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AUTHORS: Esmeralda MARIANO,Beatriz MANUEL,Hélio MAÚNGUE,Duarte Patricio

RAFAEL,Gracinda MATAVEIA,Catarina MUNGUAMBE

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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN PUBLIC SPACES IN MAPUTO: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

Esmeralda MARIANO¹, Beatriz MANUEL²*, Hélio MAÚNGUE¹, Duarte Patricio RAFAEL², Catarina MUNGUAMBE², Gracinda MATAVEIA²

¹Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM), P.B. 257, Maputo-Mozambique

²Gender Coordination Center (CeCAGe_UEM), Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM), P.B. 257, Maputo-Mozambique

Abstract

Violence against women and girls in the public space in Mozambique is poorly addressed and documented, but present in the daily lives of women. This article is based on an exploratory study that seeks to raise awareness of violence against women and girls in public space in Mozambique. The study was conducted in two densely populated municipal districts of the city of Maputo, namely KaMaxaquene and KaLhamankulu. The assessed sample represents 0.11% of the two districts. The participants were women (35%), girls (40%), boys (12.5%) and men (12.5%). A descriptive study of the data was performed with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 17. Both women and girls (60%) reported having experienced violence in their lives. Streets and alleys are prone to violence due to poor public illumination and lack of effective/visible police presence. Unemployment, drug abuse and social norms are the most influencing factors for violence.

*Corresponding author: Gender Coordination Center (CeCAGe_UEM), Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM), P.B. 257, Maputo-Mozambique

Email: chonguile@gmail.com (B. MANUEL)

Esmeralda MARIANO   https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3619-5001
Beatriz MANUEL   https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0793-6242
Hélio MAÚNGUE   https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5231-3418
Duarte Patricio RAFAEL   https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7088-791X
Catarina MUNGUAMBE   https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7211-8356
Gracinda MATAVEIA   https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1825-9761

1. Introduction

Globalization, urbanization and modernization of most of the African cities have led women to change from the traditional gender role to more exposure and presence in the public spaces. If previously, space dichotomies inside/outside, private/public existed in very clear

trenches, and the women were identified inside and confined in the private, nowadays, things are different (Monqid, 2012). Though, women still face gendered restrictions on their movement in public places due to male domination, and they are still confronted with a range of threats to access the basic services such as transportation, education and health care (Salahub et al., 2018).

The transformations of gender roles and women's status in society, came with a cost of challenging social and cultural believes that the male counterpart mindset did not overcome yet. It is worth to notice that the dynamics of new urbanization in the Global South, such as large-scale in-migration and informal settlements, create conflict and violence in sometimes unexpected or unpredictable ways, which require us to expand our understanding of urban violence (Salahub et al., 2018:7). Studies has demonstrated that "urban violence" means different things to different people in different places (Salahub et al. 2018). As noted by Maillochon (2004), the general phenomenon of urban violence is often associated with the city and danger and thus hides the importance of structuring.

Despite violence against women and girls (VAWG) being recognized as a major human rights concern and public health problem (Krantz and Garcia-Moreno, 2005; Rose, 2013), the occurrence of violence in public spaces has not been of worthy attention to be subjected to systematic intervention, even though several studies dealing with the issue have been published (Flynn et al., 2018; Fraser et al., 2017; Hancock et al., 2017; Springer and Le Billon, 2016; UN-Women, 2010). Contrary to other forms of VAWG that entered the legal sphere as ways of acknowledging the existence of violence, violence against women in public spaces is interpreted as an individual issue that only concern the victim (O'Neil, 2013). Violence against women and girls in public space comprises of public, verbal, visual, rape and sexual harassment (Garden 1995). For Waerp (2015) public harassment is a typically urban phenomenon and the larger the city, the greater the occurrence of it.

In Mozambique, VAWG has become a major concern for society due to the proportions of the phenomenon and its impact on the well-being of society. Data from the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS 2015) reveal that approximately 33% of women have fall victim of physical violence in the last 15 years and 25% of whom have suffered violence in the 12 months before the inquiry. Approximately 12% of the women aged between 15 and 49 years have been forced into sexual relations in their lives (INE, 2017). Despite that, there is still inexistence of data concerning the prevalence of violence in public spaces against women and girls in Mozambique.

Public space is a complex concept that in some contexts appears as a synonym of public sphere (politic and economic) which represent an abstract space of debate on political issues and market transactions (Arendt, 2001).

However, the approach of public space that we have tried to demonstrate in this research has to do with the concept of ''open space'' brought by Garden (1995) in studies on public harassment. According to Garden (1995) is considered public space, all places where theoretically the presence of anyone is allowed.

Even though, some progress has been achieved in the private dimension of the violence against woman and girl, violence in public spaces is still neglected, with existence of few laws and policies to prevent and combat it. The media has been reporting cases of violence and tragic episode of assassinations of women and girls in the city of Maputo. That being said, there's an urgency in understanding the forces that are holding violence and evaluate the adequate measures to prevent it.

Gender-based violence (GBV) has its roots in the inequality, asymmetry of power relations, patriarchal ideology, thus making the women more vulnerable. Women and girls are constrained of mobility within the context of gendered power relations that produces and maintain dominant masculinity, thus causing assumptions as to what are the gendered boundaries, acceptable behavior for both men and women across the private-public divide. While on the other hand, in places such as Pakistan men are expected to circulate between public and private (Anwar, et al 2018:16).

Therefore, what it is important is to pay attention to the way the public spaces are designed and also to change the social institutions that create inequality (Anwar et al 2018: 28). Results from literature on the scope of the program of Secure and Inclusive Cities in Africa, Asia and Latin America indicate that densely populated areas in cities and the spaces configuration can encourage acts of violence of different kinds, including sexual, as well as restraining police action (Briceno-Leon, 2016; Flynn et al., 2018; Moser, 2016; Monqid, 2012).

