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Visibility of Intimate Partner Violence in Tanzania's Print Media: A Case of HabariLeo and Mwananchi Newspapers

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ABSTRACT

Aim: The purpose of the study was to examine the visibility of intimate partner violence (IPV) in the newspapers. The study adopted the Agenda Setting Theory. Study Design: The study used a longitudinal comparative research design using quantitative content analysis. The research was conducted between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2023 using HabariLeo, and Mwananchi, newspapers. Methodology: The study used a quantitative approach. The study population comprised all 3,652 editions published by the two newspapers over a five-year period, from 2019 to 2023, with each newspaper contributing 1,826 editions. Results: The findings show that most news stories occupied a quarter page or less, none appeared on the front page, and Mwananchi reported IPV 3.4 times as often per edition than HabariLeo newspaper. Conclusion: Making IPV visible is not simply a matter of printing more stories. It depends on how those stories are gathered, sized, placed and followed. Until Tanzanian newspapers change those practices, IPV will continue to appear in newspaper pages as private misfortune rather than as the public problem.

Keywords: *Intimate Partner Violence, Framing Analysis, Tanzanian Press, Victim Blaming, News Sources, Headlines.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is one of the most widespread forms of harm in human life, yet only a small fraction of it ever becomes news. When it does, various forms of news tend to report it briefly and as an isolated crime. For instance, in a nationally representative sample of United States daily newspapers, 88.3% of 395 IPV articles framed the violence as a single incident and only 11.7% placed it in a wider social context (Carlyle *et al*., 2008). An Australian study of 4,516 news items on violence against women, 929 of the newspaper articles, found that 61% presented the violence as an individual event and that few told women where to seek help (Sutherland *et al*., 2019). In Tanzania, Hamad (2024) found that gender-based violence accounted for about 2% of 14,618 newspaper articles, with the share in individual titles ranging from 0.06% to 0.76%.

The gap between the scale of IPV and its place in the news is wide. The World Health Organization estimates that 26% to 28% of ever-partnered women aged 15 years and older, between 641 and 753 million women, have experienced physical or sexual violence, or both, from an intimate partner at least once in their lives (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021). The burden is unevenly shared. Lifetime prevalence reaches 37% in the least developed countries, against 16% to 23% in the sub-regions of Europe, 18% to 21% in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, and 23% in Australia and New Zealand (WHO, 2021). Eastern sub-Saharan Africa, the region to which Tanzania belongs, has some of the highest rates in the world, with 38% of ever-partnered women aged 15 to 49 affected by IPV in their lifetime and 24% in the past year alone (Sardinha *et al*., 2022). About 4 in 10 ever-partnered Tanzanian women have experienced physical, sexual or emotional abuse by a partner (Halim *et al*., 2019; Ministry of Health [MoH] *et al*., 2023), and reported gender-based violence cases rose from 23,012 in 2015 to 31,863 in 2016, an increase of 39% in a single year (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2016). Much of this violence never reaches the police, the courts or the press.

When IPV does reach the public, the medium that carries it matters. Today, radio is the most accessible medium in much of Africa, and television offers the immediacy of sound and image. Social media go further, allowing survivors and witnesses to publish their experiences without passing through any newsroom. After a widely publicised assault case in the United States, thousands of people used the hashtags #WhyIStayed and #WhyILeft to explain their own abusive relationships (Cravens *et al*., 2015). Such platforms give IPV a voice, but they offer no verification, no editorial accountability and little continuity, and an accusation can travel as fast as a testimony. Newspapers, the oldest of the mass media, play a different role. Their reports are researched, edited and archived,

and they continue to set the agenda for other outlets. Over eight years of Belgian data, newspapers influenced television news more than television influenced them (Vliegenthart & Walgrave, 2008), and even in the social media era, newspaper stories often precede coverage in faster media (Harder *et al*., 2017). In Tanzania, where broadcasters routinely review the day's papers, what a Kiswahili daily chooses to print reaches audiences well beyond its own readers. The visibility of IPV in newspapers is therefore a reasonable indicator of its visibility in public discourse more broadly.

