

The Silent Crisis: Mental Health and Suicide Among Zimbabwean Men

By Ntombizanele Mangumba

Mental health challenges among men in Zimbabwe are becoming increasingly evident, yet they remain largely ignored. Suicide is now a major public health concern, with men disproportionately affected. Reports suggest that Zimbabwean men are three times more likely to die by suicide than women, despite women attempting suicide more frequently. Recent social media cases of men contemplating suicide highlight the urgency of addressing this crisis. The reasons behind this crisis range from societal pressures to financial struggles, marital conflicts, traumatic experiences and poor mental health support systems.

The Numbers Speak
Zimbabwe has one of the highest suicide ideation and self-harm rates among young people in Africa. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) Prevention and Management of Mental Health Conditions in Zimbabwe Report (2022), suicide accounts for approximately 1.8% of all deaths in Zimbabwe, with men being at a significantly higher risk than women. Zimbabwe ranks among the top 10 countries for adolescent suicide rates, with many struggling with depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. Although national statistics on male suicides are scarce, reports suggest that men are particularly vulnerable due to factors such as social isolation, financial difficulties, and the stigma around seeking mental health help.

Why Are Men at Higher Risk?

1. Emotional Suppression: Men are often discouraged from expressing vulnerability, leading to bottled-up emotions and eventually, depression.

2. Financial and Societal Pressures: The expectation to be providers and stigma surrounding mental health issues amongst men places immense stress on men, making financial hardships a major trigger for mental health struggles.

3. Substance Abuse: Many men turn to alcohol or drugs to cope, which worsens their mental health and increases suicidal tendencies.

4. Lack of Mental Health Awareness: Many men do not recognise the symptoms of depression, and when they do, they fear being judged for seeking help.

Impact on Families, Workplaces, and the Economy
Suicide does not only affect individuals, it muddles families, workplaces, and the economy. Families suffer emotional and financial burdens, while businesses experience decreased productivity when employees struggle with mental health issues. Workplace stress is a significant contributor to male suicide, with toxic work environments, un-

realistic expectations, and job insecurities heightening stress levels.



The Role of the Corporate World

The workplace can be a key intervention point in reducing suicide risks. Companies must take proactive steps, including:

1. Promoting Mental Health Awareness: Organising regular mental health workshops and providing counseling services.
2. Encouraging Open Conversations: Creating safe spaces for employees to discuss mental health struggles without stigma.
3. Implementing Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs): Offering accessible mental health support to all employees.
4. Reducing Workplace Stress: Ensuring a balanced workload and introducing flexible work-

ing hours to help employees maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Breaking the Silence
Addressing male suicide requires a collective effort from families, communities, and workplaces. Encouraging men to seek help, investing in mental health services, and normalising conversations around mental health can significantly reduce suicide rates.

Are we having enough mental health conversations in the workplace?

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