The Gender Coordination Center from the Eduardo Mondlane University was seconded by UNWomen to conduct a research of violence against women and girls in public space and to lay –out the bases for the development of an integrated and inclusive program involving all the stakeholders to curb the violence in the public space. The research seeks to address ways of violence against girls and women in its complexity and diversity in public spaces of Maputo City.

2. Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in the city of Maputo, in two municipal districts namely, KaMaxaquene and KaLhamankulu. Two residential areas, Maxaquene A, B, C, and D, and Chamanculo A, B, C, and D were selected. The selection was based on the following criteria: (i) High population density; (ii) The existence of places of large gatherings such as public transportation terminals, markets, open spaces with taverns; (iii) Reports and records of a higher incidence of criminality and violence, assaults and thefts, with women and girls being the major

targets.

Qualitative and quantitative methods were adopted for data collection. To acquire an in-depth understanding of the nature of all forms, types, experiences and perceptions about VAWG in public spaces in Maputo qualitative techniques such as interviews and discussion in focus groups were prioritized.

For the quantitative study, 501 individuals were representatively selected according to the objectives of the study. The selection was based on the availability of the individuals. From that sample, 12.5% were boys, 12.5% men, 35% women and 40% girls. Interviewed men and women were aged 18 to 65 years. The aim was to have an indicative figure on the key questions.

In the qualitative approach, the interviews were conducted individually and in groups. 41 individuals were interviewed. In this group, 6 were community leaders and civil society representatives. 59 other individuals were placed into six groups. Females made up 66% of the total interviewed population.

The sample represents 0.11% of the two selected areas, and it is 0.05‰ of the total population of the city.

The selection of the individuals for the interview was based on the following criteria: (i) Be a girl or boy (between 12 and 17 years old) or woman or man (between 18 years old or more); (ii) Be a resident in the area of study for at least six months before the interview; (iii) Ability and willingness of giving informed written consent to participate in the study, for adults (≥ 18 years old); (iv) Having a written consent from parents or guardians for boys or girls.

Data were stored in a database developed by Gender Coordination Centre from the Eduardo Mondlane University (CeCAGe) using CS Pro 6.3, a software used for inquiries which minimize errors by allowing a double entry of data. Descriptive analysis was performed using SPSS 17, and the unity analysis considered was a municipal district.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Socio-demographic Profile of the Studied Population

75% of the interviewed population were females, being 53.2% of girls. In the male population, 50.4% were boys. From the total population, 49.9% was from the KaMaxaquene municipal district. The marital status of the sample population is presented in Table 1.

From all the participants approximately 95% of the females and 99% of males have attended school, although 20% of females and 19% of males did not complete the primary level.

Table 1. Marital status of the interviewed population

Marital status	Girls		Women		Boys		Men		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Single	192	96.0	101	57.4	63	100	37	59.7	393	78.4
Married	-	-	9	5.1	-	-	5	8.1	14	2.8
Living together*	6	30	52	29.5	-	-	20	32.3	78	15.6
Divorced	2	1.0	8	4.5	-	-	-	-	10	2.0
Widow/widower	-	-	6	3.4	-	-	-	-	6	1.2
Total	200	100	176	100	63	100	62	100	501	100

*: Couples who are not formally married or married under customary law

3.2. Violence against Women and Girls in Public Places

Initially, we assessed the perception of the participants about violence against women and girls in public places (VAWGPP). From the interviews and from group discussions we were able to identify the different types and manifestations of VAWG. The perception prevailing in the two communities is that it is a result of suffering inflicted by a person one another. A set of forms and manifestations of oppression and violation of the dignity of woman and girl were defined, not always consensually. The psychological violence included assaults and robbery, insults, threats, annoying comments, gestures and sexual insinuation. The physical violence included assaults and robbery, involving overpowering the victim, pushing's, beatings, suffocation and attacks. The sexual violence involved harassment forced sex by one or more individuals.

"*For me any act committed against the will of the person, as in the case of forcing someone to have sexual intercourse, it is violence*" (Girl, 17 years old).

"*Violence is to beat someone and force her into sexual intercourse against her will. Violence against woman and girl in public places is beating, shoving, and aggression to a woman or girl in the street*" (Girl, 15 years old).

The prevalence of VAWGPP was obtained by asking all the 376 female participants if they ever experienced any kind of violence in public spaces. Results are presented in Figure 1.
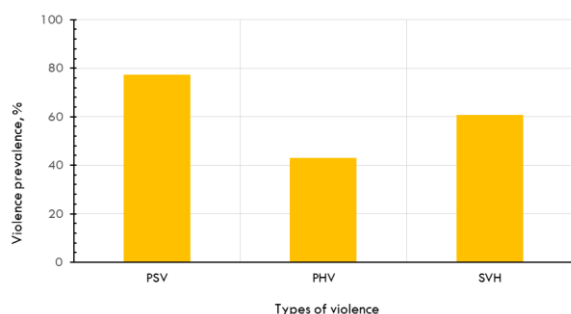
Figure 1. Prevalence of violence against woman and girl in public space in KaMaxaquene and KaLhamankulu. PSV – Psychological Violence, PHV – Physical Violence, SVH – Sexual Violence or Harassment.

It's important to note that results of sexual violence or harassment are influenced by the number of participants who related episodes of sexual molestation and not necessarily related to rapes.

