Exploration of sexual harassment practices among women using bus rapid transport service in Dar Es Salaam Tanzania

Amaniel P. Athuman (a)*

(a) Assistant Lecturer, Department of Business Administration, College of Business Education. P.O.BOX 1968 Dar es Salaam Tanzania

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 12 April 2023
Received in rev. form 23 May 2023
Accepted 09 June 2023

Keywords:
Bus Rapid Transport, UDART, Sexual harassment, female passengers, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

JEL Classification:
R4, R41

ABSTRACT

The study aims to gain a better understanding of sexual harassment acts experienced by female passengers on the Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) operated by UDART in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and to recommend factors for reducing the practice. The study specifically investigated factors that contribute to harassment, passenger coping strategies with harassment, and strategies for alleviating harassment. In-depth interviews with approximately 30 women who regularly use public transport and two UDART/BRT officials were conducted using a qualitative design. The data was collected using a phenomenology strategy, and the data was analysed using a thematic analysis strategy. The Swahili transcriptions were translated into English and analysed using MAXQDA 10 [VERBI Software, Marburg, Germany]. The nature of sexual harassment experienced by female customers includes; unwanted sexual contact, unintended touching, abusive words, and unwanted gestures. Moral decay, mental disorders in some men, a lack of strong legal enforcement, poor transportation arrangements, and a patriarchy system are all factors that expose women to sexual harassment on public transportation. Women coped with harassment by owning and operating personal vehicles, hiring motorbikes (bodabodas), avoiding service during peak hours, and deciding to accept the consequences when there was no other option. Expansion and establishment of new BRT road routes, procurement and registration of more buses, and the establishment of student buses are all strategies for combating sexual harassment in public transportation.

© 2023 by the authors. Licensee SSBFNET, Istanbul, Turkey. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Introduction

Sexual harassment is a form of gender-based violence that affects both men and women differently and can negatively impact people's lives (Belanter et al, 2020). It can also be referred to as any unwanted act that disturbs a person, such as unwanted touches, facial expressions, or the use of verbal or non-verbal acts that offend a person (Ford & Ivancic, 2020). Sexual harassment in public transportation appears to be a worldwide problem mainly in the urban settings partly owing to the rapid urbanisation that among other things leads to higher urban populations and inadequate transport services (WB, 2020). For example, since 1990 to 2020 the population in Dar es Salaam Tanzania has more than doubled leading to centralization of many services, offices and business activities in the city centre and thus attracting daily mobility of a large population from the periphery (Munishi, Hamidu & Shayo, 2021). As a result, city commuters face congested roads, delayed traffic, and an unsafe transportation system (Munishi et al, 2021).

Sexual harassment in public transport sector is a subject that attracts more people for discussion as it has been associated with moral, psychological and physical disturbances to those who face it whilst condemned to have delayed social and economic development in areas where those acts took place. Evidence shows that women are the major victims of sexual violence and that are subjected to various forms of violence while using public transport (Lewis, Saukko, & Lumsden, 2020). It can be simply stated that sexual harassment jeopardises women's freedom, movement, and activities in the city (Infanti & Kate, 2021). According to Tillous (2019), sexual harassment in public transport is a continuation of gender-based violence which sometimes tends to be under-reported due lack of appropriate report mechanism as well as women's shyness (Vargas&Boyer, 2022; Tillous, 2019).
Accordingly, different stakeholders have made several efforts to combat this problem world-wide (Zinia, 2018). In the early 2000s, several Japanese railway companies, for example, decided to establish women-only train carriage as a solution to sexual harassment (Hori & Burgess, 2012).

Moreover, in Tanzania the government launched a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service in 2017 as a remedy to congested buses, poor customer care, high cost and poor service quality in public transport sector (Munishi et al, 2021). Shayo & Munishi (2021) focused on the issue of Quality of Services Provided by Dar es Salaam Rapid Bus Transit (DART) and Implications on Customer Satisfaction in Tanzania. Krüger et al., 2021; Kirumirah & Munishi, 2020; focused on the BRT project in relation to climate change aspects such as heavy rains and floods in its wider impact on urban development and livelihoods while Mosha, Mapunda, Mbotwa & Nyamhanga (2022) focused on sexual harassment in public transport among female university student in Dar es salaam. Based on the above literature none of the study has managed to holistically and critically looked at the issue of sexual harassment among women who use this new transport system (UDART/BRT) in Tanzania.

