Assessment of The Wellness of Young Women Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) in Kenya

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Abstract

Interventions by human rights defenders (HRDs) in society are critical in the development of society but little has been done to support HRD's wellness. This study addresses this gap by examining the wellness challenges for young female HRDs in the course of their work in Kenya. Mixed method approach and purposively sampling was used targeting 53 respondents sampled from a cross-section of young female and male HRDs, CSOs working in human rights advocacy, and senior male and female HRDs. Results indicated that the most challenging issues for HRDs was financial constraint (38%) followed by discrimination (29%) and sexual exploitation (24%). 67% indicated to have experienced abuse in their work with 43% of the abuse faced being of sexual nature. 64% of the abuse cases were not reported for redress and of the 36% reported, 58% were not adequately addressed. The study also found that there were gaps in CSOs' success in effecting their own policies against abuse to enhance HRDs wellness and concludes that HRDs wellness requires both structural and institutional mainstreaming to help young female HRDs in their activism. Key recommendation for the study calls for institutionalization of wellness support for HRDs within the civil society space in Kenya.

*Keywords***: Wellness, Human Rights Defenders, Well-being, Advocacy, Mainstreaming.**

Introduction and Background

The history of women activism dates back to the 18th century where Adawo, Gikonyo, Kudu & Mutoro (2011), hold that during *The American Revolution,* women fought not only against racism but against their own men who believed in traditional gender stereotypes and socio-cultural norms that disadvantaged women. Women activism later spread from America to the rest of the world with the core agitation being around issues of civil rights, sexual liberation, childcare, health, education and equality in the workplace. In the 1990s, women activism took on a robust frame reflecting on modern realities with regard to women interests and rights such as property ownership, sexual and reproductive health rights and pursuit of political leadership among others (Kamau, 2010). In Africa, women were very active in the fight against colonialism and reproductive rights and continued doing so in the post-colonial Africa. For instance in 1992, Albertina Sisulu, a respected woman leader in the *African National Congress* (ANC) party of South Africa, joined other leaders in a mass walkout at an ANC Party Conference in Durban in demanding for the party to commit to have 33% female representation in the parliament and other government positions (Mari, Casimiro, Kwesiga & Mungwa, 2011). Similar struggles were fought by women in other parts of Africa such as Mabel Dove Danguah and Hanna Benka-Coker who were pivotal in leading tens of thousands of women in a protest against increasing food prices in Freetown, Sierra Leone (Gouws & Coetzee, 2019). In Kenya, the agitation of women rights equally has a long and detailed history from the colonial times where Kenyan women played a critical supporting role for the warriors fighting the colonial rulers. Karani (2011) indicates that under British colonial rule, women became increasingly unimportant to the economic system, and their powers and influence faded from the public sphere (Dashu, 2012).

Cervenak (2012) defines a human rights defender as a person who, individually or with others, acts to promote or protect human rights. Being a female HRD however has traditionally been characterized by challenges around sexual harassment, unfair treatment by different actors – (government agencies, fellow activists among others), police brutality and intimidation (Karani, 2011). Agitation for protection of women rights from an early stage was an inalienable and critical part of Universal Human Rights particularly for the Kenyan struggle. Kenyan women were very much involved at *The Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace* in Beijing where *The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW), was adopted in 1995. From this conference commonly referred to as the *Beijing Platform for Action Declaration*, governments including Kenya agreed on a comprehensive plan to realize the removal of all obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share of economic, social, cultural and political decision-making (Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995, 1995). Post-independence Kenya saw half-hearted efforts at supporting women rights in the country from 1963 to the 2000s especially with regards to their role in public service (academia, corporate business, governance and politics). Among the key challenges that remained significant through this period included issues around child marriages, sexual violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), lack of educational opportunities, and minimal involvement in public decision making arenas (Gatwiri, 2010).

Statement of The Problem and Objectives of The Study

The HRD eco-system is a tough and quite demanding space, especially for new and young entrants (Defend Defenders, 2018). There are different studies that have been conducted on the interventions that HRDs make to society (Adawo, Gikonyo, Kudu & Mutoro, 2011; Gatwiri, 2010; Gouws & Coetzee, 2019; Kamau, 2010; Karani, 2011), but there remains a significant gap in the level of focus that is given to young female HRDs with regards to their wellness and related challenges they face in their activism work. It is therefore important to examine the dynamics and challenges young female HRDs may experience as they navigate in these spaces not only in their advocacy for the many social justice issues, but also in their quest for social mobility as they create and chart their own career pathways in the HRD domain (Domingo, McCullough, Simbiri & Wanjala, 2019). This is the gap and problem that this study seeks to cure in assessing the wellness needs of young female HRDs in an effort to provide strategies which may be undertaken to support them in their journey as HRDs.

This study was guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To assess the challenges young female HRDs encounter in their roles as activists.
2. To determine the Wellness needs of young female HRDs
3. To find out if there are any interventions in place and their effectiveness in enabling and sustaining the wellness of young female HRDs.

4. To recommend interventions that can be undertaken to enhance the wellness of young female HRDs

Literature Review

In Kenya, agitation of women rights has a long and detailed history from the colonial times where Kenyan women played a critical supporting role for the warriors fighting the colonial rulers. Karani (2011) indicates that under British colonial rule, women became increasingly unimportant to the economic system, and their powers and influence faded from the public sphere. Despite this reality, history records courageous women in those days of extreme male domination that stood up to fight alongside their male counterparts against the colonial rule (Nzomo, 2019). For instance, *Mekatilili wa Menza* (1860s-1924) was influential among the Giriama people at the Coast of Kenya in this regard as was *Muthoni wa Kirima* who was part of the Mau Mau uprising fighting alongside men during the campaign for independence (Umazi, 2018; Nzomo, 2019).

A decade into the new millennium, the promulgation of the 2010 Constitution of Kenya (CoK) provided a lot of constitutional and legal framework for the advancement of women interests in the country. For instance, it provided for women inclusion in political and governance roles by requiring that no more than two-thirds of either gender should constitute government appointments as well as the parliament and senate (Gatwiri, 2010). Presbey (2013) observes that inasmuch as there is still a long way to go for Kenyan women and safeguarding of their interests, there continues to be an improvement in financial, social and economic inclusion within the country at different stages ranging from dialogue, policy implementation, representation and so forth. This notwithstanding, the journey for women empowerment through socio-political and economic inclusion still remains a work in progress. Wellness is broadly defined as someone's multidimensional and holistic experience, encompassing their lifestyle, mental and spiritual well-being, and the environment (Goetzel, Henke & Tabrizi, et al., 2014).

Within this broader perspective of wellness, issues around occupational, physical, social, intellectual, spiritual and emotional challenges of young female HRDs are potential areas of abuse and exploitation preying on their vulnerabilities around desperation for career opportunities and lack of sustainable economic livelihoods (Defend Defenders, 2018). There is therefore a need to examine the wellness of female HRDs, so that in their quests for justice in the social environments they are in, their welfare is also factored in, and thus their success is more gratifying. Further, the United Nations Development Fund for Women Security Council Resolution 1325 acknowledges the central role that women play in peace and security and hence call for their unilateral involvement in all matters pertaining to the wellbeing of the society (United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2020).

Methodology

This study used the descriptive survey design, which applied mixed method approach seeking to gain a detailed understanding of the plight of young female HRDs in the course of their activism work based on first-hand experience that they have. This research design was chosen because the study was also interested in investigating and establishing the existence of certain relationships among the variables under investigation – such as the operational and institutional gaps in the human rights activism ecosystem in Kenya and its contribution to the challenges of young female HRDs.

The study was conducted on a consortium of HRDs under the umbrella of Mashujaa Heritage targeting young female HRDs based in Nairobi. The population of this consortium's membership is 230 HRDs. According to Creswell (2014), for a population below 10,000, 30% is considered sufficient for a study of this nature and therefore a sample size of 53 respondents was chosen for this study. Purposive sampling was used to get the specific respondents targeted in this sample size as indicated in the sample matrix below.