3.3. Violence against Woman and Girl in Public Places: Differences between Women and Girls

Results show that violence is more prevalent among girls (65.7%) than in women (54.4%). This shows that nearly 7 girls out of 10 that have suffered violence in public place. For women, the numbers indicate that 5 out of 10 have suffered. Figure 2 displays the patterns of violence in the two groups.
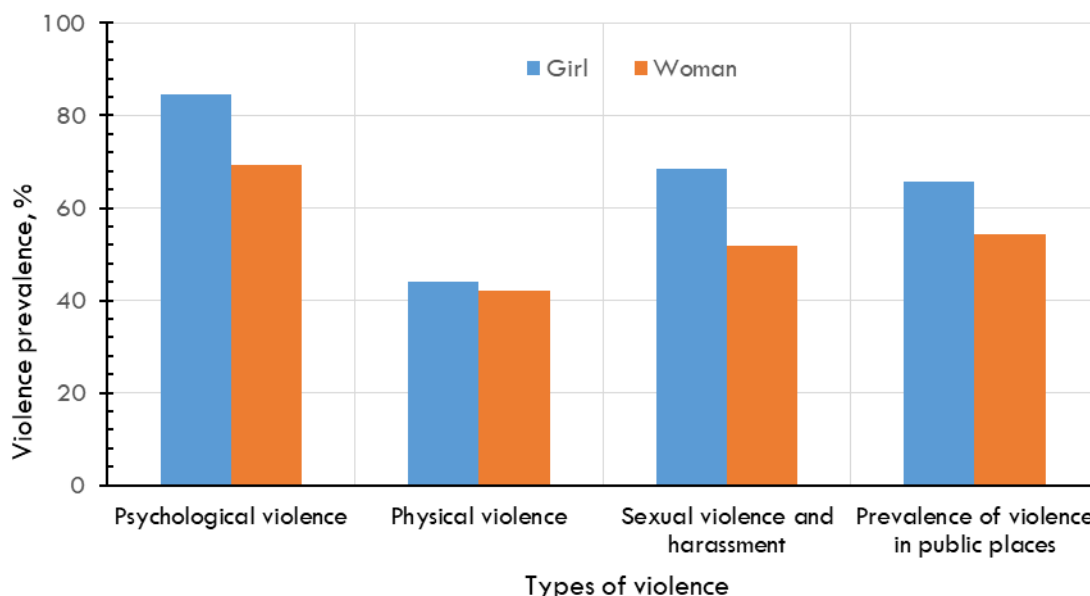

Figure 2. Comparison of the prevalence of violence in public places among girls and women.

All types of violence show a higher prevalence in the two groups, although significative difference exists in psychological violence and sexual violence.

There is a belief that there are places reserved for men and not allowed to woman. This belief is used as an excuse to perpetrate violence or harass if a woman crosses these boundaries. This behavior can be well understood by the following testimony:

"*I have seen women sitting here in the "barracas" (stall) till morning. Those are things that only men can do; it is typical behaviour of men, and not for women (...). You know, a woman must stay at home, the woman was made to stay at home. If a woman goes to school she has to come back home and do the domestic work, and no stay on the streets, and bars drinking, as men, no!*" (Man, 40 years old).

Even in spaces with no barriers based on gender, for instance, in the street, women and girls are the main targets of violence. The following testimonies show the embarrassment of women to control their bodies, their mobility and the desire, to freely, enjoy moments of leisure as men can enjoy.

"*... the stalls, do not place for women and nor for minors... I*

also did not know that the stalls are not recommended for girls" (Girl, 17 years old).

"*There is no place for them, let alone at the stalls because at their age they need to learn more of life, and at the stalls, they will only learn to smoke and to drink, that is why I believe that the stalls are not the right place for them*" (Man, community leader).

Figure 3 shows the distribution of occurrence of physical and psychological violence in public places in the two districts. Results indicate that streets are the most prominent to psychological and physical violence against women and girls (54%), followed by stalls (23%).

According to the respondents, the aggressors and executors of various types of violence are mainly juvenile regular consumers of alcohol and drugs. They are residents but also some from the vicinity who integrate the groups; a local manipulates them. The aggressors are between 18 and 30 years of ages, not attending school and are unemployed. The following testimonies describe the profile of the aggressors:
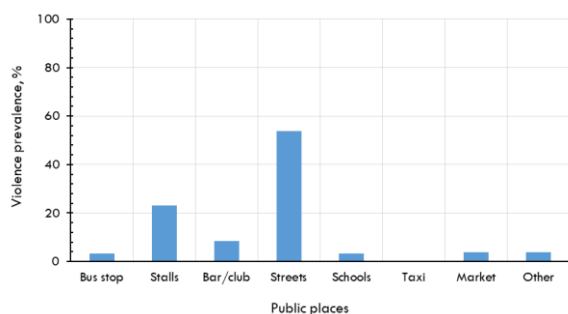
Figure 3. Places of higher occurrence of psychological and physical violence in public places (Taxi refers to the minibuses used as the major mean of public transport, 0.4% of violence prevalence).

"*They are young, young of 18 to 26, up to 30... so it is like, the way we have heard, they are young from other areas who are manipulated by a local because he knows the tricks of the affairs*" (Man, community leader).

"*Those drug addicts who smoke here are big rapists because they rape us including children, pupils on their way from school*" (Woman, 48 years old).