A substantial body of literature has examined how IPV is reported, but most of it concerns what stories say rather than how visible they are. Studies in North America and Australia document incident-driven reporting that rarely addresses causes or remedies (Carlyle *et al*., 2008; Fairbairn & Dawson, 2013; Morgan & Politoff, 2012). African studies report brevity, inside-page placement, and heavy reliance on police sources (Ekweonu, 2020; Mwai, 2016; Owusu-Addo *et al*., 2018; Pikanegore & Mpofu, 2020). Tanzanian research is recent and limited. Hamad (2024) measured the share of gender-based violence (GBV) content without separating IPV from other forms of abuse; Hamad and Kitula (2024) surveyed the challenges newspapers face in reporting such violence, and Mbapu and Ng'atigwa (2024) described the themes of IPV stories in two daily newspapers during a single year. None has measured how much space IPV receives, where it is placed and how often it returns, or whether these patterns differ between state-owned and privately owned titles.

This article addresses that gap. It examines the visibility of IPV in Tanzania's two leading national Kiswahili daily newspapers, the state-owned *HabariLeo* and the privately owned *Mwananchi*, with data covering 2019 to 2023. Visibility is treated as the combination of three measurable features of coverage, namely the space a story occupies, its placement in the newspaper, and the frequency with which the subject appears. The period covers the year before the COVID-19 pandemic, the two pandemic years, and the two years that followed, a time when international agencies warned that partner violence was rising (Mittal & Singh, 2020).

The study makes three contributions. It offers the first multi-year measurement of IPV visibility in Tanzanian newspapers. It compares state and private ownership in a media system that lies outside the Western cases on which most comparative research rests (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). It also shows that the components of visibility can move independently, because the forces that decide whether a story runs are not the same as those that decide how it is displayed. The article first reviews why visibility matters and what shapes it, then describes the method, presents the results and discusses their meaning, and closes with what newspapers and other actors can do.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Why the Visibility of IPV Matters

Reporting IPV does more than inform readers that a crime has occurred. For most of modern history, violence between partners was treated as a household matter beyond public scrutiny, and news coverage has been one of the main routes through which it was redefined as a social problem requiring collective action (Berns, 2004; Carlyle *et al*., 2008). Agenda-setting research explains how this happens. The issues that the media emphasise tend to become the issues that the public and policymakers regard as important (McCombs, 2015). Kitzinger (2004) showed how sustained media attention helped turn child sexual abuse from a hidden harm into a recognised public problem, and Happer and Philo (2013) found that coverage shapes what audiences believe is normal and what they think can be changed. A newspaper that reports IPV regularly and prominently therefore helps make it a matter of public responsibility, whereas one that reports it rarely and briefly leaves it in the realm of private misfortune.

Reporting IPV well is demanding. The journalist must establish the facts of an incident, usually from police or court sources, while protecting the safety and privacy of survivors (WHO, 2013). A complete account also explains the pattern of control that typically precedes serious violence, the risks survivors face when they seek help, and the services and laws available to them. These demands bear directly on visibility. Iyengar (1991) distinguished episodic stories, which centre on a single event, from thematic stories, which place events in their social and policy context, and showed that audiences exposed to episodic coverage tend to hold individuals rather than institutions responsible. Thematic reporting needs space, time and specialised knowledge, whereas an episodic crime report can be written from a police statement in minutes. Good IPV reporting therefore pulls toward larger, more prominent and more sustained coverage, while the easiest form of reporting pulls the other way.

This article uses the term news visibility for how noticeable an issue is in a newspaper. The idea comes from agenda-setting research, which has long asked how much attention the media give an issue and how prominently they display it. Kiousis (2004) found that these two properties tend to rise and fall together and called the combined dimension visibility. Put simply, readers notice an issue when stories about it are large, well placed and frequent. Visibility is therefore measured here through three components. Extent is the physical space a story occupies on the page (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Prominence is the placement and display of the story, including its page position and whether it carries a photograph (Pasternack & Utt, 1986; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). Frequency is the number of stories published within a given period (McCombs, 2015). Measuring the three separately shows whether they move together, as earlier research suggests (Kiousis, 2004; Lim, 2010), or whether different forces govern each.

