

REPORT

The Eugenia Nothemba Gxowa Foundation

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE

Prevalence, Institutional Responses, Cultural Norms and
the Role of Men Holding Leadership Positions in Prevention

November 2024



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A project supported by the National Lotteries Commission



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Eugenia Nothemba Gxowa Foundation

Reg: 249-217NPO

CIRP Reg. NPC. K2021839156

www.engfoundation.org.za

☎ +27 73 228 5046 (WhatsApp); +27 71 760 0166 (Calls)

INTRODUCTION

The Eugenia Nothemba Gxowa (ENGf) Foundation's programme, **Collaborating with Men and Boys to Combat Gender-Based Violence Against Girls/Women (GBVAG/W)** is modelled on the United Nations' Women's solidarity movement for gender equality, HeForShe. The pilot phase of this campaign is being undertaken in collaboration with the University of Fort Hare's Gender-based Violence Prevention Unit. The first phase, which took place between April and August 2024, involved research to assess the state of GBVAW within the university. The campaign's primary objective is to encourage and support men in leadership positions to actively and visibly advocate against GBVAW. This report is a culmination of the research and interviews undertaken at the university's Alice and East London campuses during that four-month period.

GBVAW within South African institutions of higher learning has been extensively examined in journal articles and research studies spanning the past two decades. South Africa, unenviably, has one of the highest global rates of GBVAW, and universities, as microcosms of broader society, are not exempt from this phenomenon. The persistence of GBVAW within these educational settings can be linked to enduring cultural and gender norms that maintain imbalanced sexual power dynamics across different genders. In recent years, the media has played a pivotal role in highlighting the severity of GBVAW on campuses by covering various tragic incidents. The murders of female students in South African universities have drawn widespread attention, revealing the gravity and prevalence of GBVAW within these educational settings. These incidents have catalysed student-led protests,

raising awareness and demanding action against GBVAW on campuses. Notable cases include the murders of Uyinene Mrwetyana from the University of Cape Town in 2019, Sandile Ndlovu from the Durban University of Technology, Precious Ramabulana at Capricorn Technical and Vocational Education Institution (TVET) in Limpopo, Jesse Hess from the University of Cape Town, and a shocking further eight murders across higher learning institutions in just one month of 2023, all linked to GBVAW.

Yolanda Dyantyi's expulsion from Rhodes University¹ in 2017, following her involvement in the RU Reference List protests, is a notable case within the broader context of addressing GBVAW at higher education institutions. The RU Reference List protests in 2016 highlighted issues of sexual harassment and rape on campus. Dyantyi's expulsion, for charges including kidnapping and assault, without being given a fair chance to defend herself, sparked significant controversy and was seen as part of a more considerable outcry against the prevalent GBVAW in universities. Her case, after lengthy legal battles, reached the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA) in 2022. The SCA overturned her expulsion, emphasising procedural flaws in her disciplinary hearing at Rhodes University. This decision was significant for Dyantyi and the ongoing struggle against GBVAW in educational institutions, underscoring the need for fair and just processes in handling such sensitive and critical issues.

These incidents underscore the pervasive nature of GBVAW within South African higher education institutions, demonstrating an

¹ <https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/south-africa/2022-03-29-sca-sets-aside-ex-rhodes-student-yolanda-dyantyi-2017-expulsion/>

urgent need for comprehensive strategies to address, mitigate and ultimately eradicate this grave issue from our campuses.

With this in mind, the ENGF contracted feminist research consultant, Celeste Fortuin, to bring to light the prevalence, institutional responses, cultural norms and challenges associated with gender-based violence against women (GBVAW) at the University of Fort Hare, a historic institution with a significant role in African education. Whilst UFH serves a diverse student body across its Alice and East London campuses, it also faces ongoing challenges related to infrastructure, student safety and a rising prevalence of GBVAW. Two hundred male and female students, with representation from undergraduate, postgraduate and vulnerable student groups, were interviewed for this project in 20 focus groups. Student leaders, academic staff, administrative personnel and key figures within campus residences were included – all groups that play crucial roles in shaping campus culture and supporting students.

In addition to student and staff participants, the

study received significant input from UFH's GBV Prevention Unit, which provided insights into current institutional mechanisms and challenges in addressing GBVAW. Collaboration with national higher education organisations such as Higher Health offered further context, allowing the research to draw on broader perspectives on GBVAW prevention and responses from several South African universities.

Although this study found that GBVAW is prevalent at UFH, just how prevalent is difficult to determine. This is largely because of under-reporting by victims who are influenced by social stigma, fear of retaliation and scepticism about institutional support. Cultural norms and expectations further complicate reporting; survivors often anticipate blame and social exclusion, particularly when reporting violence by individuals in positions of authority, such as student leaders or lecturers.