3.4. Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment in Public Places

Results indicate that sexual violence is the most common type of violence. It consists of directing improper words, in public, to a girl or a woman who refused advances from the perpetrator. This is followed by touching private parts without the consent of the girl or woman. Rape is the least prevalent of all forms of violence (Figure 4). In all kinds of violence, girls are the most affected according to our results

The two districts show a similar pattern regarding VAWGPP with KaMaxaquene showing higher levels of insults in public, 58% against 46.3% of KaLhamankulu (Figure 5). For violence related to rape and sexual assault (touching private parts without the consent of the victim, indecent assault), the two districts show a similar pattern.
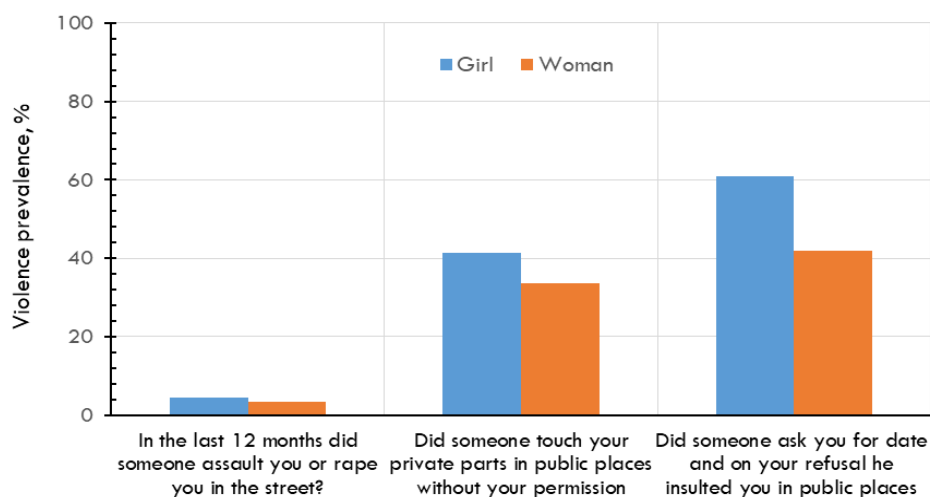

Figure 4. Prevalence of violence of sexual violence and harassment in public places in the two municipal districts of Maputo, KaLhamankulu and KaMaxaquene.
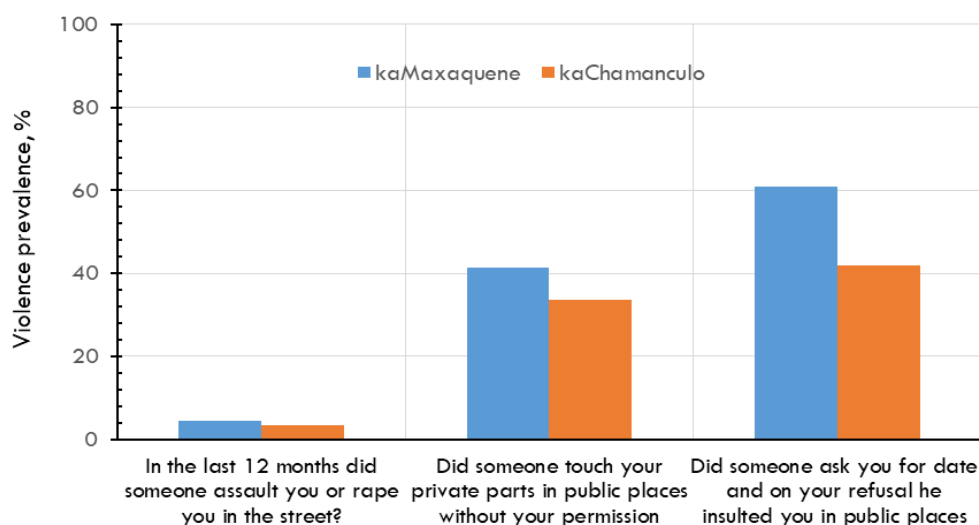

Figure 5. Prevalence of violence in the two municipal districts of Maputo City.

Regarding the occurrence of sexual violence in public places as it was observed with physical and psychological violence, the streets show the highest levels of prevalence of sexual violence, with approximately 60%. The barracks (stalls) presents 15%, Figure 6. The barracks are perceived by males and adult women as a forbidden space for women and girls. The presence of females is viewed as a spontaneous way of instigating violence. There is a

unanimous feeling of space violation, even among girls who, although being conscious of the potential risks they are subjected to, they still frequent such places. Some discriminatory ideologies, moralism and rigid social models influence this judgment, of considering girls guilt for frequenting certain places in hours considered for males only. These rules are based on gender and power imbalance.
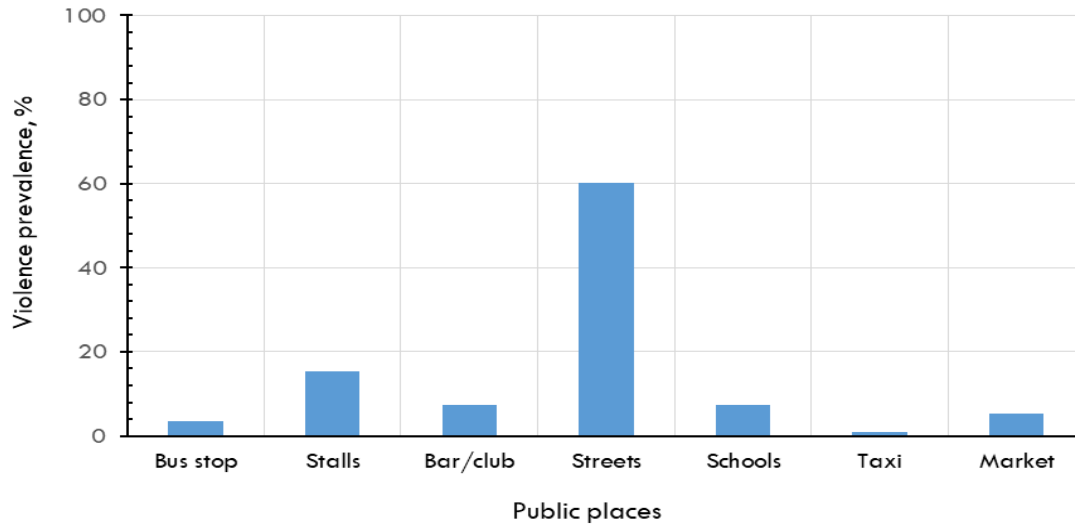

Figure 6. Prevalence of sexual violence in public places in two municipal districts of Maputo (KaLhamankulu and KaMaxaquene).

