the practical application and impact of gender-sensitive training, efforts to strengthen institutional responses to GBV risk remaining fragmented and ineffective. Furthermore, the challenges of entrenched patriarchal attitudes, inadequate institutional support, and resource constraints within police departments are seldom explored in relation to the sustainability of training outcomes. Addressing this gap is critical for understanding not only the extent to which gender-sensitive training contributes to reducing GBV in Dodoma City but

also for informing policy and practice that can enhance survivor support, institutional accountability, and broader societal change.

1.3 Objective of the Study

1.3.1 Main Objective

To explore the contribution of gender-sensitive training in reducing gender-based

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- i. To examine the way gender-sensitive training influences police officers' understanding of gender-based violence.
- ii. To explore the ways in which gender-sensitive training enhances police officers' responses to gender-based violence cases.
- iii. To assess the challenges faced by police officers in applying gender-sensitive training in handling gender-based violence cases.

1.3.3 Research Questions

- i. How does gender-sensitive training shape police officers' understanding of gender-based violence?
- ii. In what ways does gender-sensitive training enhance police officers' responses to gender-based violence cases?
- iii. What challenges do police officers face in applying gender-sensitive training when handling gender-based violence cases?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study holds significance at methodological, theoretical, policy, and practical levels in addressing gender-based violence (GBV) within the context of law enforcement in Tanzania.

Methodologically, the study contributes to qualitative research by employing an interpretivist paradigm and a case study design to explore the nuanced experiences of police officers and survivors interacting with the Police Gender Desk in Dodoma City. By combining in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, the study generates rich, context-specific insights that cannot be captured through quantitative surveys alone. The use of purposive sampling and thematic analysis, supported by NVivo software, also demonstrates a rigorous and transparent analytical approach that can guide future qualitative research on gender-sensitive policing.

Theoretically, the study enriches the discourse on gender and law enforcement by applying Feminist Legal Theory (FLT) to examine institutional responses to GBV. By aligning empirical findings with the principles of FLT, the study advances theoretical understanding of how patriarchal structures within policing institutions influence attitudes, practices, and the uptake of gender-sensitive training. It also highlights how gender-responsive approaches can challenge systemic inequalities, providing a critical framework for future studies in the field of gender, law, and policing.

From a policy perspective, the findings provide valuable evidence for stakeholders,

including the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Police Force, and gender advocacy organizations, on the effectiveness and limitations of gender-sensitive training in improving GBV responses. The study offers empirical insights that can inform the refinement of training curricula, strengthen institutional policies, and guide the allocation of resources to enhance the functioning of Police Gender Desks.

Practically, the research provides actionable recommendations for improving police practices in handling GBV cases. By identifying gaps such as resource constraints, inadequate follow-up training, and entrenched patriarchal attitudes, the study informs practical interventions aimed at fostering survivor-centered approaches and inter-agency collaboration. These findings have the potential to improve trust between law enforcement and communities, encourage GBV reporting, and enhance access to justice for survivors.

In sum, this study contributes to the broader discourse on gender-responsive policing by offering a multi-dimensional perspective that integrates methodological rigor, theoretical depth, policy relevance, and practical solutions for addressing GBV in Tanzania and comparable settings

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

This chapter reviews existing literature on gender-sensitive training and its role in reducing gender-based violence (GBV). It examines relevant theories, previous research findings, and gaps in knowledge. The chapter also presents the theoretical framework guiding the study and highlights areas requiring further investigation.

2.2 Contextualization of Terms

2.2.1 Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender, often rooted in unequal power dynamics and gender discrimination. It includes physical, sexual, emotional, and economic abuse (UN Women, 2021). In this study, GBV is the central issue being addressed. The research focuses on exploring how gender-sensitive training within Police Gender Desks in Dodoma Municipality influences the police response to, and reduction of, various forms of GBV, particularly against women and girls.

2.2.2 Gender-Sensitive Training

Gender-sensitive training involves educational programs aimed at increasing awareness of gender issues, promoting gender equality, and fostering understanding of the social and cultural dynamics that contribute to gender-based discrimination and violence (Pillay, 2019). Gender-sensitive training is the intervention being evaluated in this study. The research will assess how such training influences police

officers' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in handling GBV cases. The effectiveness of the training in fostering a gender-responsive police force is a key focus.

2.2.3 Police Gender Desk

The Police Gender Desk is a specialized unit within police stations that focuses on handling cases related to gender-based violence, providing support to victims, and ensuring a gender-sensitive approach to law enforcement (Mori & Mbwambo, 2021). The study examines the role of Police Gender Desks in Dodoma City, specifically investigating how they implement gender-sensitive training in their daily operations. This desk serves as the focal point for assessing police responses to GBV.

2.2.4 Law Enforcement

Law enforcement refers to the systems and practices through which laws are upheld, including the actions taken by police and other legal bodies to ensure compliance with legal regulations and ensure public safety (Msuya, 2020). In this study, law enforcement is examined in terms of the police's capacity to respond to GBV. The research focuses on the police's role in addressing GBV through gender-sensitive law enforcement practices, particularly after receiving specialized training.

2.2.5 Survivor-Centered Approach

A survivor-centered approach emphasizes placing the needs, rights, and well-being of survivors of violence at the forefront of interventions and services. It advocates for empowering survivors, ensuring confidentiality, and supporting them through the

legal and justice process (UN Women, 2021). The survivor-centered approach is central to the research as it explores how gender-sensitive training influences police officers in adopting such an approach when handling GBV cases. The study will assess if and how the Police Gender Desk's responses to survivors reflect these principles.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by Feminist Legal Theory (FLT), a critical framework developed in the 1970s by feminist scholars such as Catharine MacKinnon and Patricia Smith, which interrogates the ways in which legal institutions have historically reproduced gender inequalities. According to FLT, legal systems and their associated institutions—such as the police—often reflect patriarchal structures that marginalize women's experiences, particularly in matters concerning gender-based violence (GBV) (MacKinnon, 1979; Smith, 1993; Smart, 1989). The theory challenges the neutrality of the law and argues that gender justice cannot be achieved without transforming both the content of legal norms and the attitudes and practices of legal actors. In the context of this study, FLT provides a lens through which to evaluate whether gender-sensitive training helps police officers at the Police Gender Desk in Dodoma City develop a more equitable, empathetic, and effective response to GBV.

The application of FLT is particularly relevant to the study's first specific objective, which seeks to examine how gender-sensitive training influences police officers' understanding of GBV. FLT posits that violence against women is not merely a result

of individual deviance but is rooted in unequal social relations and institutionalized power structures (Smart, 1989; Berns, 2001). This perspective highlights the need for police officers to be trained not just in procedures, but in critically understanding the gendered dimensions of violence. Research shows that many officers historically approached GBV cases with narrow definitions limited to physical assault, often neglecting psychological and economic abuse (Msuya, 2020). By applying FLT, the study assesses whether gender-sensitive training helps officers expand their conceptual grasp of GBV in ways that recognize the structural and intersectional nature of such violence.

FLT also informs the study's second objective, which explores how gender-sensitive training enhances police officers' practical responses to GBV cases. The theory promotes the idea of survivor-centered justice, which prioritizes the dignity, autonomy, and well-being of those who have experienced violence (Berns, 2001; UN Women, 2021). From this viewpoint, a trained officer should respond in a manner that avoids re-traumatization, ensures confidentiality, and facilitates access to justice and support services. Existing literature suggests that when trained under gender-sensitive frameworks, officers demonstrate improved interpersonal engagement, more respectful communication, and better understanding of procedural justice (Kapinga, 2022; Pillay, 2019). This study applies FLT to examine whether such changes are evident among officers at the Dodoma Police Gender Desk, and whether these responses contribute meaningfully to reducing GBV and promoting trust in police institutions.

The third objective of the study investigates the challenges police officers face in applying gender-sensitive training in real-world GBV cases. FLT is central here, as it recognizes that institutional change is often impeded by systemic patriarchal norms, hierarchical organizational cultures, and resistance to gender justice initiatives (Maguire & Finn, 2018; MacKinnon, 1979). For example, officers may be trained in gender sensitivity but still operate within institutions that devalue such training or prioritize case closure over survivor support. Moreover, logistical barriers such as understaffing, inadequate facilities, and weak accountability structures often undermine the application of training principles (Mori & Mbwambo, 2021; Njau, 2023). Through the lens of FLT, these institutional and cultural obstacles are not seen as isolated flaws, but as manifestations of deeper structural inequalities that must be addressed if gender-sensitive policing is to be effective.

This study deliberately situates FLT within the context of Police Gender Desks in Tanzania and avoids the ambiguous use of broader legal or enforcement concepts not anchored in the specific objectives. The term “law enforcement” is used only insofar as it applies to police officers assigned to Gender Desks who are directly involved in GBV case handling. By grounding the theoretical discussion strictly within the three specific objectives, the study ensures conceptual clarity and theoretical coherence.

In summary, Feminist Legal Theory offers a powerful lens for analyzing whether gender-sensitive training contributes to gender justice in GBV response. By connecting the theory directly to police officers’ understanding, practice, and institutional constraints, the study provides a nuanced analysis of the extent to which

gender-sensitive training can transform policing culture and promote a more just and survivor-centered approach to GBV in Dodoma City.

2.4 Empirical Literature Review

This section reviews existing empirical studies related to gender-sensitive training and its role in addressing gender-based violence (GBV). The review is structured based on the study's specific objectives.

2.4.1 Gender-Sensitive Training and Police Officers' Understanding of Gender-Based Violence

Gender-sensitive training plays a crucial role in shaping police officers' understanding of gender-based violence (GBV) by equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to handle GBV cases effectively. Traditional law enforcement approaches have often been criticized for reinforcing gender biases, dismissing survivor testimonies, and failing to recognize the broader structural causes of GBV (Pillay, 2019). Gender-sensitive training seeks to address these shortcomings by fostering a deeper understanding of the social, cultural, and legal dimensions of GBV.

One of the primary outcomes of gender-sensitive training is an improved awareness of the different forms of GBV. Msuya (2020) highlights that many police officers, prior to training, tend to associate GBV solely with physical violence, often overlooking psychological, economic, and sexual violence. Through training, officers learn to recognize a broader spectrum of abusive behaviors and understand how

gender norms and power imbalances contribute to violence against women and other vulnerable groups. This is particularly important in societies where certain forms of GBV, such as marital rape or economic control, are normalized and not always perceived as criminal offenses (Mori & Mbwapbo, 2021).