Sample Matrix

Sample	Sample Size targeted
Young Female HRDs	30
Senior Women HRDs	5
Male HRDs	5
Senior Male HRDs	5
HRDs Officers in CSOs	5
Mashujaa Heritage Founding members	3
Total	**53**

Data collection tools for empirical part of the study were collected by interviews and questionnaires. The data collection was done by four data collection assistants who administered the questionnaires and interviews via virtual tools including phone calls and Google forms. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS version 18 and the data presented in tabulated and graphical illustrations as indicated in the next section.

The researchers in this study strived to honour all guarantees of privacy, confidentiality and anonymity for all respondents. Efforts were made to link result interpretation with the obtained data and did not exploit the sources of data in any way in the process of the research that would have compromised the integrity of the study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013). Further, ethical approvals were sought from all organizations/institutions and agencies engaged in this study. Before the deployment of the study, the research tool was deployed in a pilot survey targeting 10 respondents to test the validity and reliability of the tool which was found to be sufficient.

Results Analysis and Discussion

Presentation of Qualitative and Quantitative research findings

This study targeted 53 respondents but was able to get 48 respondents with different profiles defined in this study's research design sample described above. Table 1 below shows the summary of the sampled respondents that were reached for the study.

Table 1: Respondents reached by the study

S/No n.	Profile of respondent targeted	Targeted sample	Actual Sample that responded	% of target sample who responded
1.	Young female HRD	24	21	87.5
2.	Young male HRD	5	6	120.0
3.	Senior female HRD	5	5	100.0
4.	Senior male HRD	5	7	140.0
5.	Civil society organizations	5	5	100.0
6.	Mashujaa Heritage leadership	4	2	50.0
Total		48	46	95.8

From these results, 81.3% of the targeted respondents participated successfully in this study. According to Draugalis, Coons, & Plaza (2008), for a social study such as this one, a 60% respondents' response rate is sufficient to yield accurate results and greater validity which makes this study sufficiently valid with regards to response rate from sampled respondents.

Research Findings from Young Female HRDs
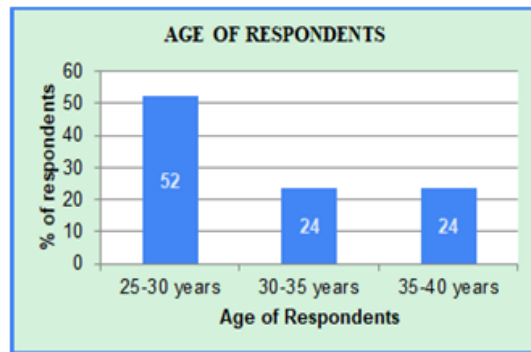
a) Respondents' socio-demographic data

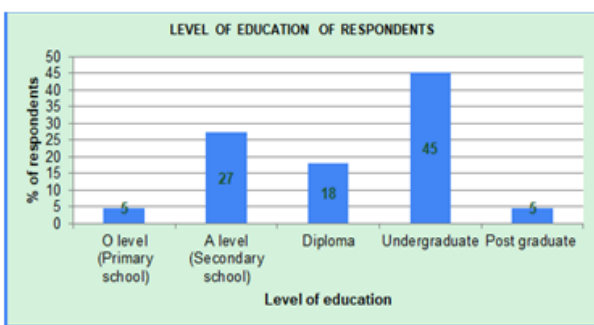Figure 2: Age bracket for respondents

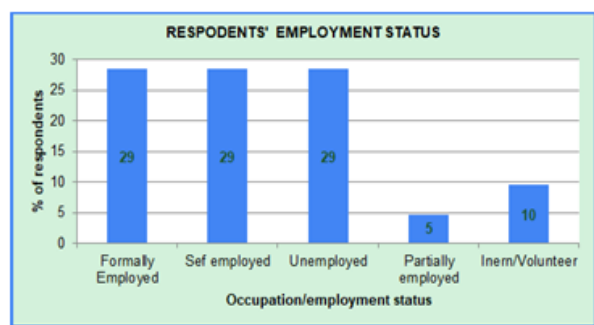
Figure 3: Level of education for respondents

Figure 4: Employment status for respondents

From the study findings as indicated in figure 2 above, 52% of the respondents under the young female HRDs category were aged 25-30 years, 24% were aged between 30-35 years and 24% were aged between 35-40%. Figure 3 above shows that a total of 68% of the respondents in this category have a post-secondary education (15% - diploma level, 45% - undergraduate level and 5% - postgraduate level). 5% had primary level of education and 27% had secondary school level of education. With regards to status of employment, the study results show that a total of 63% of the respondents were in a certain form of employment (29% - formally employed, 28% - self-employed, and 5% - partially employed) while 29% indicated that they were unemployed. 10% of the respondents indicated that they were volunteers and/or interns.

From these findings, the respondents engaged under this category were fairly educated with post-secondary level of education (68%) that can be largely described as being employed in one way or another (63%).

b) Respondents' Experience working as a human rights activist

The study sought to assess the level of experience in human rights advocacy that respondents had and the specific areas of working they had in that regard. These findings are shown in the figures below.
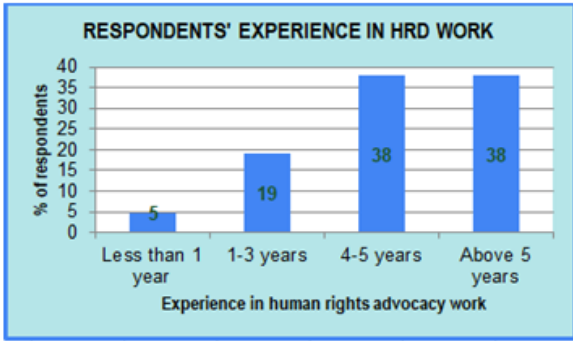
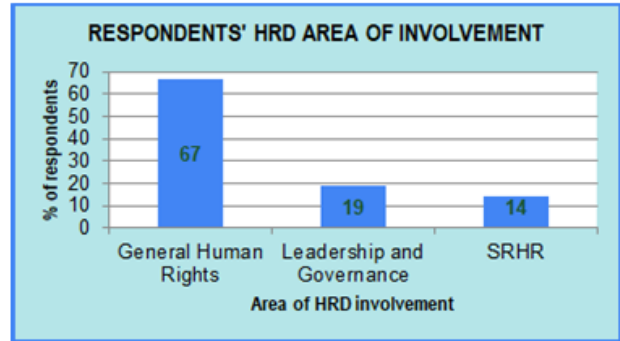Fig 5: Respondents' experience in HRD work

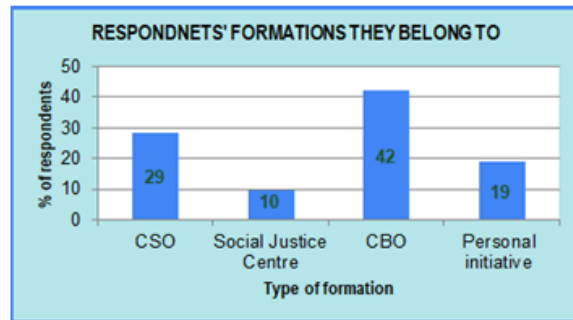Fig 6: Respondents' area of involvement in HRD work

Fig 7: Respondents' formation they belong to

Figure 5 above shows that most of the respondents were fairly experienced in their HRD involvement with 19% being involved in HRD work for 1-3 years, 38% being involved in HRD work for 4-5 years, 38% being involved in HRD work for over 5 tears, and only 5% being involved in HRD work for less than one year. Figure 6 shows that 67% of respondents are involved in general human rights advocacy, 19% in leadership and governance, and 14% in sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR). Figure 7 shows that 42% of the respondents belong to community based organizations (CBOs), 29% belong to civil society organizations (CSOs), 19% run personal initiatives, and 10% belong to social justice centres (SJCs).