3.5. Factors Conducive to VAWG in Public Places

There is a multiplicity of structural and sociocultural factors contributing to the occurrence and perpetuation of violence in public spaces. These factors can act separately or in a combined manner to influence the prevalence of VAWGPP. In structural factors, we include how the physical structure is organized, territorial and housing, infrastructure conditions (availability and accessibility) of essential services, roads, public transport, illumination, sanitation, public security, among other factors highlighted by the respondents.

Sociocultural factors include the cultural dimension of the standards, the ideologies of gender hegemony, beliefs, social norms regulating of the body and the individual, which are created and legitimated by the different institutions (family, community, school, church, and so on). For public illumination, on average, in the two districts, 78.2% of the respondents agreed that there is public illumination in the streets. In KaMaxaquene 80.4% responded positively while in KaLhamankulu were 76.1%. Regarding the quality of illumination, 43.1% classified the illumination as non-satisfactory, 47.8% in KaLhamankulu and 38.4% in KaMaxaquene. The absence of illumination or its poor quality endangers the life of the residents, especially for girls and women. The following testimonies were recorded from the study participants, and indicate the apprehension of young students in circulating at night.

"*The condition of illumination is not satisfactory for the*

security in our district, because there are places without illumination and is in those places where the criminals concentrate to attack and assault their victims" (Boy, 17 years old).

"*(…) it is not satisfactory because it is normal to walk long distances without illumination and the bandits take advantage of the situation*" (Girl, 16 years old).

To assess the state of security in the two municipal districts we asked the participants to identify insecure periods of the day where the respondents feel unease to walk in their residential areas. The results are presented in Figure 7 and 8. Globally the respondents feel unease to walk on the streets at night between 10 pm and midnight and at daybreak between 1 am, and 4 am, with 79.2% and 94.6% respectively from Sunday to Thursday, 70.1%, and 95.2% on Friday and Saturday.

Looking into the data regarding the age of the respondents, one can realize that more than 90% of the girls do not feel safe to walk in the streets of their districts between 10 pm to 4 am over whole week, Figure 7 and 8. From the shared mapping exercise with the respondents, one can infer that ensuring security in the districts it is not an easy task, particularly in areas where the layout of the streets leading to the houses, the streets are like in an intricate arrangement, a labyrinth, without illumination. There are also weaknesses in the way the institutions are working at the community level as well as the police and municipal authorities.
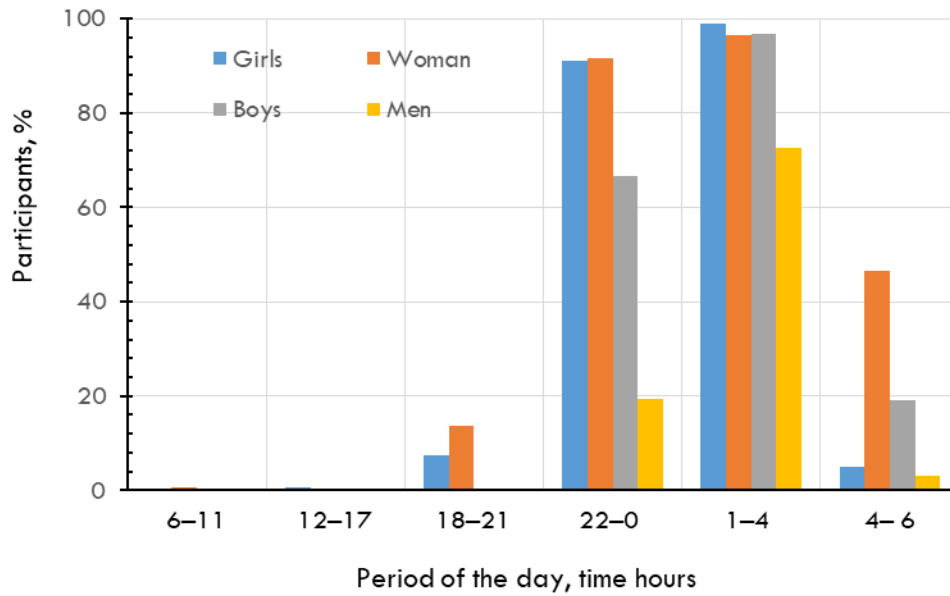
Figure 7. Security perception of the participants in their districts during weekdays, from Sunday to Thursday.
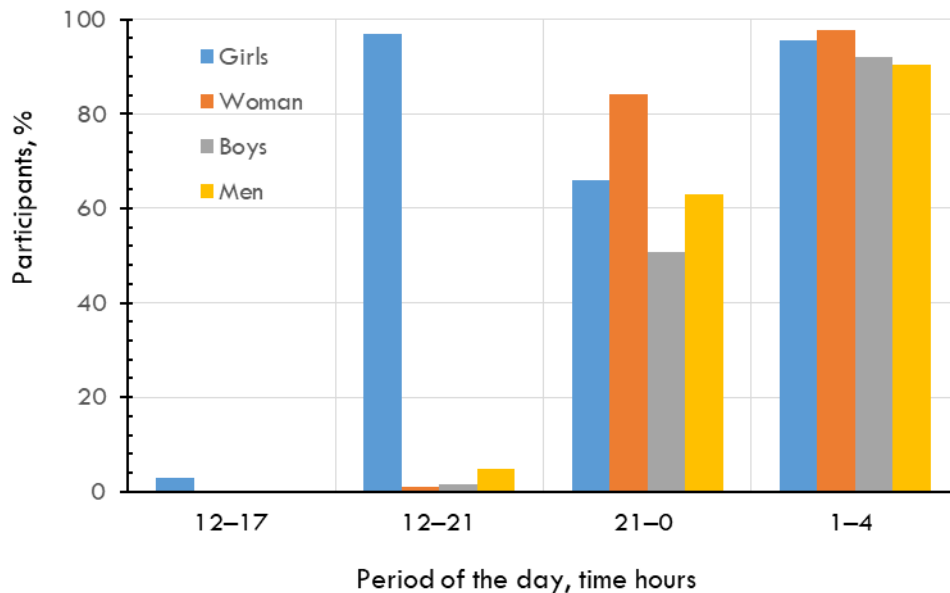