These structural features also carry meaning. Entman (1993) argued that to frame is to "select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text" (p. 52). Journalists confer salience through words, but also through decisions about space, placement, repetition and illustration (Scheufele, 1999; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). A short report on an inside page is the archetypal episodic item, and studies show that such reports present partner violence as isolated, exceptional and private (Bullock & Cubert, 2002; Sutherland *et al*., 2015). Photographs add a further cue, because they direct readers to the people who matter in a story (Coleman, 2020; Messaris & Abraham, 2001). A newspaper that consistently gives IPV little space, inside pages and few images is framing it as minor before a single word of the story is read.

2.2 What Shapes Newspaper Coverage of IPV

Whether a newspaper gives IPV such visibility depends on more than the number of incidents that occur. Shoemaker and Reese's (2014) hierarchy of influences model places news content within nested layers of influence, running from individual journalists

through newsroom routines and media organisations to social institutions and the wider culture. Four of these influences are especially relevant to IPV.

2.2.1 Newsroom Routines

Routines are the established practices that allow journalists to produce news quickly and reliably. Tuchman (1978) and Gans (1978) showed that reporters work fixed beats and depend on official sources such as the police and the courts. Because IPV usually enters the newsroom through a police statement, it is readily processed as a routine crime item rather than as a social issue that requires investigation (Boyle, 2005). Routines are also shared across organisations. Reporters in rival newsrooms are trained alike, attend the same briefings and follow the same conventions of the crime story, so routines tend to produce similar coverage whoever owns the paper.

2.2.2 Ownership

Ownership operates at the organisational level. State-linked and commercial media work under different incentives and accountabilities (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Sjøvaag & Ohlsson, 2019). Commercial titles depend on audiences and advertisers, which tends to favour the crime, conflict and human-interest stories that hold readers' attention (Herman & Chomsky, 2002). State-owned titles answer, directly or indirectly, to government, and in many African systems they are expected to project national development and social harmony, a mandate with which stories of violence in the home sit uneasily. The Tanzanian press offers a clear contrast between the two models. *Mwananchi* is published by Mwananchi Communications Limited, a subsidiary of the Kenya-based Nation Media Group. It sells about 40,000 copies a day and holds an estimated 71% of Kiswahili newspaper readership (Reporters Without Borders, 2018). *HabariLeo* is published by the government-owned Tanzania Standard (Newspapers) Limited and was launched on 21 December 2006. Because both circulate nationally in the same language market, they differ chiefly in ownership.

2.2.3 Editorial Policy

Editorial policy is the set of guidelines and principles that govern how a media organisation selects and presents content (Ndukwu *et al*., 2024). It tells editors which stories to run, how to run them and how much prominence to give them (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). Some newspapers make social issues a priority and publish IPV stories regularly, while others concentrate on politics, business or crime and report IPV only when an incident is severe (Carlyle *et al*., 2008). Policy also decides whether IPV earns front-page treatment, a feature, an editorial or a follow-up, or is confined to short crime reports that leave readers unable to grasp its wider social implications (McQuail, 2010). Editorial policy is the point at which ownership and routines become daily decisions about the page.

2.2.4 Cultural and Legal Context

Culture shapes how journalists, sources and readers understand IPV. In Tanzania, as in many societies, patriarchal norms cast men as heads of the household and women as subordinate partners (Feinstein *et al*., 2010), and such norms encourage the view that violence within marriage is a private matter rather than a violation of rights (Connell, 2005). Norms that prize family unity and the avoidance of shame also discourage survivors from reporting abuse (Jewkes, 2002), which reduces the number of cases that reach the police and, through them, the newsroom. The legal framework reinforces this privacy. Tanzania has no dedicated domestic violence statute. The Law of Marriage Act prohibits the corporal punishment of a spouse but creates no protection orders, the Penal Code addresses assault only in general terms, and the Sexual Offences Special Provisions Act of 1998 leaves rape within marriage largely outside its reach. Where the law says little about IPV, the press carries an unusually large share of the work of defining it as a public concern.