Additionally, gender-sensitive training helps officers move beyond victim-blaming attitudes. Kapinga (2022) found that prior to training, many officers tended to question victims' credibility, often attributing GBV incidents to the behavior, dress, or choices of the survivor. However, after participating in gender-sensitive training, officers demonstrated a shift in perspective, acknowledging that GBV is rooted in systemic inequalities rather than individual victim behavior. This shift is crucial in ensuring that survivors feel safe and supported when reporting cases.

Furthermore, training enhances officers' understanding of the legal frameworks surrounding GBV. Many officers, particularly those in regions with evolving gender laws, may not be fully aware of the legal protections available for GBV survivors. Njau (2023) found that officers who underwent gender-sensitive training in Tanzania showed a greater understanding of national and international GBV laws, including the rights of survivors and the obligations of law enforcement to provide timely and effective interventions. This knowledge is essential in ensuring that cases are handled in compliance with human rights standards and legal protections.

Despite these improvements, research indicates that the internalization of gender-sensitive concepts among police officers remains a challenge. Berns (2001) argued

that while training sessions can provide knowledge, they do not always lead to immediate changes in deep-seated attitudes and behaviors. Institutional culture, peer influence, and broader societal norms often shape officers' perspectives, sometimes leading to resistance or selective application of gender-sensitive practices. This suggests that training must be reinforced through continuous education, mentorship, and accountability mechanisms within police institutions (Maguire & Finn, 2018).

In summary, gender-sensitive training significantly enhances police officers' understanding of GBV by broadening their knowledge of violence in various forms, challenging victim-blaming attitudes, and strengthening their grasp of legal protections for survivors. However, the long-term effectiveness of such training depends on sustained institutional commitment and continuous professional development. This study will further explore how gender-sensitive training has influenced the understanding of GBV among officers at the Police Gender Desk in Dodoma City.

2.4.2 Enhancing Police Officers' Responses to Gender-Based Violence Cases

Gender-sensitive training has been shown to improve law enforcement responses to GBV cases. Kapinga (2022) found that trained police officers were more likely to adopt survivor-centered approaches, ensuring confidentiality, timely response, and appropriate legal support for victims. The study, which focused on police officers in Tanzania, highlighted that training influenced officers to move beyond punitive measures and adopt holistic approaches, including counseling and referral services.

In a comparative study, Njau (2023) assessed the effectiveness of gender-sensitive training in Dodoma Municipality and found that trained officers exhibited higher

levels of empathy and professionalism when handling GBV cases. The study reported an increase in GBV case reporting, suggesting that survivors felt more comfortable engaging with law enforcement officers who had undergone gender-sensitive training.

However, other studies point to inconsistencies in how training translates into practice. Berns (2001) argued that while training improves officers' awareness, their ability to implement survivor-friendly approaches is often constrained by organizational culture, limited resources, and pressure from superiors to close cases quickly. This highlights the need for institutional reforms alongside training programs to ensure sustainable improvements in police responses to GBV.

2.4.3 Challenges Faced by Police Officers in Applying Gender-Sensitive Training in GBV Cases

Despite the benefits of gender-sensitive training, police officers face multiple challenges in applying their training in real-life situations. Maguire and Finn (2018) found that one of the biggest challenges is the deeply entrenched patriarchal attitudes within police forces, which can undermine the effectiveness of training. Their study, conducted in Kenya, revealed that some officers resisted gender-sensitive approaches, perceiving them as unnecessary or conflicting with traditional law enforcement practices.

A study by Mori and Mbwambo (2021) in Tanzania also found that resource constraints, including a lack of private spaces for interviewing survivors, inadequate

forensic facilities, and limited personnel, hinder effective GBV response. These constraints often force officers to revert to conventional policing methods, which may not be sensitive to survivors' needs.

Additionally, Pillay (2019) highlighted legal and procedural challenges as barriers to implementing gender-sensitive policing. In many cases, police officers trained in gender-sensitive approaches found themselves constrained by outdated legal frameworks that did not fully support survivor-centered interventions. For example, procedural delays, lack of legal protection for survivors, and weak enforcement mechanisms limited the impact of police training.

The reviewed studies suggest that while gender-sensitive training has the potential to transform police responses to GBV, systemic challenges—such as institutional resistance, lack of resources, and legal constraints must be addressed to ensure its effectiveness. This study aims to explore these challenges further within the context of the Police Gender Desk in Dodoma City. The empirical literature reviewed demonstrates that gender-sensitive training significantly influences police officers' understanding of GBV, enhances their responses to cases, and presents both opportunities and challenges in implementation. However, gaps remain in assessing the long-term impact of training on policing culture and survivor experiences. This study seeks to bridge these gaps by focusing on the Police Gender Desk in Dodoma City, offering insights into how gender-sensitive training can be further improved to ensure more effective GBV interventions.

2.5 Research Gap

Despite the growing body of literature on gender-sensitive training and law enforcement responses to gender-based violence (GBV), several gaps remain that warrant further investigation. Existing studies have explored the impact of police training on gender sensitivity, but there are limitations in terms of contextual focus, long-term impact assessments, and institutional challenges that hinder effective implementation.

One notable gap is the lack of localized studies focusing on the Police Gender Desk in Tanzania. While research by Mori and Mbwapbo (2021) examined the effectiveness of Police Gender Desks in addressing GBV, it did not specifically assess the contribution of gender-sensitive training in shaping officers' understanding and responses. Similarly, Kapinga (2022) highlighted improvements in police handling of GBV cases due to gender-sensitive training but did not explore the specific challenges faced by officers in applying their training in real-life scenarios. This study seeks to bridge this gap by providing an in-depth analysis of how gender-sensitive training influences officers' understanding, responses, and challenges in handling GBV cases within the Police Gender Desk in Dodoma City.

Another significant research gap is the limited assessment of institutional barriers to applying gender-sensitive training. Studies such as Pillay (2019) and Njau (2023) have acknowledged that patriarchal attitudes, lack of resources, and legal constraints hinder effective GBV response by law enforcement. However, these studies primarily focused on broad institutional settings and did not explore the specific barriers faced

by officers in the Tanzanian context. This study will examine the practical difficulties officers encounter in applying gender-sensitive training, including resistance from colleagues, inadequate training reinforcement, and logistical challenges in responding to GBV cases.

Moreover, there is insufficient research on the sustainability of gender-sensitive training in policing. While Msuya (2020) found that training enhances officers' knowledge of GBV, the study did not assess whether this knowledge is retained over time or how often refresher training is conducted. Given that policing environments are influenced by traditional norms and hierarchical structures, there is a risk that officers may revert to conventional, non-gender-sensitive approaches if training is not reinforced. This study aims to address this gap by examining the long-term impact of gender-sensitive training on police practices at the Police Gender Desk in Dodoma City.

Additionally, most studies do not account for survivor experiences and perceptions of police handling of GBV cases post-training. Research such as Berns (2001) and Maguire and Finn (2018) focused on police perspectives but did not include insights from GBV survivors on whether gender-sensitive training has improved their access to justice. By incorporating a qualitative approach, this study will explore whether survivors perceive any meaningful change in police responses due to gender-sensitive training.

In conclusion, while previous research has acknowledged the role of gender-sensitive training in improving police responses to GBV, significant gaps remain in understanding its specific impact within the Tanzanian context, particularly in Dodoma City. This study will contribute new insights by focusing on localized experiences, institutional barriers, sustainability of training, and survivor perspectives, thus filling a critical knowledge gap in gender-responsive policing.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This chapter outlines the research methodology, detailing the study design, population, sampling techniques, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures. It also discusses ethical considerations to ensure the research upholds integrity, confidentiality, and the rights of participants in the study.

3.2 Research Philosophy

This study adopted an interpretivist research philosophy, which emphasizes understanding social phenomena from the perspectives of those involved (Creswell, 2014). Interpretivism is rooted in the belief that reality is socially constructed and that meaning is derived from individuals' experiences, making it suitable for qualitative research (Bryman, 2016). Since gender-sensitive training and its impact on police officers' responses to GBV involve subjective experiences, the interpretivist paradigm allows for an in-depth exploration of meanings, attitudes, and perceptions among officers and other stakeholders.

Interpretivism contrasts with positivism, which seeks objective truths through measurable data (Saunders et al., 2019). Unlike positivist approaches that generalize findings through statistical analysis, interpretivism enables an understanding of how police officers internalize gender-sensitive training and how this influences their approach to GBV cases. This philosophical approach is particularly relevant for this

study, as it seeks to capture the complexities of police officers' experiences and challenges in applying gender-sensitive training in real-world policing.

3.2.1 Study Design: Case Study

This study employed a case study design, focusing on the Police Gender Desk in Dodoma City. A case study is a research strategy that involves an in-depth investigation of a particular phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2018). It allows for a comprehensive understanding of processes, behaviors, and contextual factors influencing gender-sensitive training and its effectiveness in addressing GBV. The case study approach is appropriate because it enables a holistic examination of the unique experiences of police officers handling GBV cases. According to Stake (1995), case studies are useful when researchers seek to explore complex social issues by gaining insights from the perspectives of those directly involved. In this study, the Police Gender Desk in Dodoma City provides a focused setting to analyze how gender-sensitive training translates into practice, the challenges encountered, and the potential for improving GBV response mechanisms.

Furthermore, case studies facilitate the use of multiple data sources, including interviews, observations, and document reviews, to build a rich and detailed understanding of the subject matter (Yin, 2018). By concentrating on a specific police unit, this study will generate context-specific insights that may inform broader policies and training programs in other police jurisdictions.

3.2.2 Study Approach: Qualitative

A qualitative research approach is employed in this study to explore how gender-sensitive training influences police officers' understanding and handling of GBV cases. Qualitative research focuses on exploring social phenomena through textual data, interviews, and observations, making it ideal for studying complex human interactions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This approach aligns with the study's interpretivist paradigm, as it seeks to understand police officers' lived experiences and perspectives rather than relying on numerical data.

Unlike quantitative research, which emphasizes statistical generalization, qualitative research enables deep engagement with participants to uncover insights that may not be captured through surveys or experiments (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach is particularly useful for examining attitudinal changes, behavioral patterns, and institutional challenges related to gender-sensitive training. Through qualitative techniques such as in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, this study will explore police officers' perceptions, experiences, and challenges in applying gender-sensitive principles when responding to GBV cases.