c) Challenges experienced as human rights activists

The study sought to understand the nature of challenges that young female activists face in their usual human rights advocacy work and the summary of the findings are shown in figure 8 below. The findings indicate that most of the respondents (48%) indicated that the most critical challenge is with regard to economic hardships where they face financial hardships that predisposes them to more challenges and vulnerabilities in line with their work. 24% indicated that they struggle with accessing information important for their work and 28% indicated that they face discrimination based on their gender in the course of their work
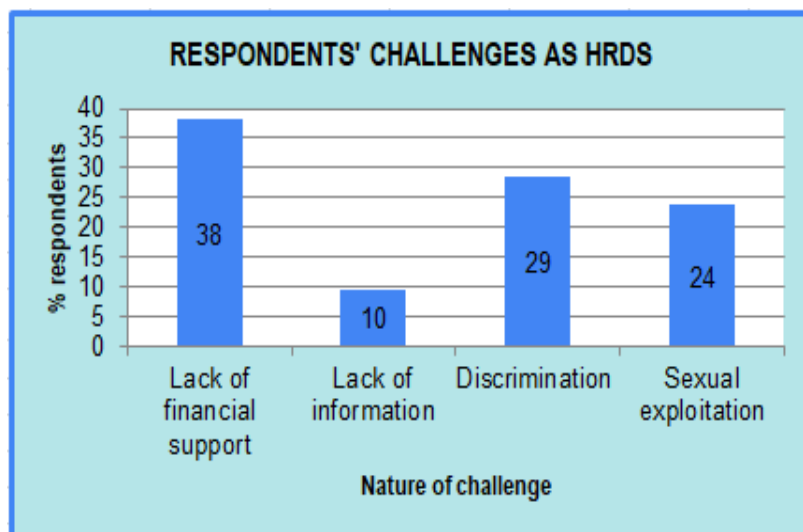

Figure 8: Respondents' challenges as HRDs

Some of the respondents shared some more details about their challenges as follows with regards to financial constraints:

Respondent #YF2: One of my biggest challenges is not being able to help the victims and survivors adequately; occasioned by lack of enough financial resources to perform my HRD duties fully.

Respondent #YF12: I am not able to pay for my own bills because most of the work I do is voluntary and not paid so I feel challenged in that way.

Respondent #YF17: [*The biggest challenge is*] financial constraints where most of the HRDs survive from hand to mouth, unable to give solidarity when needed due to lack of resources. [*For instance*], there are times where HRDs are not even able to give online solidarity which is a very powerful tool used in the line of duty or organizing due to lack of ability to buy data bundles.

[*Further*], comrades are going through frustrations which end up bringing issues of mental health and for women the struggle is worse because especially for women that are bread winners; when we face threats there is lack of protection or immediate intervention which most of us have to withdraw and struggle to find for a safe house, we've lost comrades in the line of duty.

Respondents further expressed frustrations around threats to their wellbeing and difficulties in discharging their duties as human rights advocates because of intimidation and patriarchal domination. Some of these reflections are indicated below:

Respondent #YF6: Being a young woman, many people judge that am hard headed and I mislead other women since I empower them to speak out.

Respondent #YF4: I have struggled with handling the 'Older' people's attitudes and expectations in a new and versatile world. A senior respected HRD formed a narrative online that exposed me to cyber bullying. Otherwise, are there other worlds that misfits fit in? I would love that HRDs foster a reading and wellness culture in the safe spaces.

Respondent #YF7: Lack of resources to sustain community based advocacy interventions, constant insecurity on rights defenders especially when criticizing the government and the exploitative system, unavailability of safe spaces to rescue victims of VAM and GBV, Lack of mentorship programs for the young women rights defenders and any mentorship opportunities are based on the emotional attachment between the mentor and the mentee, Most women and girls do not understand their rights and this makes rescue interventions complex thus need to mobilize them and empower them with the knowledge of their rights so that they can always argue and act from a skill - based approach anytime injustices are commuted. The patriarchal system still prioritizes power dominance while exhibiting female subordination. There are so many gender power hierarchies that make women feel inferior barring them from leadership opportunities and having seats at the decision making tables. Until, we dismantle gender norms, gender roles that place less value on women, equity is still away from the reality but until then, we won't tire from mobilizing, educating and liberating the people.

Respondent #YF18: Other NGOs do not want to support those who have dropped from social justice centers and formed their own CBO they want you to be under social justice centers such as someone got mad and could not be helped here in Githunguri because I went independent. The man ended up being chopped off the hand due to lack of support.

Respondent #YF16: It is difficult being a female activist because you may want to help but there are just too many challenges like lack of shelters and rescue centres and then there is no one that can give psycho-social support when you feel overwhelmed.

Respondent #YF21: We don't have a permanent office so it's difficult to monitor and document some cases hence most of them remain undocumented.
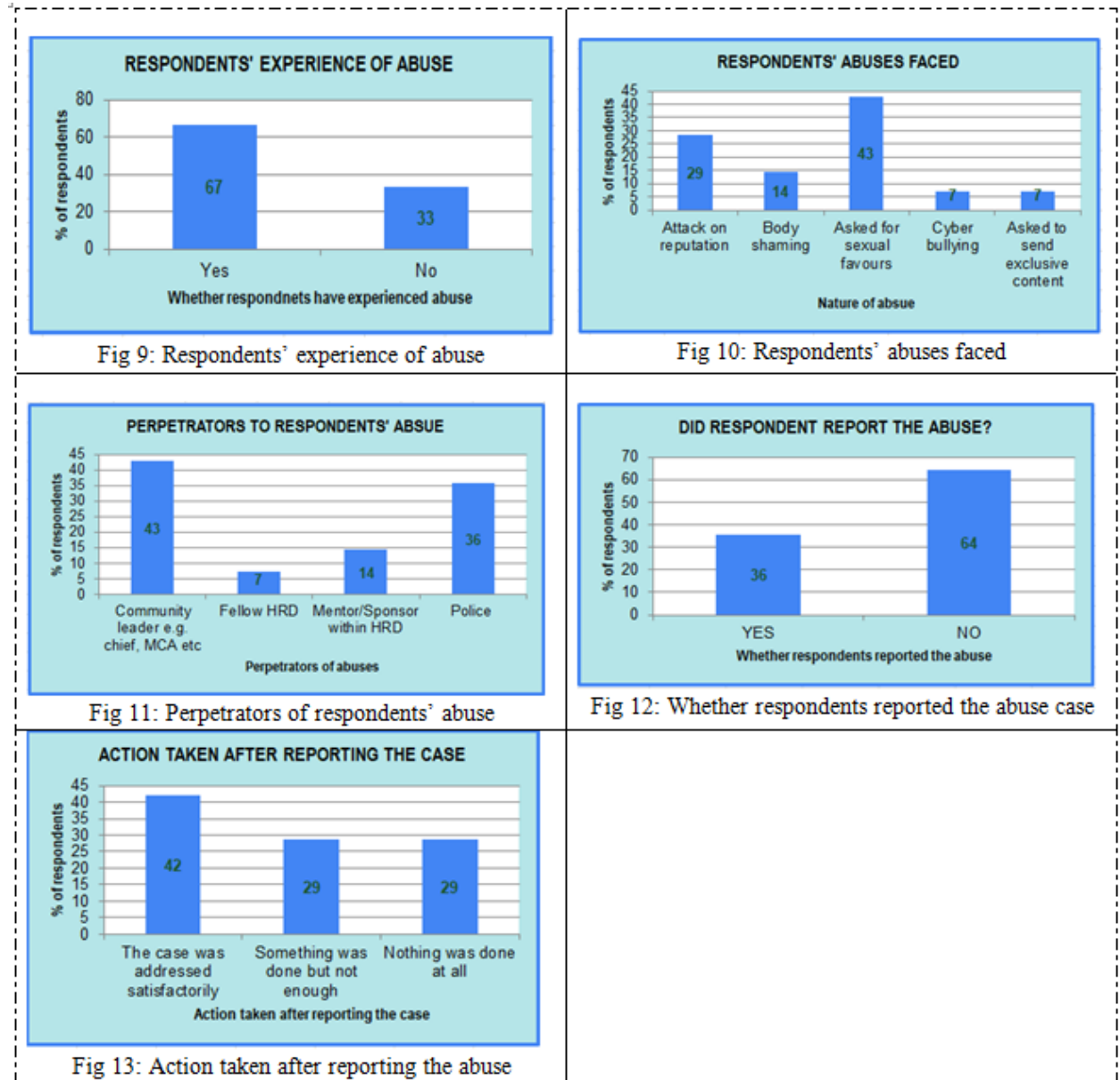
d) Forms of abuse experienced by young female HRDs

