

GBV AGAINST MEN, A NEGLECTED PHENOMENON IN OUR SOCIETY



INTRODUCTION:

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a widespread problem that affects people of all genders and it is a critical worldwide health, human rights, and development issue. There is no universal definition of GBV, although it can be classified as physical, sexual, economic, psychological, or emotional hostility aimed toward someone due of their biological sex or gender identity (Stephenie, 2020). While women and girls are disproportionately affected by GBV, men are also victims of various forms of violence (Mphatheni and Mlamla, 2022). The majority of GBV narratives depict men as violent perpetrators. While society is quick to condemn and publicly accuse male offenders of GBV, it does not pay equal attention to male victims of GBV. Recent country specific statistics are sparse as to the perception and experience of GBV against men in our society

. This commentary aims to explore the different forms of violence men commonly experience; assess the current prevalence of GBV against men; identify barriers that hinder addressing GBV against men effectively and the reasons these cases remain a buried phenomenon in our society.

Prevalence and types of violence

Recent narratives have put light on the frequency of male violence. While the figures are frequently lower than for women, they are far from insignificant. Approximately 1 in 10 males report suffering some type of gender-based violence in their lifetime (Parkes et al., 2017), with domestic physical violence against men being the most frequent, with rates ranging from 3.4% to 20.3%. Furthermore, between 10.6% and 40% of individuals reported childhood abuse or mistreatment (Kolbe and Büttner, 2020). Physical violence, emotional and psychological abuse, and sexual violence are all examples of violence against males. Intimate partners, family members, or strangers may commit these acts of violence (Wondimu, 2022)

Additionally, men and boys lack access to health, legal, and support services because health care providers and authorities “may be unaware of the signs of sexual violence due to gendered assumptions that women are victims. Men as perpetrators. Some may be hostile towards, disbelieve, or even outright deny male victims.” This can also affect reporting. These barriers, Prejudice; social taboos, prejudice and fear of straying from masculine norms. And legal frameworks tailored to one group limit men and boys’ access to the services they need, resulting in delays for boys and men to report abuse and receive the help they need. This often happens (Rabah, 2018a).

Barriers to Reporting

There are many barriers that may prevent a man from disclosing his experience of GBV. Not only we have lack of awareness about the issue and its prevalence, but societal expectations about what it means to “be a man” may cause a survivor to suppress his trauma.

From an early age, men receive the message that they should never be, or even appear, vulnerable or weak; the idea that men cannot be victims is central to gender socialization” (Rabah, 2018a). Research from North American and European countries have shown that boys are more likely than girls to face abuse from a non-family member, and perpetrators are often older males known to the survivor.

However, studies from Bosnia, Liberia, and Rwanda among others have shown that in conflict settings women have been involved in sexual violence, often with groups of men, towards other men and women. Furthermore, men and boys may not successfully be able to fully access and utilize health, legal, and support services as health providers and authorities “may not know how to identify signs of sexual violence against males, due to gendered assumptions of women as victims and men as perpetrators. Some may be

hostile, profess disbelief, or dismiss male victims outright”; which may also impact reporting.

These barriers; prejudices; social taboos, fear of stigma and falling outside of masculine norms; and legal frameworks catered to one group, limits the access of men and boys to services they need and results in boys and men often delaying reports of abuse and receiving the assistance they need (Rabah, 2018a).

Conclusion

Gender-based violence (GBV) occurs in every region of the world, affecting individuals and families of diverse income and socio-demographic groups. GBV undermines the health, dignity, security, and autonomy of persons affected, yet remains surrounded by a culture of silence. While women and girls are most at risk to many forms of gender-based violence due to their increased vulnerability and marginalization, we must not overlook the impacts of violence against men and boys (Rabah, 2018b). The review highlights why it should be of importance,

to address GBV against men and seeks to promote increased recognition and understanding of their experiences. It is crucial to raise awareness, challenge societal stereotypes, strengthen institutional responses, and allocate resources specifically dedicated to supporting male victims. By doing so, we can strive towards a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to tackling GBV, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of gender, have access to the necessary support and resources to overcome violence and rebuild their lives.

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