3.3 Study Area

This study was conducted in Dodoma City, the capital city of Tanzania and a rapidly growing urban center. Dodoma was officially designated as the country's capital in 1973, and since then, it had experienced significant demographic expansion and infrastructural development (United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 2021). Despite this growth, the region continued to grapple with high incidences of gender-based

violence (GBV), particularly domestic violence, sexual violence, and child abuse (Legal and Human Rights Centre [LHRC], 2022). Reports indicated that Dodoma had one of the highest recorded cases of GBV in Tanzania, with police and legal institutions often overwhelmed by the demand for justice and protection services (UN Women, 2023). The Police Gender Desk in Dodoma City played a critical role in addressing these cases by receiving complaints, supporting survivors, and ensuring perpetrators faced legal action. However, concerns remained regarding police officers' capacity to handle GBV cases sensitively and effectively, which made Dodoma an appropriate site for examining the contribution of gender-sensitive training in policing. Furthermore, as a political and administrative hub, findings from this study informed national policies and strategies for enhancing gender-sensitive law enforcement across Tanzania.

3.4 Study Population

The study population consisted of police officers stationed at the Police Gender Desk in Dodoma City, specifically those involved in handling gender-based violence (GBV) cases. This included officers who had undergone gender-sensitive training and had practical experience in addressing GBV. The selection of these officers was crucial because they were the direct implementers of gender-sensitive protocols, and their perspectives and experiences provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of the training. Additionally, survivors of GBV who had interacted with the Police Gender Desk were included to gain a comprehensive understanding of how gender-sensitive training impacted police responses from the perspective of those seeking justice and support. By focusing on both the officers and survivors, the study

captured a holistic view of the influence of gender-sensitive training on GBV responses.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria for this study ensured the selection of participants who were directly relevant to the research objectives. The study included police officers stationed at the Police Gender Desk in Dodoma City who had undergone gender-sensitive training, as they were directly involved in handling GBV cases. Their insights helped evaluate the effectiveness of the training in real-world situations. Survivors of GBV who had reported their cases to the Gender Desk were also included, as their perspectives offered valuable accounts of police interactions. All participants voluntarily consented to participate.

The study excluded officers who did not work at the Police Gender Desk or had not received gender-sensitive training, as their experiences did not contribute to the research. Survivors who had not reported to the Police Gender Desk were excluded, as their experiences were not relevant to the focus of the study. Individuals under 18 were also excluded, unless they were legally emancipated or had parental consent, ensuring the study focused on adult experiences. These criteria ensured the collection of relevant data for understanding the role of gender-sensitive training in GBV responses in Dodoma City.

3.5 Sampling Design and Procedures

For this study, a purposive sampling method was employed to select participants who met specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. Purposive sampling was particularly suitable for qualitative research, as it allowed the researcher to focus on individuals with particular experiences and knowledge essential to the study.

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach ensured that the participants selected were well-versed in the topic of interest, offering in-depth and relevant information regarding the role of gender-sensitive training in reducing gender-based violence (GBV).

The sample consisted of two groups: police officers and survivors of GBV who had reported their cases to the Police Gender Desk in Dodoma City. Police officers selected for the study were those who had undergone gender-sensitive training and who actively handled GBV cases. The study targeted officers working at the Police Gender Desk, as they were the primary actors in the implementation of gender-sensitive policies. These officers were selected based on their experience and training, ensuring that their insights aligned with the research focus (Babbie, 2015).

For the survivor group, the study focused on individuals who had previously reported GBV cases to the Police Gender Desk in Dodoma City. These survivors were selected to provide a clear understanding of how gender-sensitive training affected their interactions with police officers. To ensure ethical standards, only survivors who voluntarily consented to participate in the study were included (Patton, 2015).

The total number of participants was determined by the principle of saturation, where data collection continued until no new themes or information emerged (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). This was typical in qualitative studies, where the focus was on the depth of information rather than the number of participants. The sample size therefore depended on the richness of the data and the saturation point reached during the interviews.

3.6 Data Collection Methods and Instruments

For this study, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were used as the primary data collection methods. These qualitative methods were particularly suited to exploring the complexities of participants' experiences, perspectives, and interactions regarding gender-sensitive training in police responses to gender-based violence (GBV). Both methods provided rich, detailed data that allowed for a deep understanding of the phenomenon under study.

3.6.1 In depth Interview

In-depth interviews were conducted with police officers and survivors of GBV. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing flexibility in questioning while ensuring that specific topics related to the research objectives were covered. Semi-structured interviews were particularly useful in qualitative research as they provided a balance between consistency and flexibility, enabling participants to express their views in their own words while addressing key research questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). The interviews with police officers focused on their experiences and perceptions of the impact of gender-sensitive training on their ability to handle GBV cases. For survivors, the interviews aimed to gather insights on their experiences of interacting with the Police Gender Desk, particularly in relation to how officers' training influenced their responses and the handling of their cases.

In-depth interviews were advantageous in capturing individual, personal experiences, particularly with sensitive topics such as GBV. The flexibility of this method allowed participants to elaborate on their answers, providing a comprehensive understanding of the topic (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, interviews provided a confidential and

safe environment where participants felt more comfortable sharing sensitive information (Patton, 2015). Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes, providing enough time to explore the issues in depth.

3.6.2 Focus Discussions

In addition to interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) were used to collect data from a group of police officers who had undergone gender-sensitive training. FGDs offered the advantage of facilitating discussions that brought out different viewpoints or shared experiences that might not have emerged in individual interviews (Morgan, 1997). The focus group with police officers allowed for the exploration of collective insights into how gender-sensitive training influenced their responses to GBV. The discussions also provided an opportunity to observe how officers interacted with one another, which highlighted variations in their understanding or application of gender-sensitive practices.

Each focus group consisted of 6 to 8 participants to ensure that everyone had the opportunity to contribute while keeping the group manageable (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The group discussions were guided by open-ended questions, which encouraged participants to express their views freely and discuss their collective experiences. The focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis, ensuring that all responses were accurately captured.

Both in-depth interviews and FGDs were conducted in a safe and private setting to ensure that participants felt comfortable and confident in sharing their experiences.

Ethical considerations were taken into account, including ensuring confidentiality and obtaining informed consent from all participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study was conducted using thematic analysis, a widely used method in qualitative research that involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. Thematic analysis was particularly suitable for this study as it allowed for the exploration of how gender-sensitive training influenced police officers' understanding and responses to gender-based violence (GBV), as well as the challenges they faced in applying this training. Thematic analysis provided a detailed and nuanced understanding of the participants' perceptions and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The process of thematic analysis followed the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), including data familiarization, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. The data from the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were transcribed verbatim and read repeatedly to ensure complete familiarity with the content. During the familiarization phase, initial notes were taken to identify potential patterns and insights.

In the next step, coding was carried out. Coding referred to the process of organizing data into meaningful units, each representing a key piece of information related to

the research objectives. Each transcript was systematically coded using both inductive and deductive coding methods. Inductive coding allowed themes to emerge naturally from the data, while deductive coding was guided by the research objectives and theoretical framework, ensuring that the themes aligned with the study's focus on the role of gender-sensitive training in GBV responses (Saldana, 2016).

Once the coding was complete, the next step was to search for and identify themes across the data. A theme represented a pattern that captured something significant about the data in relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For example, themes emerged around how training influenced police officers' attitudes toward GBV victims or the difficulties officers faced in applying gender-sensitive practices. Each theme was defined, refined, and reviewed to ensure its relevance and consistency.

To assist with the organization and management of data, NVivo software was used. NVivo proved to be a powerful tool for qualitative data analysis, allowing the researcher to organize, code, and visualize data efficiently. NVivo's capabilities in managing large volumes of qualitative data, creating codebooks, and generating visualizations such as word clouds and charts aided in identifying patterns and relationships within the data (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). The use of NVivo enhanced the rigor and transparency of the data analysis process by providing an efficient system for managing, coding, and retrieving data.

After the themes had been identified and refined, the final step was to interpret the data in relation to the research questions and theoretical framework. The findings were discussed in terms of how gender-sensitive training influenced police officers' understanding and responses to GBV, the challenges they encountered, and the broader implications for improving GBV responses within police institutions. NVivo's tools assisted in visualizing the relationships between themes and refining the analysis based on emerging insights (Bazeley, 2013).

In summary, the thematic analysis approach, supported by NVivo software, provided a structured and rigorous framework for analyzing the qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. This approach enabled the study to uncover meaningful patterns and insights regarding the impact of gender-sensitive training on police responses to gender-based violence in Dodoma City.

3.8 Qualitative Rigor

Ensuring rigor in qualitative research was crucial for establishing the trustworthiness and credibility of the study's findings. For this research, the criteria for establishing rigor included credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). These criteria ensured that the study's findings were trustworthy and accurately reflected the lived experiences of the participants regarding the impact of gender-sensitive training on police responses to gender-based violence (GBV).

Credibility referred to the accuracy and authenticity of the findings, ensuring that they faithfully represented participants' perspectives. To enhance credibility, the

study employed member checking, whereby participants were asked to review the data and the researcher's interpretations (Creswell, 2014). This process allowed participants to validate or clarify their responses, ensuring that the results truly reflected their experiences. Additionally, triangulation was used by collecting data from multiple sources—namely police officers and GBV survivors—and through different methods, including in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. This multi-source, multi-method approach reduced the risk of bias stemming from any single perspective or tool (Patton, 2015).

Transferability referred to the extent to which the study's findings could be applied to other contexts or populations. While qualitative research typically focuses on context-specific understanding, this study provided detailed descriptions of the research setting, participants, and procedures, allowing readers to determine whether the findings might be relevant to other similar contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By examining the specific case of Dodoma City, the study offered rich contextual insights that could inform practices in comparable settings.

Dependability concerned the consistency and reliability of the research process. To enhance dependability, the researcher maintained a detailed audit trail throughout the study. This included documentation of all decisions made during the data collection, analysis, and interpretation phases. The transparent record allowed for external assessment of the consistency of the process and the logic underpinning key methodological steps (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, the researcher continually

assessed the alignment between emerging findings and the research questions to ensure that the study remained focused and coherent.