Figure 8. Security perception of the respondents in their districts during weekends, Fridays and Saturdays.

Even in districts where the community patrolling works, the patrolling is once in a while limited to specific areas, and it is inconsistent. The alleys are excluded from patrolling and it`s in these places where cases of rape happen.

The insecurity in the communities challenges the value and meaning of solidarity networks and the existing mechanisms of mutual help between the residents to overcome cases of aggression in public spaces. Many women and girls reported hearing frequently people screaming for help, women crying. It devotes them to a sense of lack of solidarity and mutual help. Neighbours are scared to help the victims fearing retaliation from the gangs, and they remain in their houses for their safety. The following statements are examples of the situation:

"*People are afraid to come out fearing to become also victims; this is the problem…*" (Man, community leader).
"*It is not safe mainly at night, and the people do not help the victims because they fear retaliation*" (Girl, 17 years old).
Sociocultural factors suggest that beliefs and cultural practices support and preserve gender inequity. To women and, in particular to girls, a marginal social statute is reserved. The balance of gender and power are based on sexist and androcentric ideologies that consider a woman as a passive and submissive being who only serves to the sexual desires of man. The sexist statements, the humiliations to women are present and expressed implicitly or explicitly in public spaces. The stereotypes of gender and the ideologies of masculinity that supports, for instance, that "Friday is the men's day", reinforcing the

ideology culturally accepted that men are free to go around and live their sexuality freely, as different to women.

Results of this study indicate that there are great mobility and presence of women and girls as hawkers in markets and barracks (stalls) and circulate at different periods of the day.

From the narrative of men, the presence of women and girls in places of nocturnal recreation is viewed as the motive for them to fall, victims of any type of violence, creating in them the sense of self-culpability and resilience.

"… they are the ones to blame, they behave by hook or by crook, then we have to reflect with them, saying no, the fault does not belong to the victim, but to the aggressor. When we expose, we continue justifying that the victim was in this way or another. We are clearing the perpetrator and blaming the victim, independently of the age of the victim, it can be a mature woman, it can be a child or a young woman" (Woman, representative of community association).

We also accessed the existence of institutions/organizations dealing with issues related to violence against women and girls in the residential areas covered in the study. Only 16% of the participants were aware of the existence of such institutions in the two districts, with 10.8% in KaMaxaquene and 21.1% in KaLhamankulu. When asked to indicate the institution where they could visit in case of reporting VAWG cases, the answers were diversified from hospitals, associations, police stations, churches among others, Figure 9 and 10.
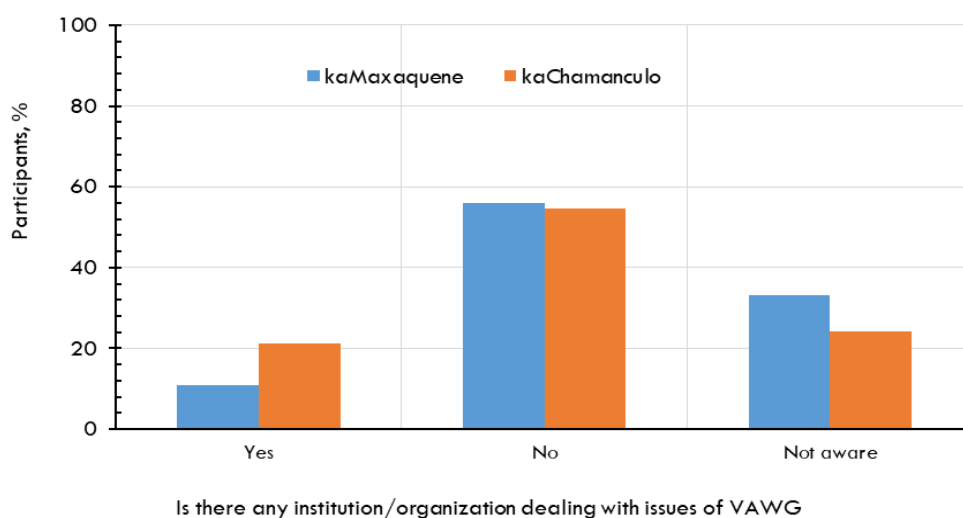