2.3 Prior Evidence on the Visibility of IPV

Studies of extent agree that IPV receives little space, but they disagree about whether newspapers differ in how much they give it. In Kenya, Mwai (2016) found that gender-based violence stories ran mostly as briefs and fillers, and Ekweonu (2020) reported a similar pattern in Nigeria. Hamad's (2024) Tanzanian estimate of a 2% share points in the same direction. Prabhu and Thirumalaiah (2024), however, found marked differences in the column space two Indian national dailies devoted to gender-based violence, which suggests that extent can vary with a newspaper's editorial identity. The disagreement may reflect market structure as much as culture. The Indian titles compete in a large English-language market with distinct editorial brands, whereas most African studies examine smaller markets in which newspapers share sources and conventions. Mwai's analysis also rested on 25 stories, a reminder that many studies of extent are too small to detect differences between titles.

Research on prominence shows that IPV seldom reaches the positions that signal importance. Front-page placement, large headlines and photographs are the strongest cues available to an editor, and readers judge front-page stories to be more significant than those inside (Pasternack & Utt, 1986; Utt & Pasternack, 2003). Ekweonu (2020) found that Nigerian newspapers seldom placed domestic violence prominently, and Mpofu and Pikanegore (2020) reported low prominence in both the state and private press of Zimbabwe. Ng'ang'a (2021) offers an apparent counter-example, showing that the killings of two women in Kenya reached the front pages. Those cases, however, were distinguished by sensational features, which is consistent with evidence that violent deaths become newsworthy through unusual circumstances rather than through their gravity alone (Buckler & Travis, 2005; Gekoski *et al*., 2012). The literature thus suggests that prominence is granted to the extraordinary case rather than to the ordinary pattern.

Evidence on frequency points to coverage that arrives in bursts. In the United States, Carlyle *et al*. (2008) found that newspapers covered IPV mainly as isolated incidents, and similar patterns appear in Canada (Fairbairn & Dawson, 2013), Australia (Morgan & Politoff, 2012) and local United States media (Kelly & Payton, 2019). African research agrees. Agbese (2021) and Agbasimelo and Ignatius (2024) found limited IPV coverage in Nigerian dailies, the latter across 164 editions, Kankhono (2020) found little sustained attention in Malawi, and Owusu-Addo *et al*. (2018) described Ghanaian coverage of violence against women as largely event-driven. Attention to social problems typically swells around dramatic events and then recedes (Stanyer, 2014). The COVID-19 pandemic tested this pattern, since lockdowns and economic strain were widely expected to increase IPV and the issue drew unusual international concern (Mittal & Singh, 2020). Whether that concern produced sustained newspaper attention in countries such as Tanzania, which imposed no prolonged national lockdown, remains unknown.

The evidence on ownership is the least settled. Commercial incentives predict that private titles will report crime more often, yet Mpofu and Pikanegore (2020) found uniformly low coverage across Zimbabwe's state and private newspapers, while Prabhu and Thirumalaiah (2024) found differences between two privately owned titles. Most studies also treat visibility as a single quantity, so it is unclear whether ownership affects how often IPV appears, how prominently it is displayed, or both. The literature therefore, leaves three questions open for Tanzania. How visible was IPV in the country's leading newspapers, did that visibility change across the pandemic years, and did state and private ownership shape each component of visibility in the same way? The present study was designed to answer these questions.