These challenges create a "culture of silence", where the fear of judgement and social repercussions outweighs the pursuit of justice, obscuring the true extent of GBVAW on campus.



KEY FINDINGS

The focus groups revealed that GBVAW is widespread at UFH:

"Sexual abuse is common here on campus because it usually happens during the weekends; if you go to Campus Control offices, there are many cases reported there. There are even rape cases." (NS, FGD).

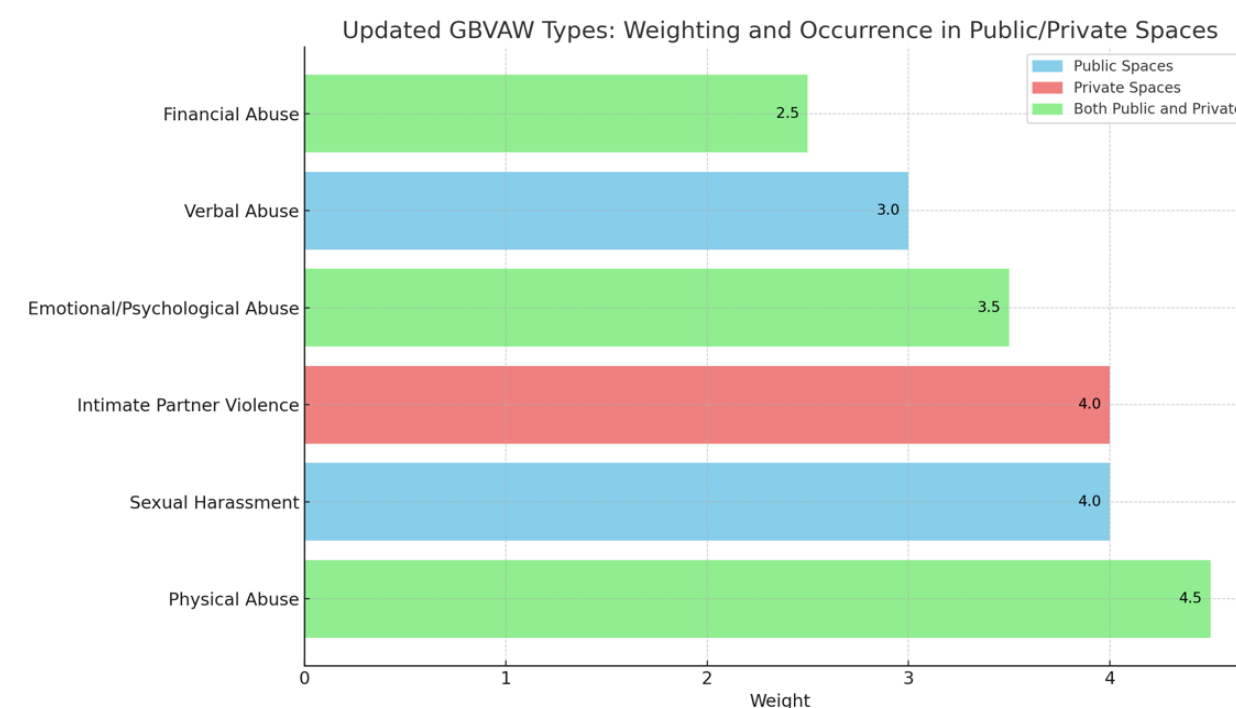
Across the focus groups, students collectively painted a picture of GBVAW as a near-daily occurrence, with verbal harassment and sexual violence being the most commonly reported forms. As one participant noted, *"I would personally say 40% every day... Sexual abuse and verbal harassment are the most common ones here." (N, FGD).*

"Based on my experience, I feel like it is very prevalent; we have heard of cases, we have seen cases and people have lost their lives because of GBV." (N, FGD).

"I would say that GBV occurs all the time here on campus. For example, when a young lady is wearing a mini skirt or tight pants and going to town, she will pass by a group of guys, and they will clap hands and blow whistles, making a girl feel uncomfortable." (NS, FGD).

The chart below provides a visual representation of the prevalence of GBVAW at UFH. Based on discussions from student focus groups, it highlights how frequently different forms of abuse occur in specific locations on campus.

At UFH, GBVAW and intimate partner violence (IPV) take many forms, which are discussed in detail below. These include verbal harassment, including catcalling, inappropriate comments and suggestive remarks, financial exploitation, physical assaults, intimate partner violence, online harassment and abuse of first-year female students.



GBVAW is normalised at the university. The study found that verbal harassment of women is frequently dismissed as commonplace behaviour. This type of harassment creates an intimidating environment for female students, yet it is often brushed off or accepted as “boys being boys”.