Figure 9. Existence of institutions/organizations dealing with issues of violence against women and girls in KaMaxaquene and KaLhamankulu.
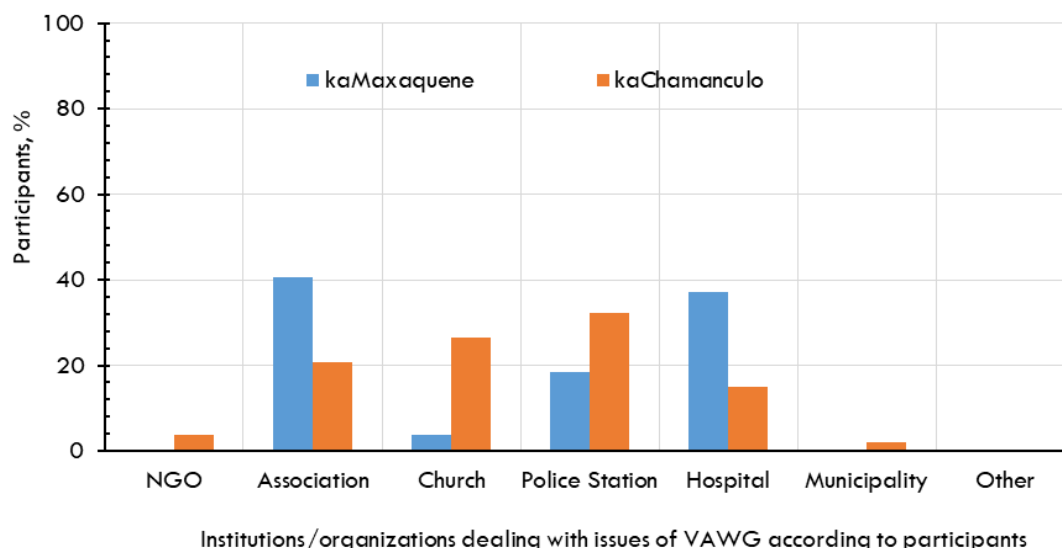

Figure 10. Institutions/organizations dealing with issues of violence against women and girls in the two districts according to the participants.

From the discussions with the focus groups and interviews with participants, one can sense some

differences related to the existence of associations or organizations dealing with cases of violence against

women and girls in the wards of Chamanculo C and D. For instance, it is noticeable that neither the community leaders nor the participants of this study are aware of the existence of such institutions as can be inferred from the following statements:

"… we do not have any information about the existence of any association of that nature…" (Girl participating in the focus group).

"*I have never heard, I might say that I do not know if it exists*" (Man, community leader).

As opposed towards Chamanculo C and D, in Maxaquene C there are some activities in progress dealing with violence, as it can be seen from the following statement:

"*It is a matter that we are touching with some care, we are an association wanting to do something, but we do not have specialists, a psychologist than to say that we want people who are suffering from violence to approach us, what are we going to offer? While we do not have specialists, we continue studying, and doing something that, in a particular manner, it contributes…*" (Woman, representative of a community association).

The former statement shows that regardless to the fear of reprisal and reaction from the aggressor in case of an intervention to rescue/defend the victim of physical violation (theft, assault or sexual), the management is made in individual bases. Our informants show indignation in the face of recrudescence of this phenomenon and the lack of action from the state. Most of the participants witness daily scenes of harassment or rape and, whenever it is possible, they try to save the victim. However, they recognize that little they can do, because the aggressors act in groups. The following statements prove the way it happens:

"*When I see a woman being molested or raped, sometimes, I care whistle … I blow it, I make noise. Once it happened I blow the whistle, they left the girl and rune away; I do not know if they thought that was the police or that I was calling on other people*" (man).

"*…nevertheless as a singular, nothing I can do and nothing I have been doing. But sometimes when I see police officers I alert them, however, they do not visit the area rottenly, therefore, I do almost nothing…*" (man).

3.6. Psychosocial Implications of Violence

Victoria's case; Victoria is the name that we attributed to a woman on her thirties, a key–informant in our study, who accepted to share her experience of violence against women and girls in public spaces of the city of Maputo. Her experience is an example of collective violence. Her body was brutally and sexually appropriated by five men when she was on her way to the sanitary unit. She had a troubled childhood history, of premature pregnancy and yet her possession of evil spirits in her childhood, it appeared to delineate a destiny of traumatic life and memories of violence. Her dramatic story of rape was shared at a more restrict familiar level, but she did not denounce the act to an institution out of her familiar circle. Even when she went to the hospital seeking health

care after contracting HIV because of the rape, she did not reveal that she was a victim of rape, fearing reprisal.

The rape case brought negative social and psychological consequences in the life of Victoria. The quality of her life was amputated due to her health problems and sickness, negative image of herself, low self-esteem in a familiar relationship, in social life with a negative impact on her affective and sexual relations. It is evident her feeling of fear, low self-esteem in respect to her partner and the feeling of fault.

Independently of the type and form of violence, that one can experience it can have distinct implications in the life of the victim. The perceptions about the psychosocial implications resulting from VAWGPS were obtained from examples of the quotidian of the victims. The victims live in fear, and they are permanently frightened by the perpetrators and aggressors. The feelings are rarely described in the first person; rather it is described as someone else's experience. Various explanations were given for the silence of the victims:

"*Some are afraid because the perpetrator even says "I know you very well, try to denounce me, to arrest me when I come out you are dead." if that individual is somehow… she just leaves as it is*" (Man, community leader).

Some of the women and girls who felt victims of rape contracted HIV. They live a mix of feelings of anxiety, psychological troubles and intimidation. Others, the young girls attending school, they end up leaving school, fearing new rapes and as well as fearing to face the aggressors or reprisal.

3.7. Response and Management Mechanisms

We present here and discuss some mechanisms that were used to respond to episodes of VAWGPS. From the nine girls and six women who reported to have suffered physical violence ending in rape in public space, only 7 (46.7%) denounced the perpetrators, four girls (44.4%) and three women (50%). From that number only 2 (28.6%) reported the case to police. The remaining reported to the intimate circle.