Confirmability addressed the extent to which the findings were shaped by participants' views rather than researcher bias. To ensure confirmability, the researcher practiced reflexivity by actively reflecting on personal assumptions, values, and potential biases that could influence the study (Finlay, 2002). A reflexive journal was maintained to document the researcher's thoughts, decisions, and emotional reactions during fieldwork and data analysis. This process helped to maintain analytical objectivity and minimized the intrusion of subjective interpretations.

Additionally, thick description was employed to provide rich, detailed accounts of the research context and the participants' experiences (Geertz, 1973). By thoroughly describing the setting, the social and institutional environment, and the nature of participant interactions, the study offered a grounded, vivid understanding of the findings, allowing readers to evaluate the depth and authenticity of the conclusions drawn.

In summary, the rigor of this qualitative study was ensured through the application of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, reflexivity, and thick description. These strategies collectively enhanced the trustworthiness and analytical strength of the research, ensuring that the findings were meaningful, contextually

valid, and relevant to understanding the impact of gender-sensitive training on police responses to gender-based violence in Dodoma City.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were critical in qualitative research, particularly when dealing with sensitive topics such as gender-based violence (GBV) and the experiences of vulnerable populations. To ensure the ethical integrity of the study, several ethical principles were adhered to, including informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, and sensitivity to participants' well-being. These principles guided the research process, ensuring that participants' rights were protected and their experiences respected.

Informed consent was a foundational ethical principle in research, ensuring that participants were fully aware of the nature of the study, its objectives, and any potential risks before agreeing to participate (Creswell, 2014). In the study, both police officers and survivors of GBV were provided with detailed information about the research, including the purpose of the study, the types of data that would be collected, and how their information would be used. Participants were given an opportunity to ask questions, and they were informed that their participation was voluntary. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants, confirming that they agreed to take part in the study with full knowledge of their rights.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study to protect participants' identities and sensitive information (Saunders et al., 2015). To ensure confidentiality, all data were stored securely, and only the researcher and authorized

personnel had access to the data. Participants' identities were not revealed in the final report, and pseudonyms were used to maintain anonymity. The audio recordings of the interviews and focus groups were transcribed and securely stored, and the recordings were destroyed after transcription.

Voluntary participation meant that participants had the right to decide whether or not to participate without facing any coercion or negative consequences (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). The study emphasized that participants could withdraw at any time without penalty. This was particularly important in research involving sensitive issues like GBV, where participants might have felt vulnerable or unwilling to continue if the questions became too uncomfortable or distressing.

In addition, the researcher ensured that sensitivity to participants' well-being was maintained, especially when dealing with survivors of GBV. Given the nature of the topic, there was potential for emotional distress during discussions. Therefore, the researcher created a safe environment where participants could express their experiences without feeling pressured (Patton, 2015). The researcher was trained in handling sensitive topics and provided information about available support services, such as counseling, in case participants felt the need to seek professional help after the interview or focus group discussion.

To minimize the risks of harm, particularly to GBV survivors, the researcher followed strict ethical protocols. For example, any participant who felt uncomfortable during an interview had the option to stop or pause the session,

ensuring their emotional safety. Additionally, given the potential vulnerability of some participants, appropriate referrals to professional support services were provided, if needed.

The study also adhered to the ethical guidelines set by the university and government to ensure that all aspects of the research were conducted ethically (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). This included a review of the research design and procedures, ensuring that they met ethical standards for conducting research with human participants.

In conclusion, ethical considerations were integral to the integrity of the study. By ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and sensitivity to participants' well-being, the research adhered to the highest ethical standards. This protected participants' rights, ensured the accuracy and trustworthiness of the data, and contributed to the ethical conduct of research on sensitive topics such as GBV.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the key findings of the study and offers a detailed discussion of the results in relation to the research objectives and questions. The chapter is organized around the three specific objectives of the study: (1) examining how gender-sensitive training influences police officers' understanding of gender-based violence (GBV), (2) exploring how such training enhances police officers' responses to GBV cases, and (3) assessing the challenges faced by police officers in applying gender-sensitive training in practice. The findings are drawn from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions conducted with trained police officers and survivors of GBV who interacted with the Police Gender Desk in Dodoma City.

The presentation of findings is structured thematically, following the major themes that emerged from the data analysis. Each theme is discussed with supporting quotations from participants, illustrating the lived experiences and perspectives that informed the analysis. The discussion section connects the empirical findings to existing literature and the theoretical framework Feminist Legal Theory providing a critical interpretation of the data and situating the results within broader gender and law enforcement discourses. Through this approach, the chapter aims to shed light on the effectiveness, gaps, and practical implications of gender-sensitive training in addressing GBV in the context of Tanzanian policing.

4.2 Influence of Gender-Sensitive Training on Police Officers' Understanding of GBV

The findings from the in-depth interviews reveal that gender-sensitive training significantly influenced police officers' understanding of gender-based violence (GBV) by broadening their conceptualization of violence beyond physical abuse. Many officers acknowledged that prior to the training, they held a narrow view of GBV that was largely confined to visible forms of violence.

“Before the training, I thought GBV only meant beating a woman. Now I know it includes things like denying someone money or insulting them repeatedly. IDI/May/2025

This quotation reflects the transformation in how officers now recognize emotional and economic abuse as integral parts of GBV. The training helped challenge conventional views and provided officers with a more nuanced understanding of violence rooted in control and power dynamics.

Additionally, the training encouraged police officers to recognize that not all violence is visible. Officers reported gaining insight into the less obvious forms of abuse, such as psychological torment and verbal aggression, which can be just as damaging as physical harm.

“I learned that not all violence leaves bruises. There’s verbal violence, threats, humiliation these are real forms of GBV too, and they hurt just as much.” IDI/May/2025

This acknowledgment illustrates a deeper appreciation for the complexity of GBV and reinforces the importance of taking all claims seriously, even in the absence of physical evidence.

Furthermore, some officers shared that the training challenged socially accepted practices that they had not previously identified as abusive. In particular, they mentioned learning about marital rape and coercive control, both of which are often minimized in public discourse.

“Some things we used to ignore, like forcing a wife to have sex, I now understand that’s marital rape and it’s part of GBV.” IDI/May/2025

Such revelations signal that the training not only built knowledge but also confronted harmful societal norms, prompting officers to adopt a more rights-based and survivor-focused lens.

Officers also spoke about gaining insight into the structural and cultural roots of GBV. Rather than viewing violence as a result of isolated conflicts or anger, they began to understand it within the broader context of gender inequality and patriarchal power relations.

“We were taught that GBV is not just about anger it’s about power, inequality, and how society gives men control over women.” IDI/May/2025

This understanding represents a crucial shift toward addressing GBV not just at the individual level, but as a systemic issue that requires structural interventions and institutional accountability.

Prior to the training, some officers admitted they had engaged in victim-blaming, often questioning the survivor’s choices. After undergoing training, they became

aware of how such attitudes further harm survivors and perpetuate a culture of silence.

“I used to ask victims what they were wearing or why they were out late. Now I know that was wrong. The blame is never on the victim.” IDI/May/2025

This transformation illustrates a clear ethical shift toward survivor dignity and marks an improvement in officers’ empathy and professionalism. Another officer expressed that their perception of GBV had changed from viewing it as a "women’s issue" to seeing it as a societal problem. This broader understanding emphasized the need for inclusive approaches in addressing GBV.

“At first, I thought GBV was only women’s issues. But I now understand it’s a human rights issue that also affects boys, men, and the entire society.” IDI/May/2025

This inclusive framing of GBV promotes a more comprehensive and gender-sensitive response from the police, which is essential for effective prevention and intervention. Interestingly, some officers shared how the training prompted personal reflection and behavioral change in their private lives. This indicates that the impact of gender-sensitive training goes beyond institutional procedures and affects individual attitudes and behaviors.

“The training made me think about how I speak to my wife or daughter. It opened my eyes that GBV starts with small things at home.” IDI/May/2025

Such reflections reveal the potential of training programs to promote long-term

societal change through attitudinal shifts at the individual level. The training also improved the professional language used by police officers when addressing GBV cases. Officers were taught that the terminology they use can shape survivors' willingness to engage with the justice system.

“We were taught to use proper terms and not dismiss a survivor’s experience. For example, calling it harassment instead of ‘misunderstanding’ really matters.” IDI/May/2025

This refinement of language shows an increased sensitivity and attentiveness to how survivors experience and interpret police responses. A number of respondents explained how they became more familiar with national laws related to GBV and how to implement these laws effectively. The training included sessions on legal frameworks and survivor rights.

“I now know the laws, like the Sexual Offences Act, and how to apply them. Before, I didn’t understand how to handle these cases legally.” IDI/May/2025

Legal literacy among officers is vital in ensuring that survivors receive justice and that cases are handled in accordance with national and international standards. Some officers shared that the training enabled them to better assess risk factors when attending to GBV cases, which is crucial for survivor protection and case prioritization.

“We were trained to assess danger signs like if someone says the abuser has weapons or has made threats. That way, we act quickly to protect them.” IDI/May/2025

This kind of preparedness helps the police to respond proactively rather than reactively, potentially saving lives and reducing long-term trauma. Additionally, the training emphasized inter-sectoral collaboration. Officers reported an improved understanding of how police, healthcare workers, social workers, and legal actors must work together in GBV cases.

“I now understand GBV isn’t just a police matter it involves health workers, counselors, and legal aid. We’re all part of the support system.” IDI/May/2025

This marks a shift toward a multi-agency approach, recognizing that survivors often need more than legal redress they also need emotional, psychological, and social support. Another common theme was the development of active listening skills and a more empathetic stance when interacting with survivors. Officers learned to approach victims with patience and non-judgment.

“We learned not to interrupt or doubt the survivor. Listening is powerful. It makes them feel safe and respected.” IDI/May/2025

Such behavioral shifts contribute to building trust between survivors and law enforcement, encouraging more people to report GBV incidents. Lastly, officers highlighted how the training discouraged the use of discriminatory or trivializing language within the police force. They learned to be more mindful of everyday communication and its potential harm.

“We were told even jokes or comments that seem small can hurt or discourage someone from reporting. Now I watch my words, even with colleagues.” IDI/May/2025

This awareness helps in fostering a professional and supportive work environment, and it creates safer spaces for both colleagues and survivors.

The focus group discussions revealed that gender-sensitive training has had a transformative impact on how officers at the Police Gender Desk in Dodoma conceptualize gender-based violence (GBV). Participants described how the training moved them from a simplistic, physical-only understanding of GBV to a broader awareness that includes emotional, psychological, and economic dimensions.