The study sought to understand the nature of abuses and violations that young female HRDs face in the course of their work and the subsequent actions taken. From figure 9 below, 67% of respondents indicated that they faced different forms of abuse in line of their work and 33% said they did not. With regards to the nature of abuse faced, figure 10 shows 43% of the respondents were asked for sexual favors, 29% had their reputation attacked, 14% experienced body shaming, 7% were asked to send explicit sexual content in exchange for work favors and 7% experienced cyber bulling. With regards to perpetrators of the abuses, figure 11 shows that 43% of the reported perpetrators were community leaders such as chiefs, MCAs, 36% were police officers, 14% were mentors and/or sponsors within the HRD fraternity, and 7% were fellow HRDs.

With regards to whether the abuses experienced were reported, figure 12 shows that 64% of the respondents did not report the cases and 36% reported the cases. Of the cases reported, figure 13

indicates that 42% were addressed to their satisfaction, 29% were addressed but not to satisfaction and 29% were not addressed at all.

From these findings therefore, the study found that most of the respondents experienced abuse (67%) and most of these abuses were of sexual nature (body shaming, sexual exploitation – 71%).

Fig 9: Respondents' experience of abuse

Fig 10: Respondents' abuses faced

Fig 11: Perpetrators of respondents' abuse

Fig 12: Whether respondents reported the abuse case

Fig 13: Action taken after reporting the abuse

Further, the findings indicate that perpetrators of these abuses were largely government officials including local chiefs, elected leaders and the police (with a cumulative score of 79%). It is also worth noting that some of the perpetrators were also from within the human rights advocacy fraternity as mentors and fellow actors (with a cumulative score of 21%).

The study further found that only a small part of the victims reported their cases (36%) and most of the cases reported were not addressed conclusively with a cumulative score of 58% and only 42% were addressed satisfactorily. Respondents indicated that they did not have confidence in system to address their grievances and therefore did not feel reporting their cases would be of any good. Some of these reflections are indicated below:

Respondent #YF1: Because the police were the perpetrators and I didn't feel safe reporting the case.

Respondent #YF3: I was afraid please do not share my name

Respondent #YF5: Perhaps, the contempt and abuse that comes from the whole experience in the human rights world is not worth discussing online. Or perhaps I think too much and operate in systems I barely understand or expect good faith in.

Respondent #YF10: My complains would not be heard

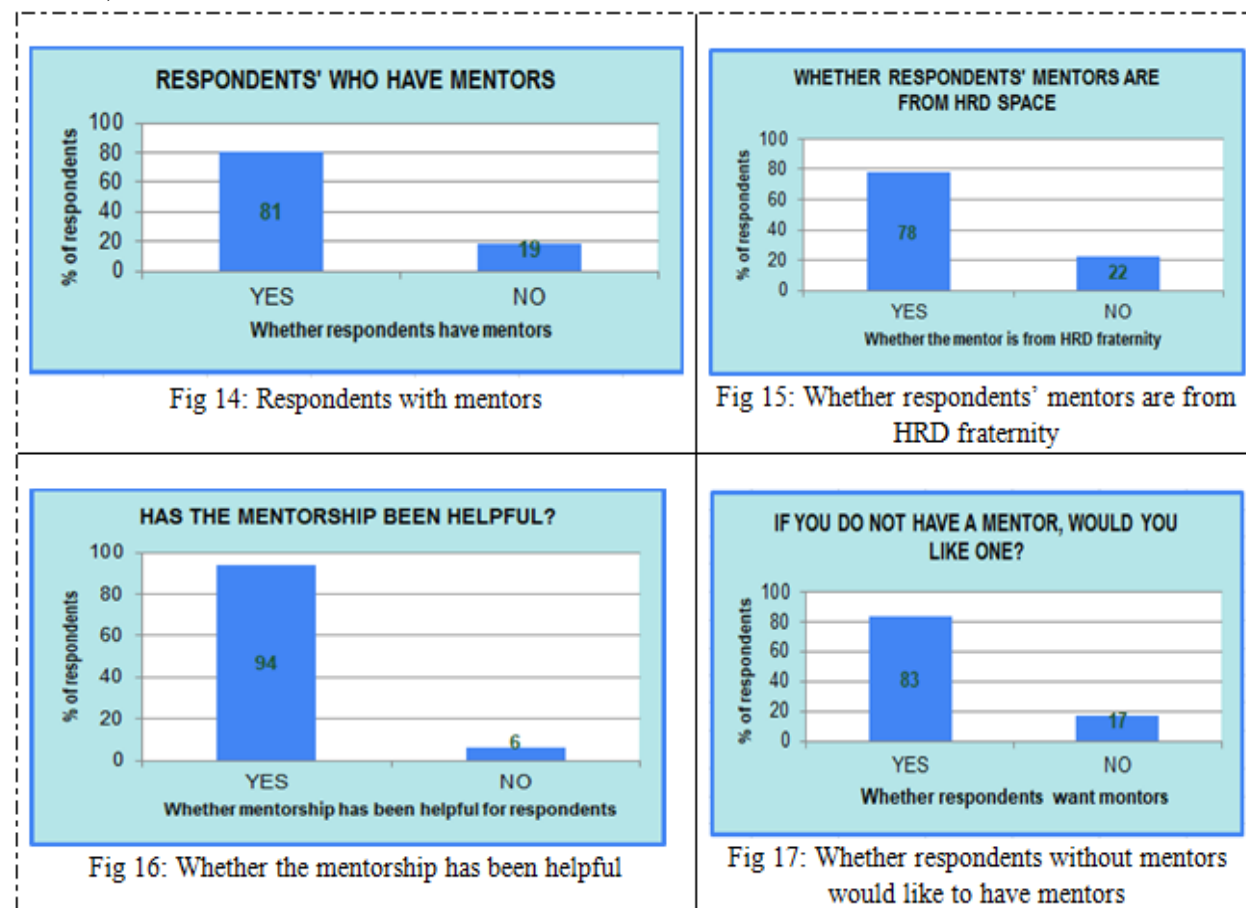**Respondent #YF21:** I didn't think it would go anywhere

Respondent #YF8: The avenues and structures for this kind of reporting were unknown to me by that time

Respondent #YF9: I did not have the strength, time or resources

e) Mentorship within the HRD fraternity

The study sought to establish whether there was mentorship within the HRD fraternity particularly with regards to young female HRDs. Figure 14 indicates that 81% of the respondents indicated that they have mentors and only 19% said they did not have. Figure 15 indicated that those that have mentors, 78% of those mentors are from HRD fraternity and 22% are from outside the HRD fraternity. Figure 16 indicates that of those that have mentors, 94% of them considered their mentorship helpful and 6% indicated they did not fine the mentorship to be helpful. For those without mentors, figure 17 shows that 83% would like to be linked to a mentor and 17% did not want to be linked to a mentor.