The situation of VAWGPS requires a response and mechanisms that take into account prevention, mitigation, as well as the reduction and resolution of the situations of violence and the psychosocial assistance to the victims. The response and strategies of mitigation can be public/private initiatives, from civil society organizations, communitarian and even individual.

From the individual interviews and discussions in groups, it was pointed out the inexistence of concrete actions, by the public institution's side, i.e. from the local governments, to tackle the complexity of the phenomenon of violence in public spaces. However, the participants are unanimous in pointing out that there are actions that could be adopted at a communitarian level to avoid situations of violence that affect women and girls.

However, the young girls, during the discussions in focus groups, highlighted the invisibility of the state intervention and from organizations from civil society in

defence of their security and their physical integrity, corporal and sexual autonomy. The girls and women, in particular, the ones who need help the most, complain about the quality (availability and accessibility) of the services, including the inexistence of health facilities with emergency services, of police and justice. Even if these services are available in neighbouring wards, the victims are not attended. There are cases where the professionals are not present when the victims are seeking their help.

4. Discussion

More than 60% of women and girls suffer some sort of harassment in public spaces in Maputo city, and girls constitute the most vulnerable group. Similarly, other contexts in the Global South, girls and women are taught that they are more vulnerable to violence, and that it is their responsibility to avoid it (Anwar et al., 2018:25).

Women and girls are subjected to preconceived judgements and stereotypes about their lives and bodies. This was also observed in some earlier studies elsewhere (Sommer et al., 2018). Feelings of fragility and incapacity of self-defence against undesirable acts are sensitive in their narratives.

The approach of VAWGPS in Mozambique has received little attention. Results of our study indicate a high prevalence. From the 376 females inquired 60.4% reported to have been victims of violence. Approximately 6 out of 10 have suffered some kind of violence in the 12 months before the study. The prevalence of sexual violence is high in girls with ages between 12 and 18 (65.7%) than in women above 18 years of age (54.4%).

The participants acknowledge that streets, alleys, abandoned houses, stalls (barracas), nightclubs, bars, markets, bus stops, public transport and schools are insecure places. In the streets, open spaces with or without illumination public are the spaces considered prone to physical and psychological violence. The streets present 53.9% of the risk followed by stalls with 23.2% and nightclubs and bars rank third with 8.4%. Sexual violence and harassment show the same prevalence in schools and bar and stalls.

Regarding types of violence psychological violence ranks first (77.4%) regarding prevalence followed by sexual violence or harassment (60.6%) and finally physical violence, ranking third with 43.1% of prevalence in two districts subject to this study.

Unemployment and the high cost of leaving drives youngsters to delinquency, drug abuse and alcohol. As a result, they end up committing sexual violence including rape. Most of the statements indicate that women and girls face many constraints to control their bodies and lives. They do not feel free to circulate in the streets, to attend school or to do the same things as their male counterparts. Results indicate that 90% of the girls do not feel safe to circulate after 10 pm. Nighttime and darkness are what conjure up risk in women's minds. As sustained

by Condon et al. (2007) danger of violence against women is more likely to be associated with some spatial boundaries. According to Bourgois (2009) the aggressors usually use other forms of violence, such as poorly visible forms of coercion, fear and subjectivity that are addressed not only to the victim but to the closest people, as a way of intimidation and hack potential help networks in the community.

Although the participants have singled out unemployment as the primary factor for VAWGPS, we argue that cultural aspects represent an important factor. Besides the structural barriers, lack of public illumination, poverty and social exclusion, the way society composes the social roles, sexual and identity for females and males are discriminatory. The social statute of women constitutes a barrier for the guarantee of fundamental human rights (Fernandez-Alvarez, 2014; Krob and Steffen, 2015; Monqid, 2012).

The role of the officers is perceived by the respondents as precarious and fragile aimed at secure protection in the districts. Although community leaders have pointed out that is there collaboration with police to enforce security the majority of women and girls deplore the absence of patrols and policing.

In general, the community acknowledges that the working conditions of the authorities are precarious and deficient for them to fulfil efficiently their obligations. Cases of lack of transportation were reported. Illicit collections from the officers were also reported, when the victims approached the police seeking help to follow their cases previously reported.

In one of the districts, KaLhamankulu, community leaders are men and women. However, mainly men are biased about the attribution of spaces for socialization for women and girls. They tend to blame the victims of sexual violence and harassment, women and girls, of being the instigators. The community leaders blame the victim's behaviour, dressing or their presence in "forbidden places" as an instigating factor. In some cases, adult women also tend to blame young victims of sexual violence, allegedly by wearing provocative clothes. This positioning seems to support mechanisms of power reproduction and domination that sustain the behaviour and attitudes of men and boys. This is in line with what Héritier (2012) calls ''differential valence of the sexes'' to show a relationship that is always hierarchical between the masculine and the feminine, translatable in terms of different space where man and women interact in society.

In the two districts, it was reported the existence of offices dealing with women and girls victims of violence. In KaLhamankulu, the office is located in the police station, while in KaMaxaquene the services are given by a community association. However, this association shows some weaknesses regarding material means and specialized human resources (psychologists) that can guarantee proper care and psychosocial support to the victims.

Added to the lack of means on the offices dealing with women and girls victims of violence, the blaming on the victims may also affect the willingness to denounce acts of violence. Culturally women and girls are to blame in case they fall victims of sexual violence. The other factor may be the fear of reprisal from the perpetrators, therefore silencing the victims of violence and making them suffering and living traumatized by the phenomenon.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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