“Before the training, I thought GBV was when someone is beaten or injured. But now I understand that shouting, threatening, or controlling someone’s movements is also violence.”
FGD/May/2025

This shift from a visible injury model to a more comprehensive understanding demonstrates the training’s effectiveness in raising awareness about covert and systemic forms of abuse. In addition to expanding the definition of GBV, the training encouraged officers to reflect on their own cultural assumptions and socialization. Several participants admitted they had never questioned harmful practices until the training sessions prompted them to do so.

“Where I come from, a husband forcing his wife into sex was normal. But after the training, I learned that it’s actually marital rape, and it’s illegal.” FGD/May/2025

The quote illustrates how the training challenged deeply ingrained norms, helping officers unlearn practices that perpetuate GBV and replace them with a rights-based approach. The training also helped officers understand the psychological impact of

GBV. Many admitted that they used to dismiss emotional abuse or verbal threats, but now recognize their damaging effects.

“We were told that even insults or belittling someone constantly is GBV. I didn’t take that seriously before, but now I see it destroys people emotionally.” FGD/May/2025

This recognition has enhanced the ability of officers to take survivor narratives more seriously, even when physical evidence is lacking. Another recurring insight was how the training helped officers to recognize the power dynamics at play in GBV cases. Participants explained that understanding power and control shifted the way they approached survivors and perpetrators.

“Now I understand that GBV is not just about anger. It’s about someone using power to dominate and control another person mostly women.” FGD/May/2025

This deeper understanding of structural gender inequality aligns with the principles of Feminist Legal Theory and supports more informed, empathetic policing. The officers also discussed how the training dismantled victim-blaming attitudes. They noted that, in the past, survivors were often questioned or blamed for their experiences. The training explicitly addressed these harmful practices.

“We were told not to ask things like ‘why did you stay?’ or ‘what were you wearing?’ Those questions make survivors feel judged and afraid to speak.” FGD/May/2025

This shows a growing awareness among officers about the importance of supportive and non-judgmental communication with survivors. Participants described how the training influenced them to consider gender dynamics more critically in their daily

work, especially in distinguishing between gender-neutral and gender-sensitive approaches.

“We used to think treating everyone the same was fair. But the training taught us that fairness sometimes means giving more support where there is more vulnerability.” FGD/May/2025

This quote underscores the importance of equity-based interventions, especially in cases where women and girls are disproportionately affected by violence. Some officers shared that the training opened their eyes to GBV beyond domestic settings, including in workplaces, schools, and public institutions. They appreciated that GBV is not confined to homes.

“I realized GBV is everywhere at work, on the street, even in schools. We used to focus only on husbands beating wives, but it’s much wider than that.” FGD/May/2025

This broader perspective enables police officers to respond to a wider range of GBV cases with increased understanding and vigilance. Participants also acknowledged that the training helped them see the link between societal silence and the persistence of GBV. They discussed the importance of being proactive and encouraging survivors to come forward.

“Now I understand that silence protects the abuser. We were trained to create an environment where survivors feel safe to report and speak up.” FGD/May/2025

Such reflections reveal a shift toward active support systems within the police force that promote justice and survivor empowerment. In many cases, the training led to

self-reflection and behavioral change among officers, not just professionally but also in their private lives and communities.

“After learning about gender sensitivity, I started thinking about how I behave at home. I try not to shout or make decisions alone without involving my wife.” FGD/May/2025

This illustrates the personal transformation that can occur when training goes beyond technical skills and addresses values and interpersonal behavior. The training also helped officers better understand survivor behavior, particularly around delayed reporting and reluctance to pursue cases areas they previously misinterpreted.

“We were taught that survivors might be scared or ashamed to report immediately. It doesn’t mean they’re lying or confused. Now we try to be more patient.” FGD/May/2025

This improved understanding of trauma and survivor psychology is key to reducing secondary victimization in police procedures. Some participants noted that the training helped them identify and correct gender-insensitive practices within their own teams and workplace culture.

“We used to joke about GBV cases or blame women for causing trouble. But the training made us realize that even jokes can discourage survivors from reporting.” FGD/May/2025

This quote points to the beginning of cultural change within police departments, where professionalism and empathy are becoming the new norm. The focus groups also revealed that the training introduced officers to international and national legal frameworks for addressing GBV, helping them feel more confident in their roles.

“Before the training, I didn’t know much about the laws. Now I understand the GBV Act, child protection laws, and how to use them when working on cases.” FGD/May/2025

Legal literacy is essential for effective law enforcement, and this new competence ensures that officers are not only empathetic but also procedurally correct in their responses. Finally, officers expressed that the training had improved their listening skills and overall emotional intelligence, allowing them to better connect with survivors.

“We learned to listen more and judge less. Sometimes people just need someone to hear them and believe them. That alone can give them strength.” FGD/May/2025

By fostering respectful and supportive environments, police officers can now contribute to survivor healing and restoration, alongside enforcing the law.

4.3 How Gender-Sensitive Training Enhances Police Officers’ Responses to GBV Cases

The findings show that gender-sensitive training significantly improved the way police officers respond to GBV cases. Many respondents described positive changes in how they handle survivors, beginning with their initial contact and extending through case management and referrals.

“Before the training, I used to focus only on getting the report. Now, I make sure to comfort the survivor and explain what will happen next.” IDI/May/2025

This shift reflects a move from a purely procedural approach to one that centers on survivor dignity, emotional well-being, and trust-building. Participants reported an

increased commitment to timely and respectful service delivery after undergoing the training. Officers described how they became more aware of the urgency and emotional sensitivity required in GBV responses.

“I respond faster now. If a GBV case is reported, I stop whatever I’m doing. Delay can put the survivor at more risk, and I didn’t realize that before.” IDI/May/2025

This quote highlights an improvement in prioritization, showing that training encouraged officers to view GBV cases as emergencies requiring immediate attention. Several officers shared that the training improved their ability to communicate with survivors in a compassionate and non-threatening manner. They became more conscious of tone, body language, and reassurance during interviews.

“The way we talk matters. Now, I use a calm voice and give the survivor space to talk. It helps them open up and feel safe.” IDI/May/2025

This marks a crucial development in trauma-informed policing, where communication techniques are central to reducing survivor anxiety and building cooperation. Officers also indicated that gender-sensitive training increased their use of survivor-centered interviewing techniques, moving away from interrogation-style questioning to more empathetic, supportive dialogues.

“Instead of pushing the survivor to explain everything at once, I allow breaks and ask if they need support. It’s not just about getting facts; it’s about respect.” IDI/May/2025

This illustrates how the training emphasized emotional safety, patience, and survivor empowerment, which are key components of effective GBV intervention. Some

respondents explained that the training strengthened their referral practices. They now actively connect survivors to medical, legal, and psychosocial services rather than treating the case as a police-only issue.

“We were told to work as a team. If the survivor needs counseling, I refer them right away. Before, I thought my job ended with the statement.” IDI/May/2025

This quote reveals an important enhancement in service coordination and holistic care for GBV survivors. Officers also mentioned improvements in how evidence is collected and preserved, with more attention given to protecting the survivor’s privacy and legal rights.

“I used to just write down the report and move on. Now, I make sure evidence is handled carefully and the survivor knows their rights during the process.” IDI/May/2025

This demonstrates the integration of professional ethics and legal safeguards in post-training police practices. Another key finding was that officers became more careful in avoiding secondary victimization. They noted being trained to avoid judgmental questions and ensure a non-blaming environment.

“We were trained not to ask ‘why did you stay?’ or ‘what were you doing there?’ Those questions make survivors feel guilty. Now I avoid all that.” IDI/May/2025

This change reduces re-traumatization and encourages survivors to pursue justice through legal processes. Participants described how the training helped them build rapport with survivors, creating a sense of safety and confidence in police handling of GBV cases.

“Some survivors cry when they come in. I used to feel helpless. Now I know how to comfort them and assure them they are in the right place.” IDI/May/2025

Such emotional support can be a turning point for survivors, making them more likely to proceed with the case and feel validated. Another area of improvement was documentation. Officers indicated that they had learned the importance of thorough, accurate, and confidential record-keeping in GBV cases.

“I now keep records properly and ensure they’re not left lying around. Confidentiality is very important in these cases because the survivor’s safety depends on it.” IDI/May/2025

Proper documentation ensures case continuity, evidence integrity, and survivor protection crucial for long-term outcomes. Some officers shared that the training helped them deal with child survivors more appropriately. They now adjust their approach to be age-sensitive and trauma-informed.

“When a child is involved, I lower my voice and use simple language. I also involve a social welfare officer when necessary, which I didn’t do before.” IDI/May/2025

This reveals how the training extended to vulnerable populations within GBV cases, fostering child-sensitive policing. Respondents described how the training encouraged gender-inclusive practices. Officers said they are now more open to assisting male survivors and members of marginalized communities.

“Now I know that men can also be survivors. I take their cases seriously and avoid making jokes or assuming they are lying.” IDI/May/2025

This quote shows that training contributed to reducing gender bias and ensuring equal treatment across all survivor identities. Some participants noted that their improved response practices have begun to restore public trust, especially among women and youth who previously feared reporting to the police.

“Women used to say we were rude or dismissive. But now I get thanked after helping someone. The training helped us rebuild that trust.” IDI/May/2025

This indicates that respectful treatment and procedural transparency are effective tools for community engagement and police legitimacy. Lastly, the training motivated officers to engage in community outreach and awareness-raising activities. They now understand prevention as part of their role in responding to GBV.

“We were told to go beyond the station. Sometimes I visit schools or community meetings to talk about GBV. It’s part of our job to prevent it too.” IDI/May/2025

This proactive approach represents a shift from reactive to preventive policing, demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of GBV response strategies.

The focus group discussions affirmed that gender-sensitive training significantly enhanced police officers’ responses to GBV cases. Participants shared various ways in which their post-training practices shifted toward more compassionate, efficient, and survivor-centered approaches.

“After the training, I don’t just ask what happened. I start by asking how the person is feeling, and I assure them that they are safe.” FGD/May/2025

This shift in initial response shows greater emotional intelligence and prioritization of psychological safety, setting a tone of empathy and care right from the start. Participants noted that they now strive to treat GBV cases with increased urgency, recognizing the danger survivors may face. The training helped them to act decisively and avoid procedural delays.