Fig 14: Respondents with mentors

Fig 15: Whether respondents' mentors are from HRD fraternity

Fig 16: Whether the mentorship has been helpful

Fig 17: Whether respondents without mentors would like to have mentors

From these findings, it can be seen that mentorship is a fairly accepted form of support for young female HRDs (81%) with good results with regards to impact (94% approval rating for the helpfulness of mentorship). Further, the few that do not have mentors, there is a general willingness to be linked to potential mentors. Respondents that expressed interest to be paired up with potential mentors, indicated a number of attributes they considered important for them with regards to mentors and some of these attributes are as follows:

Respondent #YF2: Able to network and find resources

Respondent #YF4: A female mentor with sufficient experience

Respondent #YF8: Focused, team oriented, knowledgeable in terms of the Kenyan constitution, outspoken, confident with emotional intelligence

Respondent #YF14: Supportive, resilient and understanding

Respondent #YF17: Gender, Female within the Media, Writing and the larger civil Society.

Respondent #YF18: Speaking up for voiceless by leaving no one behind.

For the respondents who did not have mentors and did not want to be paired with mentors (17%) did not give reasons for their unwillingness to be mentored despite being requested to give reasons for their decision.

f) Witnessing of human rights abuses within the HRD fraternity

The study sought to assess whether respondents have witnessed any abuses and violations from within the HRD fraternity in the course of their work. Figure 18 indicates that 56% of the respondents had witnessed different forms of abuse within the HRD fraternity and 44% indicated that they had not witnessed any abuse within the HRD fraternity.
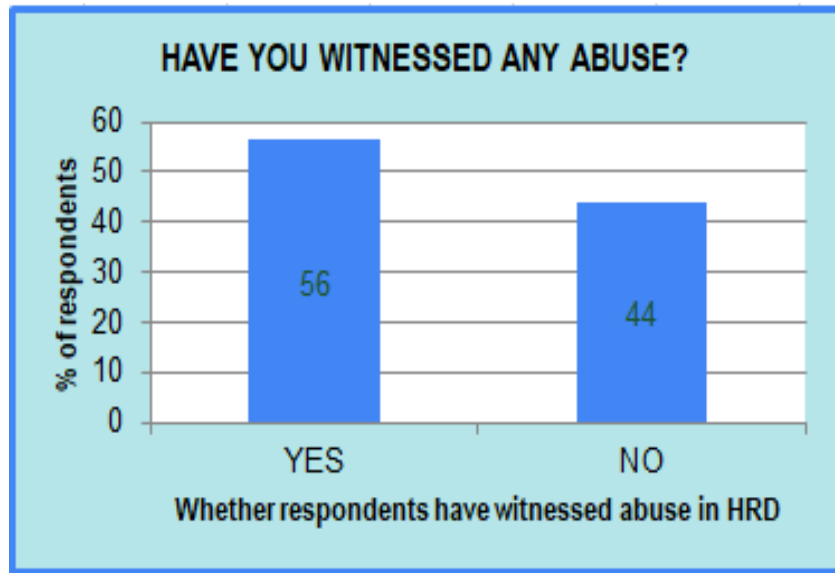

Figure 18: Respondents who have witnessed abuses within HRD fraternity

Respondents indicated different types of abuses and violations they had witnessed key of which are indicated below:

Respondent #YF3: Exploitation of one's labour – being overworked without commensurate remuneration

Respondent #YF5: Sexual harassment by police, senior HRDs taking advantage of young female HRDs, unfair distribution of opportunities

Respondent #YF9: A male HRD slapping a woman.

Respondent #YF11: Bullying and profiling based on one's gender

Respondent #YF1, #YF8, #YF13, #YF20: Police harassing women HRD during protests and field activities

Respondents #YF14, #YF16, #YF7, #YF18, #YF19: Sexual harassment/abuse

g) Assessment of wellness needs

The study sought to assess whether respondents had preference for any of the *Six Dimensions of Wellness Model* – emotional needs, spiritual needs, physical needs, occupational needs, social needs and intellectual needs. Figure 19 shows that all respondents considered all the six dimensions of wellness important and critical with a score above 76% for *very important*.
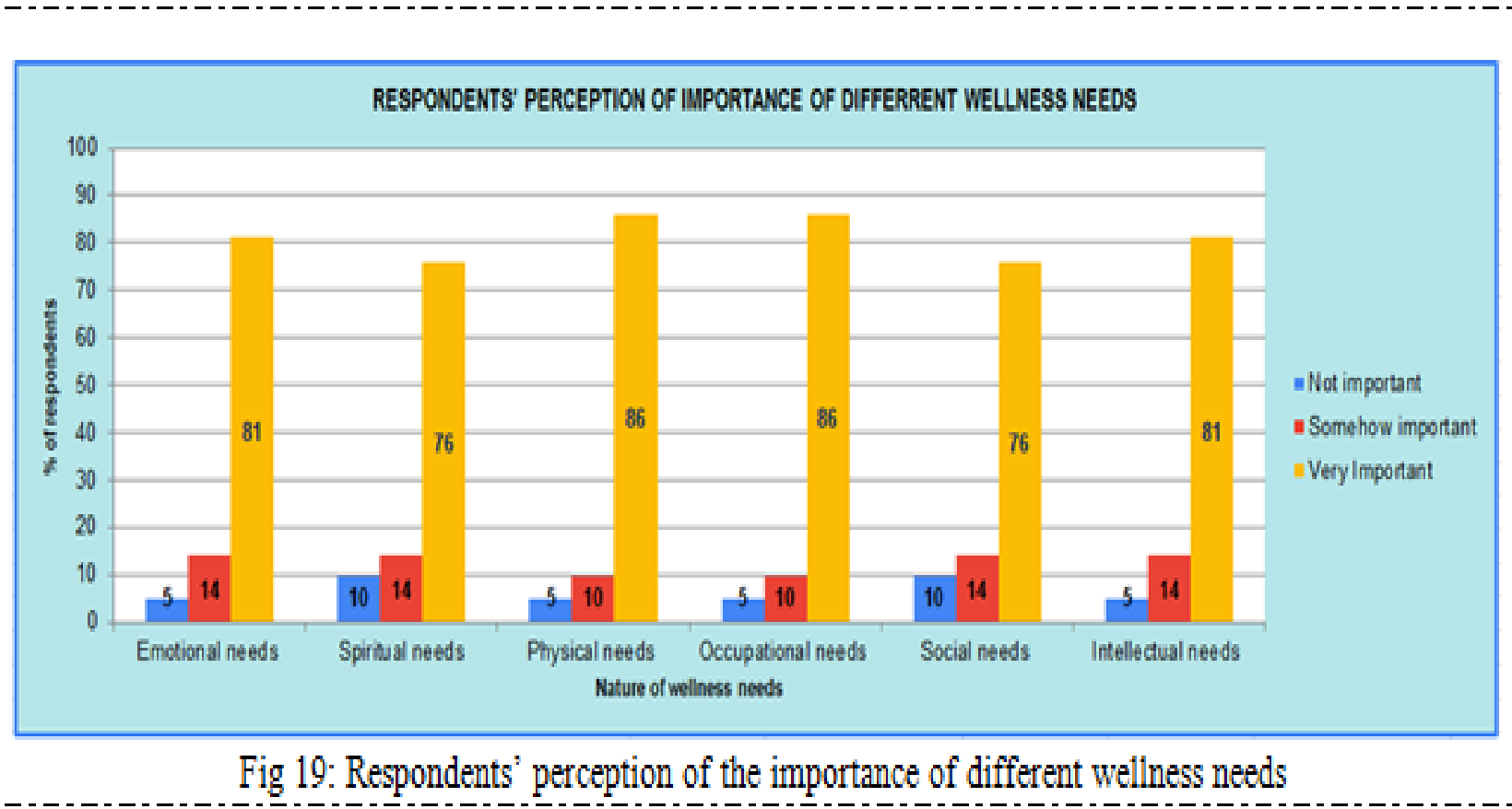
Fig 19: Respondents' perception of the importance of different wellness needs

h) Respondents' coping mechanism

The study sought to understand the different ways in which respondents cope with the challenges they face in the field and what they do to keep themselves motivated despite the challenges they face. The following are the key coping mechanisms that were reported:

i) Confiding in friends, family and fellow HRDs

Respondent #YF1: I find someone to talk to and do a debrief session

Respondent #YF6: Talking to accountable partner/friend

Respondent #YF12: I share my challenges with my fellow HRDs

Respondent #YF14: I always share the challenges with my colleagues

Respondent #YF15: I share with my fellow Comrades who are close to me or sometime I retrieve and have some time alone to do personal reflections

Respondent #YF16: I try to network/link to my fellow HRD/share I decide to quit or leave some issues

ii) Taking time off, exercise, reading and engaging in hobbies

Respondent #YF2: I take time off, exercise, read the bible and write

Respondent #YF7: I take a break off work and everything; I detach for a while then come back.