3. METHODS

3.1 Design and Sample

The study used a quantitative content analysis that was both longitudinal and comparative. Content analysis is a systematic and replicable technique for describing the manifest content of communication (Berelson, 1952; Krippendorff, 2004), and it is the established way of measuring the space, placement and recurrence that newspapers give to an issue (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). *HabariLeo* and *Mwananchi* were chosen purposively as the leading state-owned and privately-owned national Kiswahili daily newspapers. The study period ran from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2023, so that one pre-pandemic year (2019), two pandemic years (2020 and 2021) and two post-pandemic years (2022 and 2023) could be compared.

The population consisted of all 3,652 editions published by the two newspapers in the period, 1,826 for each title. Publication dates were drawn by stratified random sampling within each year and spread across all months and days of the week. This follows the logic of constructed-week sampling, which captures weekly and seasonal cycles in content and estimates newspaper content more efficiently than simple random sampling (Luke & Caburnay, 2011; Riffe *et al*., 1993). The procedure yielded 268 dates per newspaper, comprising 54 dates in each year except 2022, which had 52, for a target of 536 editions. Sampled editions were obtained from *HabariLeo* and *Mwananchi* libraries and the National library. Eighteen editions could not be located, six of *Mwananchi* and twelve of *HabariLeo*, leaving an analysed sample of 518 editions (262 of *Mwananchi* and 256 of *HabariLeo*).

The sampling design was chosen with the rarity of the phenomenon in mind. IPV items are infrequent relative to the total volume of newspaper content, so a sample had to be large enough to capture them in each year and in each title. At 54 dates per newspaper per year, the design comfortably exceeds the number of constructed weeks commonly recommended for estimating a year of newspaper content (Luke & Caburnay, 2011), while remaining feasible for manual coding of print editions. Sampling the same calendar dates for both titles ensured that the two newspapers were compared under identical news conditions.

3.2 Analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Differences in the frequency of IPV coverage between the two newspapers were assessed using an exact conditional test for the ratio of two Poisson rates, with editions analysed as exposure. Fisher's exact test was used to examine differences in extent, placement and photograph use, while chi-square tests were used to assess variation in coverage across years and the interaction between newspaper and year. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

4. RESULTS

The 518 editions contained 58 IPV items, a rate of 11.2 items per 100 editions. *Mwananchi* accounted for 45 items (77.6%) and *HabariLeo* for 13 (22.4%). The results are presented for extent and prominence first, then for differences between the two newspapers and finally for change over time.

4.1 Extent and Prominence of IPV Coverage

IPV items were predominantly small (Table 1). Quarter-page items were the most common category (37.9%), followed by fillers (25.9%), so that brief items made up 63.8% of all IPV coverage. Only 11 items across both newspapers and all five years filled three-quarters of a page or more.

Placement was similarly marginal. No IPV item appeared on the front page of either newspaper during the five years. Pages two and three carried 27.6% of the items and the centre spread 5.2%, while 67.2% appeared on page four or later. Seven items (12.1%) carried a photograph. None was illustrated in 2019, one in 2020, one in 2021, three in 2022 and two in 2023. Five of the illustrated items occupied a quarter page and two occupied half a page. Five photographs depicted government ministers or other officials, and two depicted survivors, one of them a woman whose arms had been severed by her partner (*Mwananchi*, 5 September 2023).

Table -1: Extent and Placement of IPV Items by Newspaper, 2019–2023

Category	*Mwananchi n* (%)	*HabariLeo n* (%)	Total *n* (%)
Space allocated			
More than one page	3 (6.7)	1 (7.7)	4 (6.9)
Full page	3 (6.7)	1 (7.7)	4 (6.9)
Three-quarter page	3 (6.7)	0 (0.0)	3 (5.2)
Half page	7 (15.6)	3 (23.1)	10 (17.2)
Quarter page	17 (37.8)	5 (38.5)	22 (37.9)
Filler (under a quarter page)	12 (26.7)	3 (23.1)	15 (25.9)
Page placement			
Front page	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Pages 2 and 3	12 (26.7)	4 (30.8)	16 (27.6)
Centre spread	3 (6.7)	0 (0.0)	3 (5.2)
Page 4 to back page	30 (66.7)	9 (69.2)	39 (67.2)
Items with a photograph	5 (11.1)	2 (15.4)	7 (12.1)
Total items	45 (100.0)	13 (100.0)	58 (100.0)