“Before, we treated GBV cases like any other case. But now we rush to act fast—no waiting, no delays—because the survivor might be in serious danger.” FGD/May/2025

This emphasis on timeliness enhances protection and builds confidence in law enforcement responses. The training also improved officers’ interviewing techniques. They emphasized the importance of adjusting the pace and tone of interviews to avoid overwhelming survivors.

“We don’t rush anymore. We give survivors time, let them speak at their own pace, and sometimes we do it in more than one session if needed.” FGD/May/2025

This patient and flexible approach helps survivors feel heard and respected, which encourages fuller disclosure and cooperation. Another recurring theme was the improved use of privacy during interviews and case handling. Officers now ensure confidential spaces and minimize exposure.

“Now we make sure the room is private. No one walks in or listens. We even close the blinds so the survivor feels protected.” FGD/May/2025

Maintaining confidentiality is a critical aspect of respectful and secure GBV response, and this practice was a direct result of the training. Several participants

discussed how they now use non-verbal communication effectively through body language, facial expressions, and posture—to convey safety and support.

“Even how you sit matters. I try not to lean forward or frown. I nod, keep eye contact, and show that I’m really listening.”
FGD/May/2025

These subtle behaviors can significantly impact survivor trust, comfort, and willingness to share sensitive details. The officers highlighted their improved understanding of cultural sensitivity when dealing with survivors from different backgrounds or communities.

“If someone is Muslim or from a strict family, we consider their customs and ask if they want a female officer. That wasn’t happening before.” FGD/May/2025

Such cultural awareness reduces additional distress and shows that the police are sensitive to survivors' diverse needs and identities. Focus group participants also described how the training helped them adopt a more holistic view of justice seeing it not only as arresting perpetrators but also restoring survivors’ dignity.

“Justice is not just about putting the abuser in jail. It’s also about making the survivor feel supported, believed, and guided.”
FGD/May/2025

This survivor-centered philosophy aligns with best practices in trauma-informed policing and promotes long-term healing. Another change discussed was the development of safety planning skills. Officers now help survivors think through their next steps and avoid returning to danger.

“We help survivors think about where they will stay, who they can call, and if the abuser has weapons. We guide them step by step.”
FGD/May/2025

This hands-on support strengthens protection and empowerment strategies for survivors facing immediate or future risks. Many officers also noted the importance of follow-up, explaining that they now check in on survivors after the initial report a practice they rarely did before the training.

“Sometimes we call back after a few days to ask if the survivor is okay or needs more help. That small check-in makes a big difference.” FGD/May/2025

Follow-up shows commitment beyond case closure and fosters a long-term support system for survivors. Participants acknowledged that the training encouraged teamwork among officers, reducing internal conflicts and promoting shared responsibility in GBV case handling.

“Before, we worked alone. Now, when a case comes in, we support each other—one takes the statement, another finds a referral. We coordinate more.” FGD/May/2025

Such collaboration leads to more efficient and consistent service delivery, ensuring survivors do not fall through the cracks of the justice system. One notable improvement was the effort to reduce bias against marginalized survivors.

“Now I don’t judge who is reporting. Even if it’s a man abused by his wife or a person with disability, we listen and act the same way.” FGD/May/2025

This commitment to equality enhances inclusivity in the justice system and strengthens the credibility of police services. Training also impacted how officers

deal with children who witness or experience GBV. They now prioritize comfort and psychological protection for minors.

“If a child is involved, we make sure they are not exposed to more trauma. We talk gently, involve parents or social workers, and avoid scary words.” FGD/May/2025

This adjustment demonstrates age-appropriate and trauma-sensitive responses, crucial for minimizing long-term harm in child survivors or witnesses. Finally, many officers expressed pride in how the training transformed their professional identity. They now see themselves not just as enforcers but as protectors and advocates.

“I feel like I’m not just doing a job. I’m helping someone rebuild their life. That mindset came after the training.” FGD/May/2025

This sense of purpose and emotional investment represents a powerful outcome of gender-sensitive training and signals a deeper shift toward ethical, survivor-centered policing.

4.4 Challenges in Applying Gender-Sensitive Training in Practice

The benefits of gender-sensitive training were evident; however, the findings revealed several challenges that police officers faced when attempting to apply what they had learned in practice. These challenges were institutional, cultural, logistical, and personal in nature, limiting the full realization of gender-sensitive policing. One of the most common issues mentioned was the persistence of patriarchal attitudes within the police force. Even after training, officers encountered resistance from untrained colleagues who trivialized GBV cases.

“Some officers still think GBV is not serious. They mock the cases or say ‘that’s a family matter.’ It’s hard to work sensitively in that environment.” IDI/May/2025

Such attitudes undermine the principles of gender-sensitive policing and discourage trained officers from applying their skills consistently. Another obstacle was the lack of institutional support and follow-up after the initial training. Officers reported that there were no refresher courses or continuous mentorship programs to reinforce learning.

“We were trained once, and that was it. There’s no follow-up or monitoring. After some time, people forget or go back to old habits.” IDI/May/2025

Without ongoing training and support structures, knowledge retention and behavior change become difficult to sustain over time. Officers also expressed frustration with the lack of physical resources, such as private interview rooms or transportation, which made it difficult to uphold confidentiality and safety standards.

“We want to talk to survivors privately, but sometimes we don’t have separate rooms. Survivors end up telling their stories in public, which is not safe.” IDI/May/2025

This quote highlights how logistical challenges compromise the quality of care and protection offered to GBV survivors. Several officers noted that institutional bureaucracy delayed responses to GBV cases, especially when seeking medical forms or court orders. These delays made survivors lose hope and abandon their cases.

“We try to help quickly, but getting PF3 forms or authorization takes too long. Survivors get tired and just go home.”
 IDI/May/2025

This inefficiency reflects systemic weaknesses that obstruct the timely application of gender-sensitive practices. Another issue was the shortage of personnel at Police Gender Desks. With limited staff, trained officers were overburdened and could not give sufficient attention to each case.

“Sometimes I’m alone at the desk with five or six cases waiting. I can’t give each one enough time, even though I want to.”
 IDI/May/2025

Such staff shortages reduce the effectiveness of trained officers and lower the overall standard of service delivery. Some respondents mentioned the emotional toll that comes with handling GBV cases sensitively. Without counseling or peer support, they felt overwhelmed or emotionally drained.

“Listening to traumatic stories every day affects us too. But no one checks on our mental health or offers support.” IDI/May/2025

This emotional burden, if left unaddressed, can lead to burnout or desensitization, both of which erode the impact of gender-sensitive training. Officers also pointed out that some survivors lacked awareness of their rights or mistrusted the police, making cooperation difficult despite the officers’ improved approaches.

“We are trained to be gentle and respectful, but some survivors don’t trust us. They think we will judge them or do nothing.”
 IDI/May/2025

This mistrust, rooted in past negative experiences, limits the effectiveness of even the most well-trained officers and underscores the need for broader institutional reform. Some officers highlighted a disconnect between the training content and the realities of their working environment. The training was useful, but often idealistic.

“The training assumes we have everything private rooms, enough staff, even fuel. But in real life, we struggle with basic things.”
IDI/May/2025

This mismatch between expectations and reality creates frustration and hampers the practical implementation of training principles. There were also complaints about a lack of incentives or recognition for officers who practiced gender-sensitive policing. As a result, some lost motivation.

“Even if you do everything right, no one notices. There’s no appreciation or support, so some officers just stop trying.”
IDI/May/2025

This points to the need for institutional accountability and reward systems to reinforce positive policing behaviors. Respondents mentioned that some community members also resisted gender-sensitive policing, particularly when officers intervened in cases involving respected individuals or family disputes.

“Sometimes people in the community say we are breaking families or spoiling culture when we arrest someone for GBV.” IDI/May/2025

This social resistance highlights the challenge of enforcing gender justice in environments where cultural norms conflict with legal standards. Additionally, the use of insensitive language by other officers—especially those who had not been

trained created a hostile environment for survivors and hindered the efforts of trained staff.

“I try to speak kindly, but then another officer says something rude or laughs. It destroys all the trust I tried to build.” IDI/May/2025

This peer influence can nullify the benefits of training unless all staff are sensitized and held accountable. Some officers stated that court procedures were often slow and uncoordinated with police efforts, frustrating survivors and diminishing the impact of police intervention.

“We do our part, but court delays mean the survivor waits for months without results. It makes us look ineffective.” IDI/May/2025

Such procedural disconnections between law enforcement and the judiciary erode the survivor’s experience and lower public confidence. Lastly, officers expressed that there was limited involvement of male officers in gender-sensitive training, which reinforced the misconception that GBV was a “women’s issue.”

“Most of the training sessions had more women. Some male officers think it’s not their concern, so they ignore GBV cases.” IDI/May/2025

This gender imbalance in training participation weakens collective accountability and hampers the full institutional adoption of gender-sensitive approaches.

While officers acknowledged the value of gender-sensitive training, focus group discussions revealed several practical challenges in applying what they had learned. These challenges stemmed from cultural beliefs, institutional gaps, inadequate

resources, and community dynamics that continue to hinder the full implementation of gender-sensitive policing. One frequently cited challenge was the cultural resistance among officers themselves. Some colleagues ridiculed gender-sensitive practices, discouraging others from fully embracing them.

“If you show too much care, others call you ‘too emotional’ or say you’re siding with women too much. It makes you feel alone in doing the right thing.” FGD/May/2025

This peer pressure fosters a toxic environment that discourages officers from applying what they learned during the training and perpetuates gender-insensitive policing. Another difficulty emerged from the community's perception of gender-sensitive policing. Officers noted that some community members believed police should not interfere in “private family matters.”

“When we respond to domestic violence, neighbors say we are breaking marriages. They don’t understand that it’s our duty to protect the victim.” FGD/May/2025

This societal resistance undermines police authority and reinforces harmful norms that normalize GBV within family settings. Focus group participants also mentioned a lack of financial and human resources as a persistent challenge. With limited staff and no dedicated budget for GBV response, trained officers felt overwhelmed.

“Sometimes it’s just one of us at the desk, and many cases are waiting. We want to help, but there’s only so much we can do.” FGD/May/2025

This staffing shortage prevents officers from offering survivors the thorough, individualized attention that gender-sensitive practice requires. Logistical barriers

also hindered the application of training. For example, officers lacked access to reliable transportation, making it difficult to conduct follow-ups or reach survivors in remote areas.