Respondent #YF8: Reading

Respondent #YF9: I take time off for self-care. To unwind and regroup

Respondent #YF10: I spend time with my kids

Respondent #YF13: Exercise and socialize

Respondent #YF18: Exercise, read a lot on the past experiences of successful human rights defenders

Respondent #YF19: I take time out regularly just for self-care to rejuvenate.

Respondent #YF20: I take a time out to rejuvenate and re-strategize

iii) Avoidance, Meditation seclusion and holding it within

Respondent #YF4: Most of the time there are challenges I ignore or I close myself in a room I really cry shout, scream and get relief.

Respondent #YF5: I keep quiet and withdraw. I love my family and for long I have not given it attention... FYI this for me has been due to pressured dedication from Mentors who ignore the other side of life.

Respondent #YF11: I retreat into a secluded space

Respondent #YF17: Avoidance

Respondent #YF21: I meditate and share my experiences

i) Recommendations from respondents on how to address the challenges they face

The study sought to get recommendations from respondents about what could be done to remedy and address some of the challenges that they had indicated they faced as young female HRDs in Kenya. The following list provides the summaries deduced from their responses:

1. Equip them with proper information about the risks of what they do and how to deal with them
2. Provide platforms for personalized debriefing and especially with fellow female actors in the HRD fraternity for advice and moral support.
3. Create safe spaces for them with people who they can trust and share with their struggles.
4. Bridget the gap between the Civil society and the grassroots movement to remove the apparent antagonism that exists; the same should be done the intergenerational gap that also at times appears to create tensions within HRD fraternity where vocal young female activists are misunderstood by older activists as being overzealous
5. Provide pro bono lawyers to help them pursue legal justice in the cases of harassment or injustices committed against them
6. Form networks of HRDs within communities and set up mentorship programs to help ground young female HRDs in their work with direction and good experience skills.

7. Professionalize HRD work. Make it a career. Make it easy for victims of abuse to access justice.

Research Findings from Young Male HRDs

a) Respondents' socio-demographic data

The age brackets for the sampled young male respondents as shown in figure 20 were 33% across all the age brackets – 25-30 years, 20-35 years, and 35-40 years. Figure 21 shows that the 84% of the respondents had a tertiary level education (67% diploma level and 17% degree level) and 16% had A-level education. Further, figure 22 shows that 83% of the respondents had a form of income either as formally employed or running their own businesses (5)% self-employed and 33% formally employed) and 17% were unemployed.

From these findings, it can be deduced that the sampled respondents were fairly educated with a post-secondary qualification and had most of them (83%) have some form of income to sustain themselves in their day to day living.
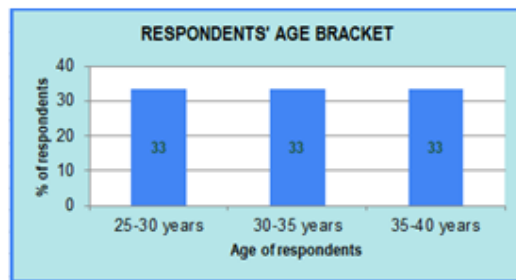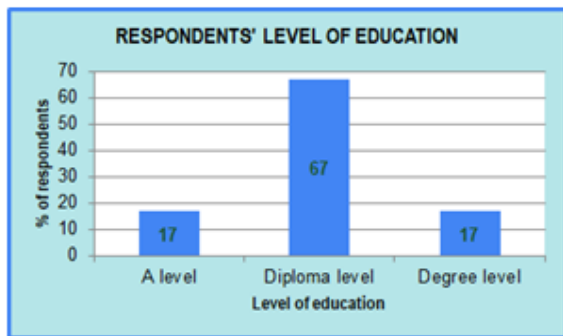

Figure 20: Age bracket for respondents

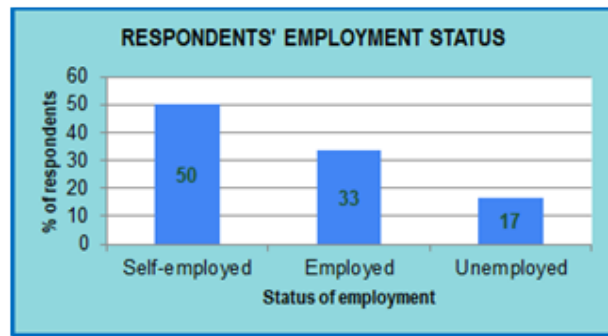Figure 21: Level of education for respondents

Figure 22: Employment status for respondents

b) Witnessing abuses against young female HRDs

The study asked respondents whether they had witnessed any violations and abuses meted against young female HRDs within the HRD fraternity and figure 25 shows that 83% of the respondents responded in the affirmative and only 17% responded in the negative.
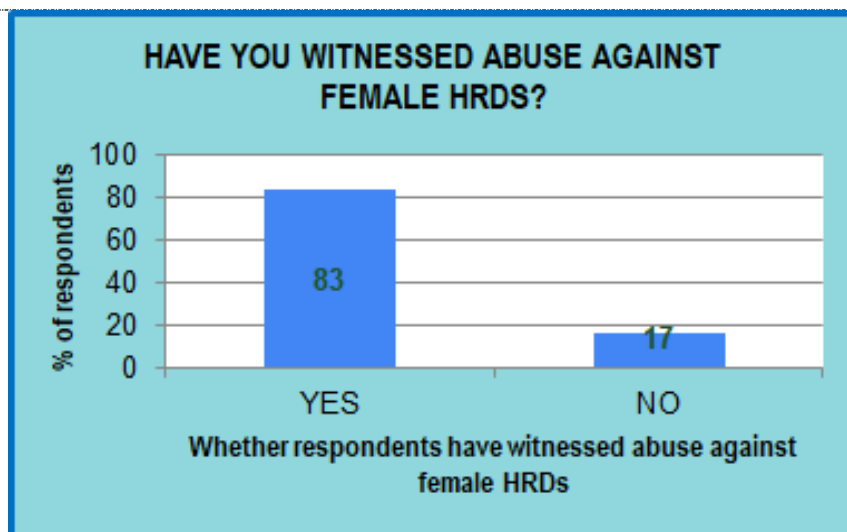

Figure 25: Whether respondents have witnessed abuse against young female HRDs

These findings indicate that even from the perspective of young male HRDs, they feel that young female HRDs face more violations and abuses in the cause of their work in comparison to their male counterparts.

c) Wellness needs among young male HRDs

The study sought to understand some key wellness needs among young male HRDs in the course of their work and the following were the key needs highlighted:

Respondent #YM1, #YM2: Capacity building on how best to cushion themselves against the violence and stigma that they face in the course of their work

Respondent #YM3: Proper network and referral pathways especially in times of violations