Note. Percentages are calculated within each newspaper and may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

4.2 Differences Between the State and Private Newspapers

Mwananchi published 17.2 IPV items per 100 editions and *HabariLeo* 5.1, a rate ratio of 3.38, 95% CI [1.79, 6.83], $p < .001$ (Table 2). The private newspaper carried more IPV items than the state-owned newspaper in each of the five years.

The two newspapers did not differ, however, in how they displayed IPV (Table 3). Substantial items of half a page or more made up 35.6% of *Mwananchi*'s IPV coverage and 38.5% of *HabariLeo*'s, $p = 1.00$. Items on early pages made up 33.3% and 30.8% respectively, $p = 1.00$. Photographs accompanied 11.1% of *Mwananchi*'s items and 15.4% of *HabariLeo*'s, $p = .65$. Once an IPV item was published, the two newspapers gave it statistically indistinguishable space, placement and illustration.

Table -2: IPV Items and Rates per 100 Editions by Year and Newspaper

Year	*Mwananchi n* (rate)	*HabariLeo n* (rate)	Total *n* (rate)
2019	7 (13.2)	2 (3.8)	9 (8.5)
2020	14 (26.9)	5 (9.8)	19 (18.4)
2021	9 (17.0)	1 (2.0)	10 (9.7)
2022	6 (11.8)	3 (6.2)	9 (9.1)
2023	9 (17.0)	2 (3.7)	11 (10.3)
2019–2023	45 (17.2)	13 (5.1)	58 (11.2)

Note. Rates are IPV items per 100 editions analysed. Editions analysed per year were 53, 52, 53, 51 and 53 for Mwananchi and 53, 51, 50, 48 and 54 for HabariLeo.

Table -3: Comparison of IPV Coverage in Mwananchi and HabariLeo

Measure	Result	Difference
Frequency of IPV items per edition	Rate ratio = 3.38, 95% CI [1.79, 6.83], $p < .001$	Significant
Share of substantial items	35.6% vs. 38.5% substantial items, Fisher's exact $p = 1.00$	Not significant
Share of items on early pages	33.3% vs. 30.8% on early pages, Fisher's exact $p = 1.00$	Not significant

Note. Substantial items occupy half a page or more. Early pages are pages two and three and the centre spread.

4.3 Frequency Across the Pandemic Period

The number of IPV items rose from 9 in 2019 to 19 in 2020, the year that alone accounted for 32.8% of the five-year total, and then fell to 10 in 2021, 9 in 2022 and 11 in 2023. Expressed as rates, combined coverage rose from 8.5 to 18.4 items per 100 editions between 2019 and 2020 and stayed between 9.1 and 10.3 thereafter (Figure 1). The variation across years was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(4, N = 58) = 6.20$, $p = .18$, and the two newspapers did not follow different trajectories, $\chi^2(4, N = 58) = 1.78$, Monte Carlo $p = .78$, Cramér's $V = .18$. Coverage was also rarely sustained. Only three items (5.2%) were follow-up stories, and a single editorial on IPV appeared across both newspapers in five years.