Based on the preceding background the objective of this study is to get a better understanding of sexual harassment among women in the context of Bus Rapid Transit (UDART/BRT) service to ascertain the nature of harassment they experience and how they cope with the harassment.

**Literature Review**

**Theoretical and Conceptual Background**

Symbolic interactionism is a micro-level theory that focuses on interpersonal relationships within a society. It explains social behaviour in terms of how people interact with one another through symbols where by addressing the subjective meanings that people impose on objects, events, and behaviours, people can interpret each other's behaviour (Aksan et al,2009). According to Griffin (2012) people's selves are social products, but they are purposeful and creative and interaction with others shapes people’s self-images Fielding, Tzani, Ioannou,& Artinopoulou (2021). This theory relates to this study since Sexual harassment in public spaces and public transport has been practised in a symbolic manner. Communication by using symbols in different societies can be used to take a certain message from one person to another as may be defined by a particular cultural group or social class. Under this study symbolic interactionism is applicable since the interviewed women affirms to face one or different kinds of symbolic contacts which gives the a message related to sexual harassment hence leaves them feels shy and offended, for instance unwanted sexual contact, unintended touch, unwelcome smile and abusive words as explained n this study.

**Empirical Review**

**Nature of sexual harassment experienced by the female passengers:** Existing literature confirms that women experience considerable sexual harassment in public transport more especially in the context of urban setting mainly resulting from congestion in the public transport (Mowry & Bailey, 2022; Fielding et al,2021; Lewis 2018). Sexual harassment in the urban transport are among those unreported gender violence acts.

Common kinds of sexual harassment include, physical, non-physical, and verbal sexual harassment forms that disturb women physically and psychologically. For example, 95% of young women in Dar es Salaam report receiving verbal harassment by being called various names that annoy them (Mosha et al,2022).

**Factors contributing to sexual harassment to female public transport passages:** Accordingly, a number of reasons have been cited by the literature as a source of reasons r contributing to sexual harassment in the public transport in the urban context. One of the cited reasons has been congestion mainly during rush hours. Buses are too overloaded with passengers a situation that attracts sexual abuse actions such as physical and non-physical abuse particularly among women (Fontalavo; Arevalo & Trespalacios, 2019; Chowdhury, 2022, Boyer & Vargas,2022).

Poor urban planning has also been identified a source for sexual harassment for women in the public transport context. It has been argued at the time of planning public transport system many plans do not consider women's affairs in city mobility, which should be taken into serious considerations, because in cities, many people, particularly women, cannot afford to own and use their own vehicles, and thus they become victims of abusers (Quinones, L.M, 2020). This consequently subject women to unwanted sex practices from strangers in urban transportation (Logan,2015).

Other factors related to sexual harassment in public transport mainly cited in mega cities include, lack of strong legal enforcement, mental disorders among men, psychological problems, social-cultural issues, poor transportation planning and management by city authorities, poor security for women, and patriarchal beliefs (Logan,2015; Quinones, L.M, 2020; Syeda, H,2020; Mowry & Baille 2022). Dress code has also been identified as one of the factors contributing to sexual harassment in the public transport. (Robson, 2013) for example cited that women wearing miniskirts or hot pants were vulnerable to sexual harassment in public transportation.

Research also shows that customer’s age is one of the factors contributing to sexual violence in the public transport. This line of literature suggests that female passengers of relatively young age are more vulnerable to sexual harassment (Chowdhury, 2022). This is to further say that sexual harassment varies in percentage with age, with 77% of young women reporting to have experienced the
challenge at least once in the previous six months and 55% of older women reporting to have experienced the same challenge for more than six months (Hori & Burgess, 2012; WB, 2022).

Coping with sexual harassment in public transport: Literature identifies a number of strategies employed by female passengers in coping with the sexual harassment. One of the reactive ways of coping with sexual harassment among women is covering themselves using handbags, newspapers, and magazines in order to avoid being filmed or sexually harassed in various ways by other public transportation users. Another strategy adopted by women who fall victims to sexual harassment in public transport is opting for another cheap means of transportation (Ng’hily, 2022), (Boyer & Vargas, 2022). Women also opt to board a public transport early before or later after rush hours (Ng’hily, 2022). In the case of women with medium and high income through employment or business activities they opt to purchase and own their personal vehicles (Quinones, 2020). Aforementioned literatures have not paid adequate attention to sexual harassment in the urban transportation setting of Sub-Saharan Africa and notably among all categories of women passengers in Dar es Salaam Tanzania.