Respondent #YM4: Financial support for empowerment

Respondent #YM5: To be conscious of their personal safety in activism

Respondent #YM6: Mentoring, psycho-social support, appropriate remuneration

d) Challenges experienced by young male HRDs in the course of their work

The study sought to understand some key challenges that young male HRDs face in the course of their work and the following were the key challenges highlighted:

Respondent #YM1: Arrests, lack of enough resources to facilitate my human rights work

Respondent #YM2: Intimidation from stakeholders due to lack of proper networks and knowing people in high places

Respondent #YM3: Lack of financial capacity to help me do my work to completion"

Respondent #YM4: Lack of information and knowledge of current activities

Respondent #YM5: Brutal Resistance from government agencies

Respondent #YM6: Poor remuneration, lack of psycho social support; it's very hard to build a career in the sector.

e) Recommendations from young male HRDs on how to mitigate challenges faced in their work

The following are the key recommendations shared with regards to how both young male and female HRDs can be helped to deal with the challenges they face in the course of their work:

Set up a solid network of HRDs which can be used as platform for collective protection and capacity building

Set up a system for timely reporting and addressing challenges of exploitation and abuse

Train HRDs on risk assessment and mitigation before they engage in any activities to ensure their safety comes first

Research Findings for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

a) Respondents' experience in HRD work and area of operation

Figure 32 below shows that 60% of respondents' experience in HRD space spans over 10 years (20% 5-10 years and 40% above 10 years) and 40% of the respondents have experience working in the HRD sector of less than 5 years.
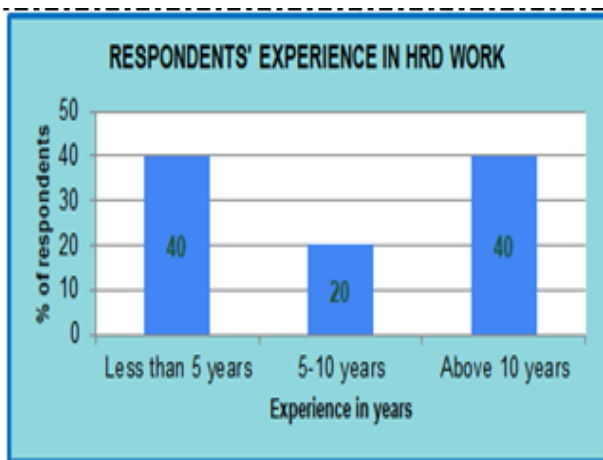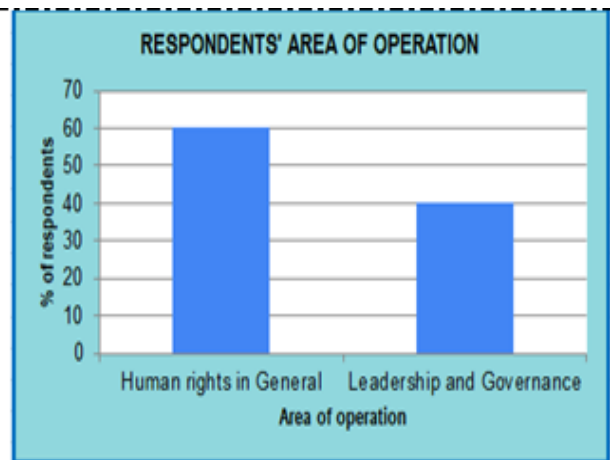

Figure 32: Respondents' expereince in HRD work

Figure 31: Respondents' area of operation

b) Wellness needs for young female HRDs

The study sought to understand what, in the perspective of the respondents, were some of the wellness needs for young female HRDs and some of these needs were indicated as follows:

1. Psycho-social Support
2. Earning a living from their work and related activities
3. Supporting them to be emotional stable given the work they do is not easy
4. Training in Security Management, Mentorship and creation of safe spaces for them to share external and internal challenges and find solutions.
5. Funding/financial support, mental wellness and healing, social support and collective action.

c) Challenges that young female HRDs face in the course of their work

The study sought to understand some of the challenges that young female HRDs face in the cause of their work from the perspective of the respondents and the following list provides some of the key challenges identified:

1. They are targets of sexual harassment
2. Lack of patience, adequate training.
3. Safety and security, gaps within the justice system, mental illness financial instability

In view of these challenges, respondents were asked to share some of the mitigation strategies they have put in place in their respective organizations to address the identified challenges that young female HRDs face. Some of the mitigation strategies shared are as follows:

1. Sound policies
2. Mentoring, counseling and guidance programs
3. Best practices around security such as hiring taxis for all staff who work late, and having zero tolerance to sexual harassment at the workplace.
4. Collective resource mobilizing, supporting activities at grassroots-level supporting campaign work to build capacities through leaders trainings.

d) Existence of an organizational policy against abuse

The study sought to know whether respondents in their respective organizations have policies specifically set up to address challenges that young female HRDs face in line of their work. From figure 32, it can be seen that 60% of the respondents indicated that they had an organizational policy against abuse within their organizations and 40% said they did not have.

For the respondents that indicated that they had such a policy in place, the study sought to understand what the policy entailed and the respondents given were:

> **Respondent #CSO1:** Transparency
>
> **Respondent #CSO2:** Open
>
> **Respondent #CSO3:** Not really a systematic mechanism
>
> **Respondent #CSO4:** Policy for ALL staff

Figure 32: Whether respondents have organizational policy against abuse
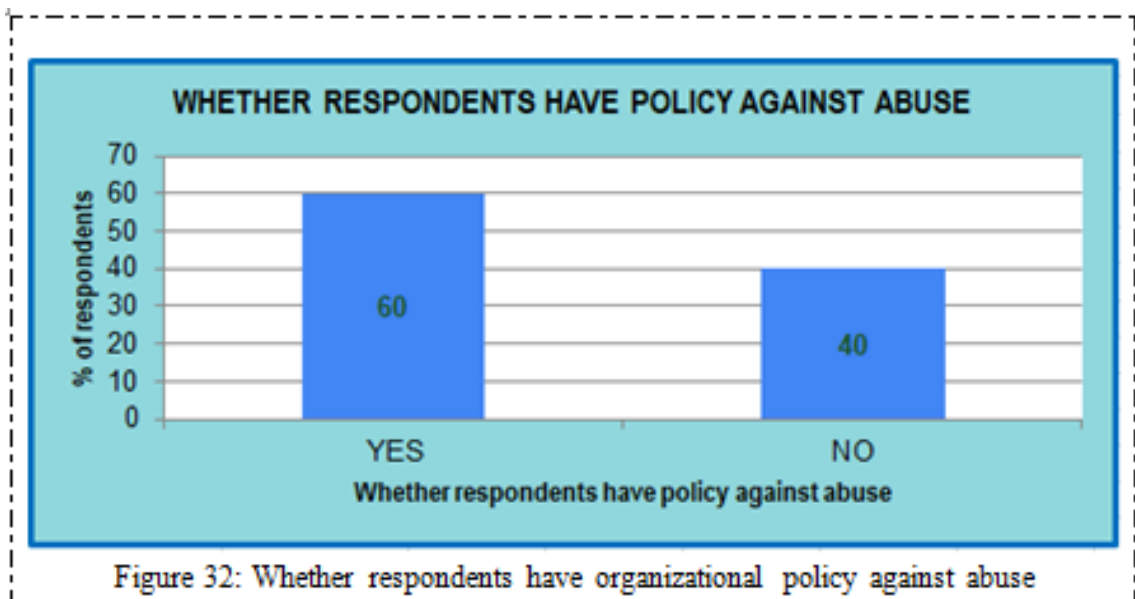
From the findings provided with regard to existing policy against abuse, it can be deduced that details about this policy appear not to be well understood or articulated by respondents. Further, there is still

a gap within organizations working in the HRD space with regards to institutional policies against violations and abuse within their own organizations (40% score is considerably high).

e) Assessment of the success of the organizational policy against abuse

For the respondents that indicated that they had organizational policies against abuse in their organizations (60% - figure 32), the study sought to understand how successful they rated the working of those policies by testing the successful implementation of different attributes of the policy.