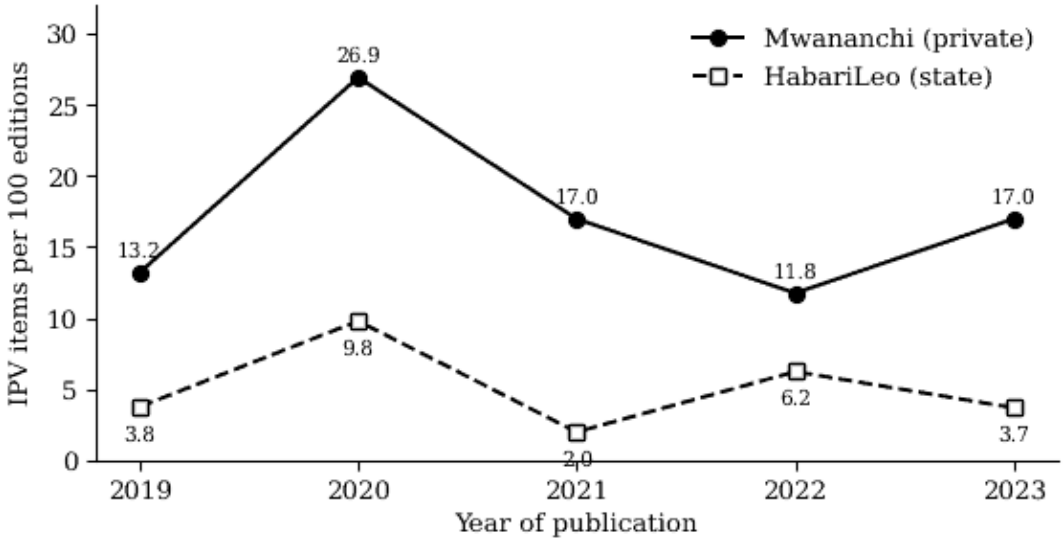


Figure -1: IPV Items per 100 Editions by Year and Newspaper, 2019–2023

Note. Rates are IPV items divided by editions analysed in each year, multiplied by 100.

5. DISCUSSION

This study asked how visible IPV was in Tanzania's two leading Kiswahili dailies and whether ownership shaped that visibility. The answer to the first question is unambiguous. Across five years and two newspapers, IPV was given little space, no front-page presence, few images and almost no sustained follow-up. The answer to the second question is more nuanced and theoretically more interesting. Ownership was strongly associated with how often IPV appeared, but not with how it was displayed once it did.

5.1 A Marginal and Episodic Presence

The predominance of quarter-page items and fillers means that most IPV stories had room for little beyond the bare facts of an incident. Items of that size cannot accommodate statistics, expert commentary, legal context or information about support services. They are, in Iyengar's (1991) terms, the material of episodic framing, and they invite readers to attribute violence to individual failings rather than to gender norms, economic dependence or weak legal protection. The pattern mirrors findings from Kenya (Mwai, 2016), Nigeria (Ekweonu, 2020) and Ghana (Owusu-Addo *et al*., 2018) and is consistent with Hamad's (2024) evidence that gender-based violence occupies a very small share of Tanzanian newspaper content. Taken together, these studies suggest that the marginal treatment of IPV is a regional characteristic of African newsrooms rather than a feature peculiar to Tanzania.

The complete absence of IPV from the front page deserves particular attention. Front-page placement is among the strongest signals of importance an editor can send (Pasternack & Utt, 1986; Utt & Pasternack, 2003), so its absence over five years amounts to a sustained judgement that IPV does not compete with politics, the economy or sport for readers' attention. This agrees with Nigerian and Zimbabwean evidence (Ekweonu, 2020; Mpofu & Pikanegore, 2020) but differs from Ng'ang'a (2021), who found that two Kenyan femicides reached the front pages. The contrast is revealing. The Kenyan cases had sensational features that made them national stories (Buckler & Travis, 2005; Gekoski *et al*., 2012), whereas the Tanzanian incidents, including maimings and killings, involved ordinary people. Front-page attention to IPV in the region appears to depend on the extraordinary character of a case rather than on the gravity of the harm.

The photographs point in the same direction. Five of the seven images showed officials, so that when IPV was illustrated the visual emphasis fell on institutional responses rather than on those affected, a pattern consistent with reliance on official events and sources (Gans, 1978; Tuchman, 1978). The rare images of survivors raise a different concern. A photograph of a maimed woman makes the harm undeniable, but it may also expose her to stigma and further danger, contrary to WHO (2013) guidance. The editorial challenge is to humanise IPV without exploiting the people who live through it.