Research and Methodology

Study area

This study was conducted in Dar es Salaam due to the city's large size and metropolitan nature, as well as the fact that Tanzania's BRT system is only available in this city. The BRT transportation system has drawn people from all walks of life from across Tanzania. The inspiration for this study came from a Lipsinder workshop held at the College of Business Education, which invited various stakeholders in public transportation, including officials from UDART/BRT, who shared information on issues related to sexual harassment claims on the city's new transportation system.

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative design with a phenomenological inquiry strategy. This approach, as suggested by Teheran et al (2015), aimed to document the lived experiences of the participants of the study. Therefore, as this study based on sexual harassment among women using public transport, phenomenology inquiry helped the researcher to get in depth information on nature and causes of sexual harassment and coping strategies women employ to overcome the challenge while using a public transport. The decision to employ this design was reached based on the fact that a significant number of studies on sexual harassment have used conventional quantitative approaches, which tend to ignore some sensitive qualitative aspects.

Sample and Sampling

Convenient sampling was used to recruit women who uses public transport and particularly UDAR/BRT. The study involved a total of 30 women using the public transport who have knowledge of the subject matter and the willingness or readiness to participate in the research. In-depth interviews were used to collect data as a tool to generate the necessary information for the study. Moreover 02 officials from UDART/BRT were involved and supplied the information regarding sexual harassment claims among women customers using their services were provided during the Lipsider workshop held at the College of Business Education. Researcher visited a number of bus stops to observe the situation and recorded the required information.

Validity and reliability

Related analysis of this research are based on the fact that ethical issues were considered because human subjects were used in the study. Considering the involvement of human subjects in this study, it was imperative for the researchers to acquire a research clearance permit from the College of Business Education on behalf of the Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH) (Research Permit granting Commission). This permit was submitted to the Dar es Salaam Regional Administrative Secretary and to other authorities of the sampled municipalities to elaborate on the safety of all human subjects who would be involved in the research task. Researchers ensured that names, identities, and information provided by respondents remained confidential. To protect respondents, no name of any respondent was revealed anywhere in this study.

Data analysis

Researchers transcribed all the data collected through interviews. Thereafter, the Swahili manuscripts were translated into English Language, typed, and saved as documents in rich text format. Thematic analysis of the transcriptions was conducted with an aid of MAXQDA 10 [VERBI Software, Marburg, Germany]. In order to obtain meaningful content, researchers read through the interview transcriptions several times to familiarize themselves with the data. Researchers then identified and coded central contents in the text transcriptions.

Findings and Discussions

This section presents the research findings based on the three objectives of the study namely, nature of sexual harassment experienced by the women passengers, factors contributing to sexual harassment to women in public transport and strategies employed by women using public transport to cope with sexual harassment.
I: Nature of sexual harassment are experienced the BRT/UDART/ female customers

Unwanted physical contact: One of the types of sexual harassment experienced was unwanted physical touches or contact that made the women passengers uncomfortable or harassed them in public transportation. In congested bus some men tend to look for space whilst they intentionally target to touch women’s private parts bodies like breasts, thighs and shoulders (Chowdhury,2022). The touching intends to attract women sexually as one of the respondents acknowledged;

Early in the morning, as we rush to the office, we must board a crowded bus in order to get ready early for work and other places of business, and in this situation. We are subjected to sexual harassment, especially when (some men) who tend to hide their identity or avoid being noticed by other passengers, intentionally touch our private parts like our breasts, buttocks, and thighs, while acting unaware of what they are doing to you:

Another respondent adds;

‘ In public transportation, especially during rush hours, some immoral men or those we suspect have mental problems tend to rub their penises in our buttocks and especially they targets women with big buttocks......those men pretend to have nowhere to stand because of the congestion inside the bus. Now their penis become erected disturbs us emotionally. This is unfair as we need respect and freedom when using public transport. These men are known as ‘dungadunga’ in swahili and they take advantage of rush hours and congestion to sexually harass women in public transportation and women become affected physically and psychologically.

