

The Power of Intergenerational Knowledge: Retirees Leading the Charge Against GBV

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Gender Based Violence (GBV) is one of the greatest pervasive ills of the South African society declared by the president of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) as second pandemic to the COVID-19, which has worsened since March 2020. Even though the country has taken enormous steps in developing and empowering women, GBV still persists. Many people take GBV very light. I define different types of GBV, to add to and expand what it really means. GBV is understood as, any form of violence that is perpetrated against an individual because of their gender or perceived gender. The different forms of GBV in South Africa include, but not limited to domestic violence; intimate partner violence; sexual harassment; emotional violence; socio-economic violence; and femicide. Domestic violence encompasses physical violence that includes hitting, punching, pushing, pulling, kicking, biting, slapping, choking, or using weapons to assault someone. Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is defined as behavior within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm. This includes acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviors. Emotional violence/ verbal violence is an array of actions in which a person insults, humiliates, and generally instils fear in an individual to control him or her. Emotional abuse includes being insulted or made to feel bad about oneself, being belittled or humiliated in front of others, being scared of the male perpetrator, by the way the male partner looks at the female partner, yelling, smashing things, having the male partner threaten to hurt someone the female partner cares about, harassment, degrading comments, and threatening. Socio-economic violence refers to the use of power or control through economic means to oppress or harm individuals or groups. It takes many forms, including economic exploitation, financial abuse, discriminatory lending and hiring practices, unequal pay, and the denial of economic opportunities based on social identity factors such as race, gender, or class. Femicide is understood to be the killing of women and girls based on their gender identity. Femicide can take many forms, including intimate partner violence, honor killings, dowry related killings, and murder as a result of gender- based discrimination

I observe that there are many factors that act as the driving causes of GBV and among them are patriarchy, gender equality, culture, societal structure, biological history, role model, individual issues, education level and socio-economic factors among others. Patriarchy acts as a trigger for diverse forms of violence, ranging from physical assault to emotional manipulation and perpetuates violations against women. South Africa is a multicultural society, in which different cultures have their own norms, values and beliefs in which many types of violence are caused by. The higher incidence of GBV can be attributed to individual and biological factors that shape an individual's behavior towards others. These factors include a history of the perpetrator being abused during childhood, exposure to marital violence within the household, an absent or rejecting father, and frequent alcohol use. I profess that individual level factors fueling GBV range from young age at marriage, substance abuse, level of education and family background and alcohol consumption

Additionally, community-level factors, such as poverty, lack of social support, reduced social networks, limited employment opportunities, and rigid gender roles, elevate the risk of women being exposed to GBV. It is closely linked to women's socio-economic status and cultural issues. Women's dependency on men for financial support is a risk factor for violence and girls in their relationships, families, and the communities in which they live. I therefore contend that it is important that we as a country identify with pride, a retiree cohort, to assist in addressing GBV comprehensively, considering risk and protective factors, consequences, and entry points for intervention.

Retirees have accumulated a wealth of life experiences, which can provide valuable insights and perspectives to others. Having lived through various challenges, they have developed patience and resilience and intuitively learned different methods of teaching others. They are the country's power force as many of them actively contribute to their communities through volunteering, mentoring, or supporting charitable causes. They have navigated changes throughout their lives, making them adaptable and open to new ideas.

We therefore can request them to actively engage in conversations about GBV within their communities. By sharing information and resources, they could help raise awareness and promote a culture of prevention. They can offer emotional support to survivors of GBV. They have learned to listen without judgment and they can connect survivors to relevant service, making a significant difference. They can further challenge harmful gender stereotypes and promote equality, encouraging respectful behaviour and questioning discriminatory attitudes. They can participate in community meetings, writing letters to local representatives, and supporting organizations working on GBV prevention. Retirees are powerful people full of wisdom. They can talk openly with their grandchildren about healthy relationships, consent, and respect and discuss GBV impact and consequence and encourage their independence and self-confidence. They can teach safety precautions, such as avoiding risky situations and knowing emergency numbers and advocate for safe spaces within the community and schools.

This article seeks to humbly request South African retirees to organize workshops, seminars, or awareness campaigns and even educate their peers and community members about GBV, its impact, available resources, volunteer with local organizations working on GBV prevention, assist with hotline services, accompany survivors to medical appointments or legal proceedings, or participate in community patrols. I avow, by sharing their life experiences, they can positively influence attitudes toward GBV.