The normalisation of GBVAW within the UFH community perpetuates a cycle of harmful behaviours where violence and harassment are expected. The pervasive nature of this conduct discourages students from seeking help, either because they feel their concerns will be dismissed or because they lack trust in the university’s ability to provide effective support. This cultural tolerance of GBVAW fosters an environment where perpetrators face minimal accountability and survivors are left feeling isolated and powerless.

Financial exploitation of female students

This is present at UFH in the form of “transactional relationships.” Many female students, especially those from economically vulnerable backgrounds, report feeling pressured to engage in relationships with older men (often referred to as “blessers”) or wealthier students to secure financial assistance for basic needs such as food, rent or tuition. These exploitative relationships frequently involve coercion, manipulation and sometimes violence, leaving young women feeling trapped and unable to exit these arrangements.

“There is this thing of blessings, so people who have money abuse students. Some female students endure that because they don’t have money, and no one supports them back home. GBV can happen when you are given the money; the guy may feel like he owns you, and the girl now is forced to do the things they don’t want just because they are financially supported. Others don’t report such cases because they are threatened, and no one wants to lose their academia and have a criminal record.” (NS, FGD) Students who rely on a partner for financial support may worry about losing that support if they attempt to exit the relationship or report

coercion. Similarly, students pressured by influential faculty members or older students with academic power fear potential retaliation, such as poor grades or exclusion from academic opportunities, if they resist or speak out. This intersection of economic dependency and institutional power dynamics deepens their vulnerability, limiting their ability to seek help or exercise agency in their personal lives.

Online harassment

Another troubling form of GBVAW identified in the study is online harassment, which includes cyberbullying, stalking and the non-consensual sharing of private information or images. In many cases, this remains unaddressed due to the absence of clear policies to tackle cyber-based GBVAW. Female students reported feeling unsafe and exposed, as perpetrators can anonymously harass or threaten them online, often without facing any consequences.

An incident that occurred in 2023 exemplifies the growing issue of digital forms of sexual harassment on campus. A male student who was part of various school group chats would randomly select numbers from these chats and video call individuals, not to reveal his face but to expose his genitals.

This case highlights the rise of cyber-misogyny, where perpetrators exploit the anonymity afforded by digital platforms to exert control and inflict harm. In some cases, Facebook posts with videos of GBVAW being committed are published with the intention of humiliating or degrading an individual, often leading to severe emotional and psychological consequences. A participant explained,

“We also have those cases where people post other people on social media... to humiliate them and make them trend for your reasons. If I see you doing something and I post it, it will go viral, and that person will feel embarrassed and even end up committing suicide because of the action that was taken by someone else.” (P, FGD).

Physical violence and IPV

The students who were interviewed relayed numerous accounts of physical assaults and controlling behaviours within intimate relationships on campus. IPV includes psychological and emotional manipulation. It was found to be alarmingly common especially in student residences. Many female students shared experiences of being threatened, isolated from friends and subjected to coercive control by their partners. Some students cohabit in residences, leading to conflicts and violent altercations that often go unaddressed.

As one participant told the researchers:

“I was assaulted by the guy who was my partner. It is not easy to talk about and also not something you can wake up and decide to talk about because people judge you. He took me to the east campus, where he knocked me off on a wall and left me unconscious, bleeding. I woke up after 20 to 30 minutes and went back to my room alone.

To hear stories like that and students being killed by their partners or being raped brings back the memories and flashbacks of what happened to me. I was wearing a weave that I loved dearly, but now I hate it so much because it brings back the memories of what has happened to me.” (N, FGD)

This account illustrates the severe physical and emotional trauma experienced by the participant whom a fellow student assaulted. The assault left her unconscious and vulnerable, underscoring the immediate physical danger she faced.

The study found that IPV also takes place between platonic friends. A student described a harrowing incident where she experienced sexual harassment from a male friend who entered her room under false pretences and attempted to assault her while she was sleeping.

“We considered him a friend. After returning

from The Groove, I went to sleep in my room, leaving the door unlocked for my roommate. Later, I woke to find him touching me and realised he had followed me. He claimed he was looking for his friends, but it was clear he had been trying to assault me. The next day, he said he didn’t remember because he was drunk. I could report him, but people would say I’m being dramatic because he didn’t fully rape me.” (KB, FGD).

This account highlights a case of sexual assault where the perpetrator, initially regarded as a friend, took advantage of the student’s vulnerable state.

The vulnerability of first-year female students

This is a major area of concern. First years are not familiar with campus structures, power dynamics and available support resources. The term “fresh meat” is disturbingly used by some upper-year students, including SRC members, to describe first-year female students. This exploitative and dehumanising language reflects and perpetuates a predatory culture.