The above statements are well supported by some previous studies conducted in Kenyan public transportation which found that it frequently takes the form of unwanted physical touches or contact and offensive facial expressions made by men toward women that annoy women freedom in public transport (Kenya’s report,2021). Sexual harassment aspects such as touching female body parts, use derogatory or unpleasant language, and smile, to name a few factors has been found common among young women between the ages of 14 and 30 (Mosha et al, 2022; Chowdhury 2022; Ford & Ivancic,2020). Moreover, unwanted sexual contacts occur in congested buses during rush hours, making harassment easier, and making sexual abuse actions, such as rubbing a hardened man’s penis against a woman’s boob or behind and hips, easier (Fontalavo; Arevalo & Trespalacious, 2019; Horii & Burgess, 2012).

Abusive language/verbal abuse: Furthermore, abusive language/verbal abuse is another form of sexual harassment experienced. Findings further show that, some women were verbally harassed while using public transportation by by men who uttered offensive words to the female passengers such as baby, honey, sweet, my love, to name a as one respondent puts it here under:

We feel uneasy when using public transportation because (some men) or bus conductors call us petty names like ‘zuchu’ a name of a local musician in Tanzania, or they call us honey, sweet, my love, and so on so that we will pay attention to them. This irritated our humanity and makes us feel compelled to use public transportation. This is disturbing to us, because it is not a reality and it damages our reputation

These findings are consistent with a previous study conducted in Dar es Salaam by (Mosha, Mapunda, Mbotwa, & Nyamhanga,2022), which confirmed that approximately 95% of young women in Dar es Salaam have experienced verbal harassment by being called various names that annoy them. Physical, non-physical, and verbal sexual harassment have all been identified as common forms of sexual harassment that physically and psychologically disturb women (Chowdhury, 2022).

Unintentional touching: Unintentional touching was mentioned as another aspect of harassment in the public transportation by the interviewed women using BRT and other commuters in Dar es Salaam. One of them asserted that;

“We have to deal with unintended touches, especially to our backs, thighs, necks, and breasts. When a woman feels someone touching her body parts, the person (particularly men) who used to touch women in crowded buses tends to pretend that they did so inadvertently due to the situation inside the bus and not intentionally... This is not correct because we know it is deliberate and not accidental.”

Existing literature also confirms presence of unwanted touches or the use of acts that offend a person in public transportation is sexual harassment (Ford & Ivancic,2020). As a result, women in public transportation are embarrassed by unintended touches done to them by men and unfortunately, women are too shy to report these incidents as soon as they occur. According to feminism theory, men's harassment acts are the result of a society's dominated patriarchy system, which makes women feel inferior. According to Goulirmari (2020), men dominate in public spaces and justify their actions as correct, whereas women are more reserved and reluctant to report public harassment against them.

Unwanted gestures: Taking public transportation requires coming together and meeting people from various cultural backgrounds. Women who use public transportation report encountering people, particularly men, who make unwelcome gestures and symbolically express their love feelings for women when happens they are standing or sitting together in crowded buses or bus stations. This is done by strangers to the women, and it distresses them, despite the fact that very few accept the gestural invitation. According to (Mosha et al,2022), actions committed against women and girls in public transportation, such as verbal abuse and unwelcome gestures, emotionally disturb women as some respondents declared that;
“You may come across a man who stares at you and sometimes laughs and shows a kind heart to you, but they intend to ask you for your mobile number, which once given to him becomes a nuisance... They want to fall in love with or have sex with... However, in some cases, they display or use various signs against women and girls that harass them (women).”

Another woman added that;

Men, both adults and boys, are not shy even in public transportation; some give you their phones so you can type your number for them so they can use the opportunity to disturb you. Others whisper into our ears and speak their foolishness, others show love signs or directly ask for relationships, and you can notice others staring at you with lustfully.

These findings correlate with studies by Aksana et al. (2009) and Griffin (2012) which affirmed that unwelcome gestures, as defined by the victims, translate the doer's intended negative or positive meaning. This may cause frustration, fear, and distress to a victim of sexual harassment (Syeda, H, 2020; Fielding et al., 2021; Mowry & Baille, 2022).

II: Factors contributing to sexual harassment among female customers in the BRT/UDART

Several factors, including moral decay among community members, mental disorders among men, and the patriarchy system that exists in society, have been discussed in order to expose women and girls to sexual harassment while using public transportation, as discussed below.

Moral decay among community members: Sexual harassment in public transportation is associated with a general picture of moral deterioration among community members whose behaviour has deviated from community cultural and values. Some respondents began doing so during the interview phase;

“Men are sexually weak creatures who, when they see a woman with a big behind or round built up hips, tend to harass her and, if they find a chance in a congested mode of public transportation, use it as an opportunity to rub their penis into women's bodies while pretending to know nothing about what they do.”