Figure 33 shows that the policy's *immediate intervention after an abuse case* and *providing support post-event* scored 60% success rate. *Investigating cases to their logical conclusion* and *obtaining justice for the victim* scored 40% success rate indicating.

These findings indicate that inasmuch as there are institutional policies against abuse in organizations, there still exists gaps with regard to full operationalization and attainment of successful results as envisioned on the policy within these organizations.

Figure 33: Respondents' perception of the success of their organizational policy against abuse
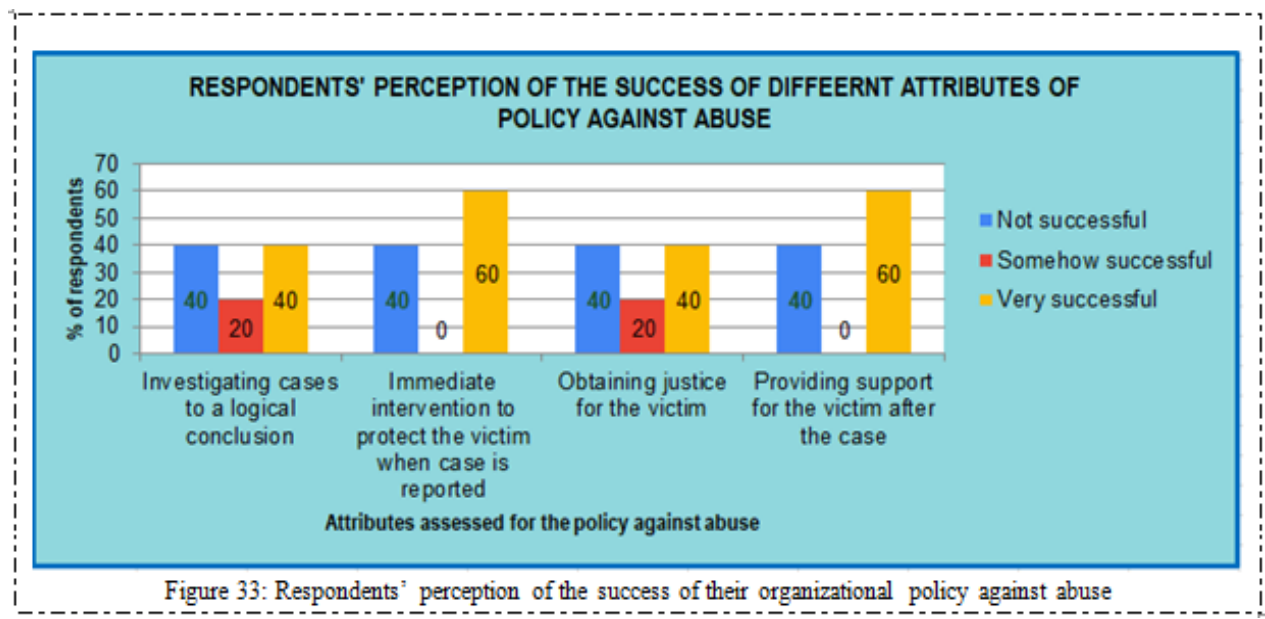
f) Importance of different challenges facing young female HRDs

The study sought to assess how different organizations perceived the importance of different challenges faced by young female HRDs in the course of their work. Figure 34 below shows that all challenges assessed were considered important and needing continuous interventions and support to mitigate against them by scoring 60% and above

.

Figure 34: Respondents' perception of the success of their organizational policy against abuse
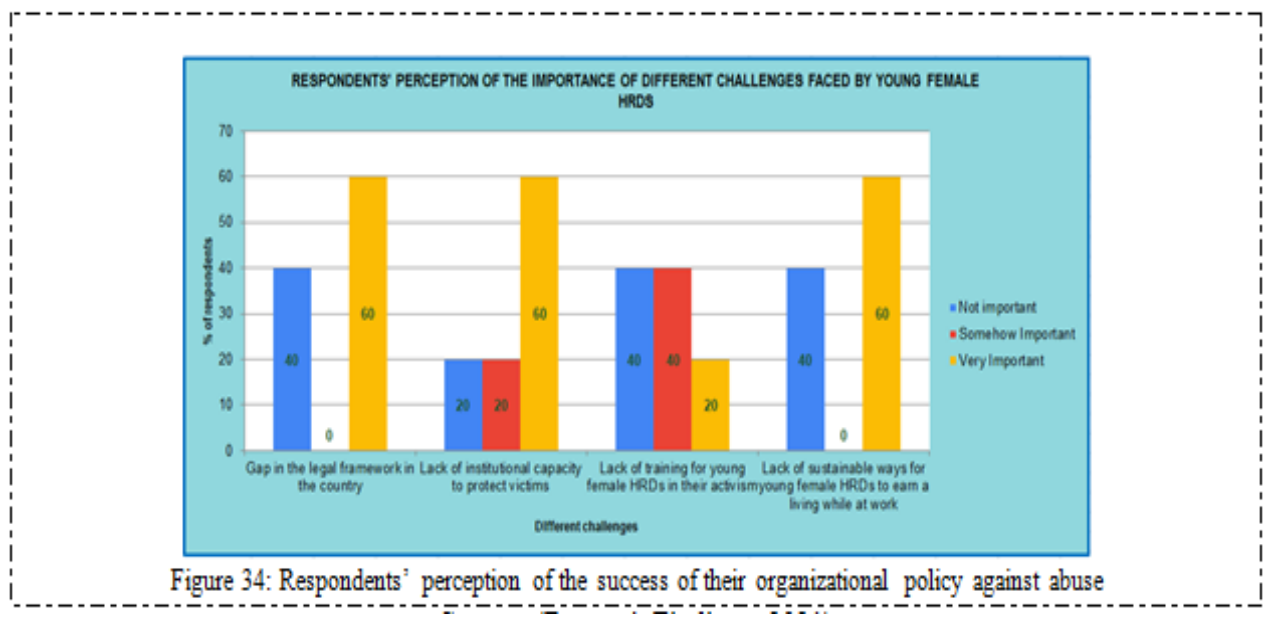
Conclusion and Recommendations

From the foregoing results and analysis, it has been demonstrated that young female HRDs face different challenges affecting their wellness in line duty as activists. The foregoing discussion also concludes that young female HRDs admit to be having a crisis with regards to how they can address their wellness needs especially psycho-social support that is crucial in the line of their work. In this regard, this study highlighted the following as the key gaps within the HRD ecosystem in Kenya that can be exploited against young female HRDs in the line of their work:

1. The human rights ecosystem is a microcosm of the larger patriarchal society where many seek to dominate women which continues to put all women at risk of harassment, discrimination and violence.

2. Lack of a wellness monitoring system, which should have a reporting mechanism in case of abuses from within the ecosystem

3. Lack of adequate support from the older generation of HRDs to the younger generation

4. Lack of a serious mentorship program to motivate the young female HRDs.

Study Recommendations

These study recommendations largely target Civil Society Organizations and are as follows:

1. Bring to an end to unpaid internships in all human rights organizations.

2. Put in place formal systems and processes to address issues of inequality, sexual harassment, violence, and other forms of discrimination as well livelihoods.

3. Create platforms to address intergenerational gaps through mentorship particularly where younger HRDs think that older HRDs have not done enough because they have nit documented most of their work as HRD but forgetting that our time was not a digital world as today.

4. Provide avenues for psycho-social support for young female HRDs

5. Train HRDs on risk assessment and mitigation before they engage in any activities to ensure their safety comes first

6. Provide economic empowerment to support young female HRDs earn a living and be self-sustaining in their economic needs

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