“We want to follow up on cases or escort survivors to services, but we don’t have vehicles or fuel. It’s frustrating.” FGD/May/2025

This lack of logistical support compromises officers’ ability to deliver a complete and responsive service to survivors. Participants explained that survivors themselves sometimes resisted gender-sensitive interventions due to fear, shame, or social pressure, despite officers’ best efforts to support them.

“Some survivors change their mind after reporting. They say their family wants them to forgive the abuser. It’s hard to protect them when they stop cooperating.” FGD/May/2025

This reveals how deeply ingrained gender norms continue to silence survivors and limit the effectiveness of police interventions, even when those interventions are conducted sensitively. Another major concern was the lack of ongoing supervision or accountability mechanisms to ensure that trained officers applied gender-sensitive approaches consistently.

“After the training, we go back to work and that’s it. No one checks if we’re doing things right. Some people just go back to the old ways.” FGD/May/2025

Without institutional accountability, the risk of relapse into harmful practices remains high, weakening the overall impact of the training. Officers also highlighted

that some survivors were disappointed by the slow pace of legal procedures, which often made the police look ineffective in their eyes.

“We may act quickly, but then the case sits in court for months. Survivors get tired and blame us for the delays.” FGD/May/2025

This disconnection between police efforts and judicial outcomes diminishes trust in the system and discourages future reporting. Participants expressed concern over limited infrastructure at the station, especially the absence of private, safe spaces for survivor interviews and counseling.

“We need a proper room for GBV cases. Right now, we share space with others, and survivors feel exposed or embarrassed.” FGD/May/2025

This lack of physical space directly affects the survivor experience, undermining the confidentiality and safety that gender-sensitive policing seeks to uphold. A recurring theme was the emotional burden of handling traumatic stories daily. Officers felt that their mental health was often neglected despite the demands of the work.

“You hear painful stories every day. Some of us carry that pain home. But there’s no counseling for us. We just keep going.” FGD/May/2025

Unaddressed emotional strain may lead to burnout or emotional detachment, making it harder to maintain empathetic, gender-sensitive responses. Some officers noted that survivors with disabilities or communication challenges were especially difficult to assist without specialized training or tools.

“If a survivor is deaf or mentally challenged, we struggle to help. We haven’t been trained for those situations.” FGD/May/2025

This gap limits inclusivity and shows that more tailored training and collaboration with specialized service providers are needed. Participants also discussed the challenge of inconsistent training coverage. In many cases, only a few officers received the training, leaving the majority uninformed and unreformed.

“Only a few of us were trained. Others didn’t attend and still use harsh methods or dismiss survivors.” FGD/May/2025

This partial implementation results in uneven service quality and creates internal contradictions within the police response system. The group also shared how fear of retaliation—especially in close-knit communities discouraged survivors from engaging fully with the police, even when officers were supportive.

“In some cases, the abuser is a powerful person. Survivors get scared and withdraw the case. We can’t force them to continue.” FGD/May/2025

Such fear reveals the broader social and power dynamics that constrain survivors' access to justice and limit the reach of even well-trained officers. Lastly, officers spoke of the lack of recognition or career incentives for those who consistently apply gender-sensitive practices. This demotivated some officers over time.

“We try our best, but there’s no reward or even appreciation. It feels like no one cares whether we apply the training or not.” FGD/May/2025

Without reinforcement through acknowledgment or promotion, the long-term sustainability of gender-sensitive policing is jeopardized.

4.5 Discussion of the Findings

This study set out to explore the contribution of gender-sensitive training in reducing gender-based violence (GBV) through police practices at the Police Gender Desk in Dodoma City. Drawing from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with trained police officers and GBV survivors, the study provides valuable insights into how such training shapes knowledge, response, and institutional practice. This discussion integrates the findings with the research problem, theoretical framework, existing literature, and the interpretivist qualitative methodology used.

The problem identified in this study—persistent GBV incidents in Dodoma City despite the establishment of Police Gender Desks and the introduction of gender-sensitive training—reflected broader national concerns. Official reports indicated rising GBV cases and recurring complaints about secondary victimization and limited support from police officers. This raised questions about the actual effectiveness of gender-sensitive training as a tool for improving police conduct and, ultimately, for reducing GBV. The study addressed this concern by examining the influence of training on three specific areas: police officers' understanding of GBV, their responses to cases, and the practical challenges they face in applying the training.

Findings from the first objective revealed that gender-sensitive training significantly broadened officers' conceptual understanding of GBV. Prior to the training, many officers equated GBV primarily with physical assault. Post-training, however, they demonstrated an enhanced awareness of psychological, economic, and sexual

violence, as well as a deeper understanding of GBV's structural roots in gender inequality. These findings align with Feminist Legal Theory (FLT), which emphasizes that GBV is not merely a product of individual deviance but is embedded in institutionalized gender hierarchies and patriarchal structures (Smart, 1989; MacKinnon, 1979). By challenging officers to reflect on their own assumptions and internalized norms, the training began to dismantle patriarchal beliefs that had historically shaped law enforcement practices.

The methodological choice of qualitative inquiry—through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions—was particularly suited for uncovering these nuanced changes in attitude and perception. The use of semi-structured tools allowed officers to articulate not only what they learned but how it changed their behavior, language, and emotional engagement with GBV cases. As one officer reflected, the training made him reconsider how he interacts not only with survivors but also with women in his own household—a finding that speaks to both personal and institutional transformation.

In addressing the second objective—how gender-sensitive training enhances police officers' responses to GBV—the findings showed considerable improvement in procedural and interpersonal aspects of policing. Officers reported increased sensitivity in communication, use of non-blaming language, proactive referrals to health and legal services, and greater attention to confidentiality. These developments support the empirical literature, including studies by Kapinga (2022) and Njau (2023), which found that trained officers were more likely to provide

survivor-centered support and avoid re-traumatization. Feminist Legal Theory again proves relevant here, as it advocates for legal practices that empower survivors rather than subject them to further harm through institutional negligence or aggression.

Furthermore, the interpretivist paradigm allowed the research to explore not just the *what* but the *how* and *why* of officer responses. Through their narratives, officers explained how the training provided them with practical tools—such as empathetic interviewing techniques and risk assessment checklists—which directly improved their case handling. However, the study also found that despite improved behavior, some survivors remained reluctant to engage fully with police due to fear, shame, or societal stigma. This aligns with Msuya (2020), who observed that survivor trust in law enforcement is shaped by a combination of past experiences, community attitudes, and the consistency of institutional behavior over time.

The third objective—assessing the challenges officers face in applying gender-sensitive training—revealed multiple systemic and contextual barriers. These included limited resources (e.g., lack of private rooms, transport, and staff), institutional resistance, inadequate refresher training, and social pressure from both colleagues and the wider community. These findings are supported by Pillay (2019) and Mori & Mbwapbo (2021), who emphasized that structural barriers—such as underfunding, patriarchal police cultures, and weak accountability mechanisms—often hinder the practical implementation of gender-sensitive principles.

FLT is particularly powerful in interpreting these challenges. The theory acknowledges that simply training individuals cannot dismantle systems unless broader institutional reforms occur. For example, while individual officers may change their approach, untrained colleagues, hostile work cultures, and unresponsive courts may neutralize their efforts. This theoretical insight was echoed in the lived experiences of the officers interviewed, many of whom expressed frustration with unmotivated peers, lack of recognition for gender-sensitive practices, and the emotional toll of unsupported GBV work.

The study's case study design and focus on Dodoma City provided localized insights that address a noted research gap in the literature: the lack of context-specific data on how gender-sensitive training is applied within Tanzanian Police Gender Desks. While prior studies addressed national or regional trends, this research illuminated the ground-level dynamics in an urban context with high GBV incidence. By including both police officers and survivors as respondents, the study ensured that both implementation and outcome perspectives were considered, thus strengthening the validity of its findings.

In summary, the discussion confirms that gender-sensitive training contributes positively to improving police officers' understanding and response to GBV. However, its success is constrained by systemic challenges, including insufficient institutional support, resource limitations, and societal resistance. These findings reinforce the argument advanced by Feminist Legal Theory: that meaningful transformation in GBV response requires structural change, not just individual

awareness. Training alone is not a panacea; it must be part of a larger, coordinated effort involving policy reform, community engagement, resource allocation, and institutional accountability.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of the Findings

This study sought to explore the contribution of gender-sensitive training in reducing gender-based violence (GBV), using the Police Gender Desk in Dodoma City as a case study. Guided by three specific objectives, the study employed a qualitative approach rooted in the interpretivist paradigm, utilizing in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to collect data from trained police officers and GBV survivors.

The first objective examined how gender-sensitive training influences police officers' understanding of GBV. The findings revealed that the training significantly expanded officers' conceptualizations of GBV beyond physical violence to include emotional, economic, sexual, and psychological abuse. Officers came to recognize GBV as a human rights issue rooted in systemic power imbalances and gender inequality. The training helped deconstruct patriarchal norms, challenged stereotypes such as victim-blaming, and promoted inclusive, legally grounded understandings of violence.

The second objective explored how the training enhanced officers' responses to GBV cases. The findings showed substantial improvements in communication, empathy, and survivor-centered procedures. Trained officers demonstrated greater sensitivity during interviews, more accurate risk assessments, timely referrals to support services, and a commitment to confidentiality. Officers also became more responsive

in terms of prioritizing GBV cases and offering emotional support, leading to increased survivor trust and engagement with police services.

The third objective assessed the challenges police officers face when applying gender-sensitive training in practice. Despite the progress made, several barriers hindered full implementation. These included a lack of institutional support, inadequate follow-up training, limited physical resources such as private spaces and transport, as well as cultural resistance from both within the police force and the community. Officers also cited the emotional toll of handling traumatic cases and the absence of recognition or incentives as further obstacles to consistent application of the training.

Overall, the study established that while gender-sensitive training significantly enhances police understanding and response to GBV, the impact is constrained by structural, cultural, and logistical challenges. These findings validate the need for a comprehensive, multi-level strategy to support and sustain gender-sensitive policing.

5.2 Conclusion

This study concludes that gender-sensitive training plays a critical role in transforming police attitudes, behaviors, and practices in the handling of gender-based violence cases. The training has proven effective in equipping officers with a deeper understanding of GBV, a more empathetic and respectful communication style, and survivor-centered intervention techniques. These shifts are vital for

improving access to justice, reducing secondary victimization, and enhancing institutional accountability in the response to GBV.