Another respondent added that;

“Because (some) women's clothing styles attract men sexually, we may sometimes incorrectly condemn men for harassing women in public transportation while (we) women are the source of the actions taken against us due to our clothing and lifestyle... We assume that (some) women use the crowded buses to find love partners. Hahahaha (laughs) because a decent woman must check herself well-dressed before leaving the house, knowing that she (they) will use public transportation, which can be extremely congested, particularly during rush hours”

The issue of moral deterioration among community members can be viewed through different lenses of community socio-cultural backgrounds and can be defined based on social interaction within the community itself, but wearing style can define a person to the public with different notions, Robson (2013). In Tanzania, for example cultures encourage decent wearing styles that will protect body parts from attracting public attention; however, due to cultural changes and diversity, people change the way they dress and view it as a personal matter rather than a moral issue.

Some men find it easier to be attracted to women who dress in a way that exposes their body parts, and when they encounter such situations in crowded public transportation, it is easier for them to be touched by strangers. Some men even go as far as ejaculating to women in public transportation; in Swahili, these men are known as “dungadunga”. Ng’ihily (2022), writing for the Citizen newspaper, added that moral decay has led to sexual harassment in public transportation and that more efforts are needed by involving various stakeholders to address the issue.

Men’s Mental Disorders: Mental illnesses are conditions that have an impact on a person's thinking, feeling, mood, and behaviour. As evidenced, this circumstance also exists among some men and is linked to the rise in sexual harassment of women on public transportation as respondents asserted that;

Those men who harass women in public transport once caught must undergo mental testing to determine whether they are mentally ill or mentally fit. This is because a normal person with a serious job or business has no time for harassing women in public transport. In the same way one can conclude that those who show deviant behaviour may have a mental disorder even though they appear to look normal.

Lack of strong legal enforcement among perpetrators: Women who are harassed in public transportation are unaware of their legal rights, as well as where they should report harassment and what they should do. The situation is explained by respondents that;

“We don't know where to go to report harassment because there is no public awareness about how to report it or who to go to for help. As a result, we are hesitant to react or report. There is a lack of awareness, and women using public transportation are unaware of the existing laws regarding public harassment... Women require assistance in learning about and understanding their rights when using public transportation........”

Many women are hesitant to report incidents of sexual harassment in public transportation, particularly when it occurs to them (Lewis, Saukko, & Lumsden, 2020), making it difficult to take appropriate action against perpetrators of harassment in public transportation.
Plans for overcoming challenges associated with harassment in public transportation should be thoroughly discussed and communicated to the public in order to raise public awareness (National Transport Policy, 2003; Ng’ihy, 2022). This should be done in tandem with existing laws and regulations protecting the use of public transportation.

**Poor transportation arrangements:** Abuse in public transportation may occur as a result of poor planning and organization in Tanzania’s public transportation sector, in which customers enter buses at random through various means. (doors, windows). Respondents claim that;

“During the COVID 19 Pandemic, LATRA, an authoritative organ concerned with land transport, required every public vehicle to use a level seat formula to overcome congested buses and alleviate issues of harassment and disease transmission. The system worked well, and it was a relief to use public transportation in both BRT/UDART and other commuters. Complaints from commuters and BRT/UDART owners and operators that they lose money using seat level in buses instead of congested buses that give them a good profit sparked the challenge. After the COVID 19 high pressure period ended, bus congestion resumed and harassment increased.”

The National Transport Policy (2003) stipulated, among other things, that the transport sector in Tanzania has high costs, poor service quality, and inadequate institutional arrangements in which laws, regulations, and procedures are not inconsistent. This policy indicates that LATRA and other transportation authorities should work tirelessly to improve the sector in the country, not just on harassment issues, but on issues that will attract more users to trust and feel secure while using public transportation.

