



Foreword to *The Dyke* Special Issue 4, Gender

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Preface

The Midlands State University Gender Institute hosted a Conference from the 5th to the 6th of October 2022, themed *Combating Gender-Based Violence in Tertiary Institutions* resulting in the production of this special issue of *The Dyke Journal*. Herein are a collection of research-based papers on Gender Based Violence and Sexual Harassment in Institutions of Higher Learning in Zimbabwe. In this Special Issue, 4 of *The Dyke Journal*, are articles authored by researchers from universities polytechnics and a teacher education college in Zimbabwe. In their quest to create awareness on the importance of gender in research in higher education, the authors tackle Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Sexual Harassment (SH), a specific form of GBV, in Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) in Zimbabwe.



Foreword

Gender-based violence (GBV) is described by Sida (2015 p. 1) as “the most extreme expression of unequal gender relations in society and one of the most widespread violations of human right.”

Institutions of learning provide an ambient where various forms of gender-based violence and sexual harassment are witnessed (Cuxart et al., 2021; Hu & Cheong, 2021; Sida, 2015; Tutgun-Ünal, 2021). The same schools, “from primary level to higher educational institutions, vocational training and non-formal education, are important sites for normative change and have the potential to address gender inequalities and prevent GBV” (Sida, 2015 p. 1), and this Special Issue provides concentrated insights into the context-based GBV –wherein the context are institutions of higher learning.

Relations between students and staff members at the institutions are the main ingredient to GBV and/or sexual harassment. All papers in this issue appear to agree that institutional policies on GBV, sexual harassment are currently ‘toothless’ leading to the exacerbation of the GBV pandemic.

Despite the patriarchal nature of the context, wherein patriarchy (Ademiluka, 2018; Hadi, 2017; Javed & Kumar Chattu, 2021) appears to be protecting its kith-and-kin –as if patriarchy reacting to threats to its power, while on the other hand masculinity (Lodge, 2005) encouraging ‘boys-not-to-cry.’ Articles herein reveal that lack of open dialogue, awareness, education, frameworks, worldviews, and friendly support systems within institutions are contributing to the GBV scourge going unreported. Further, victims are unable to recognise GBV and or sexual harassment ultimately conditioning laxity among implementers of the respective policies.

The Special Issue, hence is rich in providing a glimpse of the state of GBV in tertiary institutions marking the need for continued dialogue on another pandemic which continues to bedevil society.

While the causes, and drivers of GBV, are multiple and complex (Sida, 2015), Muzvidziwa battles to locate the main causes of GBV in tertiary institutions and observes lack of *unhu/ubuntu* (Nansubuga & Munene, 2020; Swartz, 1997; Wall, 2016) as very central.

Chamboko posits that female students are victimised due to ignorance on GBV aspects. As if agreeing with Muzvidziwa, Chamboko identifies desire for short-time benefits by mainly female students result in them falling victim to trust, persuasive and manipulative tactics used by perpetrators. Chamboko calls for promotion of friendly platforms for victims to share experiences with the hope for justice, and healing.

Guga et al., debunks the notion that GBV is synonymous with females only as they provide evidence of how the male are victims to GBV as well (Sida, 2015) despite their age, level of education or social status. 'Silence', however, benchmarked on masculinity is noted as the main challenge and cause for the escalation of GBV and/or sexual harassment among affecting male students and staff.

Mangeya unravels the nexus between tertiary students, side-line student sports chants and the perpetuation of attitudes towards GBV wherein the side-line sports chants are noted as an important cultural text in any given society that provide spaces for the negotiation of gendered attitudes in any given social milieu. It is the cultivation of such attitudes that manifest themselves in private spaces leading Matope and Muchabaiwa to examine intimate partner violence from an intersectional feminist perspective to handle GBV as resulting from patriarchy and other discriminatory and repressive practices. The duo recommend use of digital and physical security mechanisms; provide consultations with victims and survivors to recount their experiences in a safe and supportive environment. Alluding to the 'digital', Matope and Muchabaiwa wrestle with, Mawere brings attention to cyber-sexual harassment now common with social media use given that most of the students in the said institutions are the 'Ama200' generation which is very active and visible on social media (Hu & Cheong, 2021).

Mawere calls for the need to educate students about their rights, and dangers, obtaining in the cyber space and that institutions come up with anti-cyber sexual harassment programmes; while Moyo evaluates the effectiveness of the measures currently in place to curb sexual harassment of female undergraduate students in public universities in Zimbabwe.

Mugodzwa and Ngwerume demonstrate that ‘no one is righteous’ in higher and tertiary institutions as students and their lecturers are perpetrators and victims alike of GBV. They claim that most of the cases, sadly, are going unreported or being swept under the carpet by institutional authorities to protect the ‘integrity’, from ‘public scrutiny’ and image of the institutions involved. A strategic implementation system of sexual harassment policies is called for in institutions to nib escalation of GBV in institutions of higher learning.

Chauraya having captured opinions, attitudes, feelings, and emotions on regarding the high prevalence of the scourge, proffers a gender responsive multi-pronged framework to strengthen implementation initiatives so that the vice is combated.

Conclusion

Articles herein are dialogic, as multi-perspectives are provided in an effort to understand the hidden dimensions of GBV, how it is cultivated, manifest and what are the challenges victims mainly face. Tertiary institutions are expected to be safe environments for relations, whether educational, intimate or otherwise, and articles herein in one voice are saying GBV has, and must not have a place in tertiary institutions. In this regard, all stakeholders, students, staff, institutions, the government and others must collaboratively work together to curb the menace.

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