The 2020 rise in coverage fits the wave-like dynamics of issue attention (Stanyer, 2014). Coverage per edition roughly doubled in the first pandemic year, when international concern about IPV peaked (Mittal & Singh, 2020), and then returned to its earlier level. Because the variation was not statistically significant, the rise should be interpreted cautiously. Its shape, together with the scarcity of follow-up stories and the single editorial in five years, nonetheless suggests that IPV entered the news when incidents occurred or global attention spiked, and was then left to fade.

The overall volume of coverage should also be set against the scale of the problem. Across both newspapers the sample yielded roughly one IPV item for every nine editions, at a time when tens of thousands of gender-based violence cases were being reported to the authorities each year (NBS, 2016) and around four in ten ever-partnered women had experienced partner abuse (MoH *et al*., 2023). Even allowing for the fact that newspapers cannot report every case, the gap between the prevalence of IPV and its presence in the news is wide. It suggests that the great majority of partner violence in Tanzania never becomes news at all, and that the cases that do are selected for their severity rather than their typicality.

5.2 Why Ownership Moves Frequency but Not Display

The comparison between the two newspapers produced the study's central finding. The higher frequency of IPV coverage in *Mwananchi* is consistent with the expectation that commercially driven newspapers favour crime and human-interest material that attracts readers (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Herman & Chomsky, 2002). The magnitude of the gap, a more than threefold difference

per edition, also fits the argument that state-owned titles prioritise official activity and development messages, within which violence inside the home sits uncomfortably. The finding departs in part from Mpofu & Pikanegore (2020), who reported uniformly low coverage across Zimbabwe's state and private press. Coverage was low in both Tanzanian papers as well, but the difference between them was large, perhaps because *Mwananchi*'s dominant market position strengthens its commercial incentive to report crime.

The absence of any difference in display is equally informative. Once either newspaper decided to publish an IPV story, it sized, placed and illustrated that story in nearly the same way. This divergence maps neatly onto the hierarchy of influences (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). Ownership, an organisational-level force, appears to govern the decision to publish. Routines, which operate across organisations, appear to govern the form the story takes. Reporters in both newsrooms draw on the same police and court sources and process IPV through the same crime-story template (Boyle, 2005; Tuchman, 1978), so the product looks alike regardless of who owns the paper. The finding also helps explain why the Tanzanian titles, unlike the Indian dailies studied by Prabhu and Thirumalaiah (2024), allocated space almost identically. The Indian papers compete in a large English-language market with distinct editorial identities, whereas the Tanzanian papers share a single source structure and genre convention for IPV.

Editorial policy and culture help explain why neither ownership logic produced sustained coverage. A single editorial on IPV in five years across two national dailies indicates that neither newspaper treated partner violence as an issue on which it needed to take a public position, and the scarcity of features and follow-ups shows that editorial priorities left IPV to the crime desk. The cultural and legal context narrows the supply of stories further still. Where norms of family privacy discourage survivors from reporting abuse (Jewkes, 2002) and no domestic violence law creates court processes or official statistics to report on, most IPV never produces the police statement on which routine coverage depends. Tanzanian editors and reporters themselves describe a lack of urgency in covering gender-based violence, pressure not to report cases involving influential families and the settlement of cases out of court (Hamad & Kitula, 2024), each of which removes cases from the news before any decision about display is made.

6. CONCLUSION

Do Tanzanian newspapers help make IPV visible? The evidence from *HabariLeo* and *Mwananchi* suggests that they do so only in part. The newspapers remain the most systematic public record of partner violence in the country. They documented maimings and killings that might otherwise have gone unrecorded, and *Mwananchi* returned to the subject more than three times as often as its state-owned rival. Yet the record they kept was small, inside and infrequent. Most items were briefs, none reached the front page, few were illustrated, almost none were followed up, and a rise in coverage during the first pandemic year did not last. The newspapers registered IPV as a series of crimes, but they did not make it visible as a public problem.

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