**The patriarchal system:** Men believe they have cultural rights to do whatever they want in the presence of women. This is especially influenced by the social structure that prioritizes men over women. As a result, when men harass women on public transportation, they are not embarrassed because they see it as a normal occurrence with nothing unusual about the situation. Respondents described it as follows;

‘When you feel someone is doing unusual things to you, you must find a way to avoid him, especially on public transportation. Some men believe it is their right to harass women in public, and if you try to defend yourself, the man may annoy or curse you. Unfortunately, some passengers tend to defend the perpetrator by asking a victim to look for her private vehicle if she is not comfortable with the crowded bus where she feels harassed’

The results presented above are supported by various literatures. Tillous, 2019, for instance, pointed that people who use public transportation during rush hours prefer to avoid wasting time in order to get to their destinations on time. Unfortunately, during congestion hours in public transportation when happens a victim of harassment complaints on the act other passenger become violently hostile to (her) and use harsh language. As a result, when faced with this difficulty, women and girls choose to maintain their composure and devise individual strategies for overcoming the harassment, Mosha et al (2022). Feminists are horrified by this sort of discrimination against women on public transportation because they believe that sexual harassment results from the sexist male ideology of male superiority (Goulimari, 2020).

**III: Strategies employed by women to cope with sexual harassment public transport**

**Owning and operating personal/private vehicles:** Women who have experienced more than one type of sexual harassment feel safe purchasing and using their own vehicles as a means of escaping challenges associated with congested buses and harassment because they have acknowledged that;

‘Using a personal vehicle is safe because you avoid sexual harassment, which occurs on public transportation...However, you must factor in the cost of gas and services, which will rise, but you believe it is safer than taking public transportation, which is inexpensive but fraught with dangers...The only issue with private transportation is the increased budget/cost of operation, which necessitates careful planning and budgeting.’

According to Quinones (2020) Many women in urban areas cannot afford to own private cars and thus become victims of abuse; only a few women are able to own their own private vehicle, so a large group of women rely on public transportation. This calls for better services and legal frameworks to help reduce, if not eliminate, abuses in the public transportation sector.

**Rent a motorcycle (bodaboda):** Motor bikes (bodaboda) have become a popular and inexpensive mode of transportation in many parts of Africa, including Tanzania, in recent years. Many people are now renting and riding motorcycles because they prefer it to taking crowded buses and being abused. Several ‘bodaboda’ fans presented it as follows;

In order to rush and arrive at work early, especially if you have an important business assignment to complete, it is better to hire a motorcycle so that you can get to your workplace quickly, easily, and cheaply. The challenge with ‘bodaboda’ is only on road safety and permission to go to places where they do not have permission to go...however, using ‘bodaboda’ is safer than congested buses where people sweat, cough, and abuse women.

To avoid sexual harassment or to keep themselves at comfortable zone, some women has decided to search for another low cost alternative mode of transportation that allows them to be comfortable than using congested buses. One of the participants in this study confirmed;
There are challenges to being abused while using public transportation during rush hours because buses are congested, putting us in danger of being harassed in some way, because perpetrators take advantage of congested vehicles to harass women. Having studied public transportation challenges, where (some) of us (women) decide to use public transportation before or after rush hours. To do so, one must rise early and board a bus before stations become congested, as well as plan to leave the office early or late in order to avoid two major challenges: getting into a crowded vehicle and avoiding harassment.

The above presented findings relate to the facts found in previous literature which stipulates that, women affected by sexual harassment tend to reschedule their timetable so as to use the services when there is low congestion that cannot put them at the risk of being harassed (Infante & Kate, 2021).

Deciding to live with the consequence’s harassment: Many people in urban areas use public transportation as an easy way to move from different areas depending on the nature of their businesses and other activities due to low incomes and living conditions. Buses get crowded because many people choose this inexpensive mode of transportation. According to respondents, low-income women opted to put up with the abuse on public transportation because they have no other option;

‘Due to our low income and poor business performance, we are unable to purchase or rent private vehicles, so we must rely on other forms of transportation. The only option we have is to take the ’daladala’ or ’mwendokasi’ (BRT/UDART) system of public transportation. We could purchase our own vehicles if we had money to avoid harassment on public transportation.

The above started findings correspond well with those established by Quinones (2020), which maintain that, in urban transportation, women frequently experience unwanted sex from strangers; this type of violence differs from that which they experience at work or at home. Women put up with the harassment because they have no choice but to use public transportation in spite of its drawbacks.

Conclusion

Public transportation contributes significantly to a country’s and individual’s economic development. The sector gained popularity by providing cheap and quick transportation services to various groups of people, particularly in urban areas where there is a rapid population growth.