However, the study also makes it clear that training alone is insufficient. The effectiveness of gender-sensitive training is limited when not supported by a conducive institutional environment, adequate resources, and continuous professional development. Moreover, persistent patriarchal attitudes—both within police departments and the broader community—remain significant barriers to the full realization of gender-sensitive policing. Without structural reforms and sustained commitment from all levels of the justice system, the gains made through training risk being diluted or reversed.

In conclusion, gender-sensitive training must be viewed not as an isolated intervention but as part of a broader institutional and societal transformation. Only when training is embedded within a framework of accountability, resourcing, policy coherence, and cultural change can it fully contribute to the reduction of gender-based violence in Tanzania.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, several recommendations are put forward to enhance the effectiveness of gender-sensitive training in combating GBV.

First, there is a need for institutionalization of ongoing training and capacity-building for all police officers, not just a select few. Regular refresher courses, mentorship

programs, and knowledge-sharing platforms should be developed to reinforce initial training and update officers on new developments in GBV response.

Second, resource allocation must be prioritized. Gender desks require sufficient staffing, private and secure interview spaces, transportation, and communication tools to function effectively. Without these essentials, even well-trained officers are constrained in their ability to apply gender-sensitive principles.

Third, the police force should introduce internal monitoring and accountability mechanisms to assess the application of gender-sensitive practices. Officers who demonstrate consistent, professional, and empathetic responses to GBV should be recognized and rewarded. At the same time, clear disciplinary procedures should exist for those who violate survivor rights or dismiss cases unfairly.

Fourth, efforts should be made to address harmful cultural attitudes both within police departments and the broader community. Public education campaigns, community-police dialogues, and partnerships with civil society organizations can help shift perceptions around GBV and the role of law enforcement in protecting survivors.

Finally, inter-agency coordination should be strengthened. The police, judiciary, healthcare providers, and social welfare services must work collaboratively to ensure that survivors receive comprehensive, timely, and respectful care. Policy reforms that support survivor-centered justice and remove administrative bottlenecks are essential in this regard.

In summary, while gender-sensitive training is a powerful tool in the fight against GBV, its success depends on the creation of an enabling environment that supports and sustains ethical, inclusive, and survivor-centered policing practices

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APPENDICIES

APPENDIX 1: In-Depth Interview Guide

For Police Officers at the Police Gender Desk

1. Introduction and Background

- Could you please tell me about your current role at the Police Gender Desk and how long you have been working in this role?
- What motivated you to join the Police Gender Desk, and what specific responsibilities do you hold related to handling gender-based violence (GBV) cases?

2. Gender-Sensitive Training

- Can you describe the gender-sensitive training you received? How long was it, and who provided it?
- What key topics were covered in the gender-sensitive training you participated in?
- How would you describe the relevance of this training in your day-to-day work with GBV survivors?

3. Effectiveness of Training

- In your opinion, how effective has the gender-sensitive training been in improving your approach to handling GBV cases?
- Can you give examples of how the training has influenced your interactions with survivors of GBV?
- Have there been any challenges in applying the skills and knowledge gained from the training in real-life situations? If so, what are they?

4. Impact on Police Responses to GBV

- How would you assess the overall effectiveness of the Police Gender Desk in responding to GBV cases in your area?
- How has the training you received influenced your decision-making process when dealing with survivors of GBV?
- How do you ensure that the survivors' needs are met, considering the gender-sensitive approaches you have learned?

5. Training Gaps and Future Improvements

- In your opinion, what areas of the gender-sensitive training need further development to enhance police responses to GBV?
- Do you feel that there is sufficient follow-up or refresher training after the initial training? What could be improved in this area?

6. Closing

- Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with gender-sensitive training and its impact on your role at the Police Gender Desk?
- How do you think the Police Gender Desk's response to GBV cases could be strengthened further?

APPENDIX 2: Focus Group Discussion Guide

For Survivors of Gender-Based Violence

1. Introduction

- Please introduce yourselves and share a brief background about your experience with the Police Gender Desk.
- Could you share your reasons for reporting a GBV case to the Police Gender Desk?

2. Experience with the Police Gender Desk

- What was your experience when you approached the Police Gender Desk to report your GBV case?
- How did the police officers at the Gender Desk treat you when you reported the case? Were they understanding and empathetic?
- Do you feel that the police officers at the Gender Desk were trained to handle cases like yours?

3. Gender-Sensitive Training Impact

- Based on your experience, do you think the officers at the Police Gender Desk responded to your case with sensitivity to your gender and your needs as a survivor?
- Were you informed about the services available for survivors of GBV, such as counseling or legal assistance? How effective were these services in your case?

4. Training Influence on Police Responses

- Do you think that the gender-sensitive training received by the officers influenced the way they handled your case?
- Can you share any specific instances where you noticed that the officers' behavior or approach was influenced by gender-sensitive practices?

5. Barriers and Challenges

- Did you encounter any challenges or barriers when seeking help at the Police Gender Desk? If so, what were they?
- Were there any aspects of the police response that you felt were lacking in terms of understanding or handling your GBV case appropriately?

6. Suggestions for Improvement

- What improvements do you think should be made to the Police Gender Desk's response to GBV survivors?
- How do you think the gender-sensitive training of police officers could be improved to better serve survivors of GBV in the future?

7. Closing

- Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with the Police Gender Desk and their handling of your GBV case?
- What message would you give to the police regarding the support they provide to GBV survivors?

APPENDIX C: TIME FRAME

S/N	Activities Duration	January - 2025	February - 2025	March - 2025	April- 2025	May - 2025	June- 2025
1	Proposal Development						
2	Finalize, Proposal presented to Faculty						
3	Requesting ethical approval; Construction, Updating Research tools.						
4	Data gathering process						
5	Data analysis and Report writing						
6	Drafts' submission to the faculty						
7	Dissertation dissemination and submission						

APPENDIX D: BUDGET

Description	Qty	Price (TZS)	NDays	Sub-Total
PERSONNEL				
Preliminary transportation cost	1	10,000	4	40,000/=
Researcher transportation during data collecting	1	10,000	40	400,000/=
Budget for the Research Assistant	2	10,000	40	800,000/=
Communication	-	60,000	1	60,000/=
Sub-Total				1300,000/=
EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY				
Stapler machine	1	5000	1	5000/=
Note Book	1	3500	1	3500/=
Photocopy Paper for Questionnaire	280	300	1	84,000/=
Printing and Binding Final	4	30,000	1	120,000/=
Sub-Total				212500/=
MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS OF DATA				
Data entry	1	300,000	1	300,000/=
Analyses and checks, for data quality	1	500,000	1	500,000/=
Sub-Total				800,000/=
CONTINGENCY.				
Contingency 10 %				225250/=
TOTAL SUM				2,537,750 /=

Budget justification

The expected cost of the study is Two Million, Five Hundred Thirty-Seven Thousand and Seven Hundred Fifty shillings (2,537,750/=) will be used during the study.

i. Personnel

One million, Three Hundred Thousand shillings (1,300,000/=) will spend to the principal investigator, this sum will include lunch, transportation and communication

ii. Equipment and Supply

Two hundred Twelve thousand, five hundred shillings (212,500/=) will spend on supplies and equipment

iii. Data management and analysis

Three hundred thousand shillings will be paid to one data clerk; this sum will be used for data input and management. The statistician will receive a salary of (500,000/=) shillings, which will cover the costs of data cleansing, quality assurance, analysis and presentation of the research finding.

Research Clearance Letter



Ref. No OUT/PG202300998

6th June 2025

Regional Police Commander (RPC),
Dodoma Region,
P.O. Box 912,
DODOMA.

Att: IGP,

RE: RESEARCH CLEARANCE FOR MS. ASHA NDOMBA, REG NO: PG202300998

2. The Open University of Tanzania was established by an Act of Parliament No. 17 of 1992, which became operational on the 1st March 1993 by public notice No.55 in the official Gazette. The Act was however replaced by the Open University of Tanzania Charter of 2005, which became operational on 1st January 2007. In line with the Charter, the Open University of Tanzania mission is to generate and apply knowledge through research.

3. To facilitate and to simplify research process therefore, the act empowers the Vice Chancellor of the Open University of Tanzania to issue research clearance, on behalf of the Government of Tanzania and Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology, to both its staff and students who are doing research in Tanzania. With this brief background, the purpose of this letter is to introduce to you **Ms. Asha Ndomba, Reg.No: PG202300998**, pursuing **Master of Arts in Gender Studies (MAGS)**. We here by grant this clearance to conduct a research titled **“Exploring the Contribution of Gender-Sensitive Training in Reducing Gender-Based Violence: A Case of the Police Gender Desk in Dodoma City”** She will collect her data at your area from 9th June to 30th July 2025.

4. In case you need any further information, kindly do not hesitate to contact the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) of the Open University of Tanzania, P.O.Box 23409, Dar es Salaam. Tel: 022-2-2668820. We lastly thank you in advance for your assumed cooperation and facilitation of this research academic activity.

Yours sincerely,

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA



Prof. Gwahula Raphael Kimamala

For: VICE CHANCELLOR



JAMHURI YA MUUNGANO WA TANZANIA
WIZARA YA MAMBO YA NDANI YA NCHI
JESHI LA POLISI TANZANIA



TELEGRAM: "POLISI DODOMA"
Simu: 2321760/2324126.
Fax no. 2323359.
E-mail: rpc.dodoma@tpf.go.tz

OFISI YA KAMANDA WA POLISI,
MKOA WA DODOMA,
S.L.P 912,
DODOMA.

Kumb. Na. GA.56/897/0113

11/06/2025

To.
MS. ASHA HASSAN NDOMBA

YAH: MAOMBI YA KUFANYA UTAFITI (RESEARCH) KATIKA DAWATI LA
JINSIA NA WATOTO MKOA WA DODOMA.

Tafadhali husika na somo tajwa hapo juu,

2. Kamanda wa Polisi mkoa wa Dodoma amekubali ombi lako la kufanya tafiti inayohusiana na *"Exploring the contribution of gender sensitive training in reducing gender based violence"* katika dawati la Jinsia na Watoto kama ulivyoomba kutoka Chuo Kikuu Huria tawi la Dodoma.
3. Naomba kuwasilisha.

A.F. MUTALEMWA - ACP

Kny: KAMANDA WA POLISI MKOA WA DODOMA

K.N.Y KAMANDA WA POLISI
MKOA WA DODOMA
DODOMA