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the sexual harassment acts experienced by women while using the new Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) operated by UDART in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, factors exposing women to sexual harassment in public transport and coping strategies employed by women to overcome the harassment. The study reveals that, unwanted sexual contact, unintended touching, abusive words, and unwanted gestures are examples of sexual harassment experienced by women on public transportation. Factors exposing women to sexual harassment in public transport includes moral deterioration, mental disorders in some men, and a lack of strong legal enforcement. Various coping strategies women adopted are decisions to own and operating personal vehicles especially for few with financial capacity, renting motorbikes (bodaboda), avoiding using the service during rush hours, and choosing to live with the consequences when there is no other choice were ways that women dealt with harassment.

Strategies by operators of the services and government to improve the sector includes expanding and establishing new BRT road routes, purchasing and registering more buses, and establishing student buses and develop and implement strong legal enforcements that will eliminate the behaviour in public transport sector in general. The study was only able to measure the extent of sexual harassment in Dar es Salaam and not in other cities across the nation. However, there are numerous problems with harassment in public transportation, including noise in the transportation system and transportation costs. Further studies can be conducted to evaluate the extent of the afore mentioned challenges and propose more strategies that can help improve the sector for the well being of service users and the country economy.

Recommendations

The presence of public transportation has facilitated the movement of people from one location to another for the purpose of work or business. Despite its economic importance, the sector faces numerous challenges, particularly sexual harassment. As a result, the study suggests;

i. The Ministry of Transport should raise public awareness about on how owners and operators of the sector should respect and protect all groups of service users by adhering to the rules and regulations that govern how the sector operates.

ii. Strong legal enforcement should be in place to protect women and girls from abuses they may face or encounter while using public transportation.

iii. There should be simple mechanisms in place to encourage women and girls to report incidents of abuse without feeling embarrassed. When the action occurs, the victim should immediately report or complain.

iv. The Ministry of Transport and other stakeholders in the sector should collaborate and develop strategies with bus owners and operators to reduce congestion by ensuring quality and reliable services that satisfy customers.

v. Develop and communicate clear and understandable legal frameworks that will support gender equality and respect in the sector’s operation.

vi. Transport sector stakeholders and authorities such as Government, LATRA, DARCBOA must wake up and work hard to ensure that service owners and providers follow the rules and regulations for operating the sector by identifying strengths
and weaknesses and ways to improve the entire transportation industry while protecting and respecting the rights of service users.

Acknowledgement

I want to thank everyone who helped make this work possible. Prof. Emmanuel J. Munishi, my mentor, for reviewing the work on a regular basis and putting it in a standard format. Dr. Restitutus T. Mushi for her valuable input, Mr. Kirumira Mubarack, the coordinator of the Lipsinder workshop, BRT officials, and participants in the Lipsinder workshop held at the College of Business Education for their valuable contributions to this study.

Author read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, methodology, validation, formal analysis, investigation, resources, writing—original draft preparation, writing—review and editing by author.

Funding: This research was not funded by any institution

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to restrictions.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References


Belanteri, A.R; Hinderekar, S.G; Wilkinson, E; Episkopou, W; Timirc, C; De Plecker; Mahbala, M; Takarinda, C.K; Van den Bergh, R (2020). Sexual violence against migrants and asylum seekers. The experience of the MSF clinic on Lesvos Island, Greece; https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0239187

Boyer, K & Vargas, D (2022) Do you really want to Keep going with this? Reporting gender based violence in public Transport in Saltitlo, Mexico


Fontalavo, Soto, Arevalo & Trespalacios (2019). Women Perceived Risk of Sexual Harassment in Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) System: The case of Barranquilla-Colombia: Journal of Transport and health; Science Direct


Ng’hily, D (2022) Public Transport a hotspot for Sexual Harassment; The Citizen Newspaper- Mwananchi Communications Limited; Published on Saturday, October 22.2022 in Dar es Salaam.


Robson, S (2013). Chinese women warned not to wear mini-skirts or hotpants to avoid sexual harassment; Mail online published on 5 June 2013 and updated in June 2013-acessed on 20 March 2023:

Shayo, F. & Munishi, EJ (2021). Quality of Services Provided by Dar es Salaam Rapid Bus Transit (DART) and Implications on Customer Satisfaction in Tanzania. The Second Business and Economic Development Conference (BEDC, 2021), Held on 16th-17th November, 2021 in Dodoma, Tanzania


Publisher’s Note: SSBFNET stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

© 2023 by the authors. Licensee SSBFNET, Istanbul, Turkey. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).