During the focus groups, students explained that even members of the Right to Learn Society (a student organisation) target first-year students by offering assistance with stressful processes such as NSFAS applications, registration and accommodation. These helpers gain access to students’ personal information, such as phone numbers, and create a sense of obligation by positioning themselves as saviours in a time of need.

“So, when you first arrive at the institution at the main gate, they take you where you could do the registration. They would say, ‘Can I take your number to communicate? And I have people who will accompany you and help you with accommodation.’ You can feel that the people did you a great favour and you owe them.” (N, FGD).

Some first-year students, unable to secure housing,

are exposed to transactional relationships, where housing or other forms of support are exchanged for sexual favours. The focus groups revealed that first-year female students even have to live in “skwata” (informal settlements) because of the university’s shortage of residences.

Other female first-year students are raped in their university accommodation.

“There was a case of a first-year student. This guy from one of the political organisations offered her a place, and he raped her. The case was reported to campus control and that guy was expelled or had a disciplinary hearing. I’m not sure what happened with the case, but some actions were taken. The guy graduated and left, but I’m not sure what happened to the girl.” (P, FGD).

“Last year, there was a case of a female first-year student who was raped by drunk students at the male residences and dumped at the toilet. The police were called, and suspects were arrested.” (N, FGD)

Unsafe spaces

The students interviewed identified dangerous areas on campus such as student residences and the main gate, particularly late at night, when students return from social events, such as discos.

“There are things that happen at the main gate because when a girl comes from a disco and, let’s say that she lets the guy buy her alcohol, and the guy is hoping that he will leave with that girl, there are instances like that, and they lead to GBVAW. When the girl does not want to go to the guy’s place, the guy may end up beating that girl and saying, ‘You’re using me, now you don’t want to pay me back.’” (NS FGD).

This situation illustrates the transactional expectations some men have when engaging with women in social settings where violence is used to assert dominance or claim entitlement to

a woman’s body. The notion of “owing” the male student after consuming alcohol bought by him and the subsequent violence when expectations are not met, exemplifies the exploitative dynamics that can play out at the main gate. Another participant highlights the regularity of such incidents:

“I would hear the noise of people fighting, and you would think it’s only guys, and you would see it’s a girl, a guy and a friend who is just trying to stop it. So, one weekend, I would maybe see seven cases, from Friday to Sunday.” (P, FGD).

One participant recounted a chilling encounter witnessed by campus security:

“Some students come back from the drinking spot called the disco, and they chill there at the school’s main gate for a gathering/after-party post-Groove. Around those times, after 2:00a.m., ...some get raped on their way to their residences or fight with guys that want them romantically or sexually. I had a chat with security yesterday about a girl who was accompanied by a guy to her residence, who was also a stranger, and the security caught him undressing the girl on the stairs while she was drunk. The worst part is that the guy was not drunk, while the girl was intoxicated.” (P, FGD).

Students also reported that non-student boyfriends are able to gain access to female residences, heightening the risk of violence for female students. There is very poor security in the residences, inadequate lighting and a lack of monitoring around taverns and dark areas on campus. This creates opportunities for predatory behaviour, particularly when combined with substance abuse.

The ambiguous role of the Student Representative Council (SRC)

This study found that some SRC members advocate for students and aim to push GBVAW

cases forward. But others have used their positions to exploit first-year students and prevent cases involving SRC candidates from being reported or investigated. Certain SRC individuals evade accountability. Students’ trust in the SRC’s ability to protect the interests of the student body is then undermined.

The focus groups revealed a disturbing pattern of abuse of power by SRC members. One participant shared an account of how an SRC candidate assaulted a female student during the election period. The victim was told not to pursue her case further to prevent “compromising” the candidate’s chances of winning the election.

“It was during the SRC elections, and it was a candidate who was going to be elected for SRC that assaulted the girl. We went to campus control and when she was told to write her statement, she was told that they would hold on to the case until after the elections, because it would compromise him. And when he got into the SRC the case was dismissed and no follow-ups were made. I’m saying that cases are reported, but few are brought forward because of these people in power and position.” (P, FGD)

The prevalence of toxic masculinity

Toxic masculinity is a set of cultural expectations that pressure men to assert dominance, control and emotional detachment, often at the expense of respect for others. This study found that indeed, male students in particular, have been socialised into a belief system that prioritises entitlement and control in relationships, which can lead to conduct that they may not recognise as harmful or abusive. These behaviours include coercion, intimidation and controlling actions toward female students. For example, some male students may view possessiveness, jealousy and monitoring their partner’s movements or communications as signs of care or love when, in reality, these are forms of controlling behaviour that can be psychologically damaging. Aggressive

behaviour is often normalised as part of the “male experience”. Harmful actions that result from toxic masculinity on campus are framed as inconsequential. Consequently, perpetrators often evade accountability, while female students are left to deal with the emotional and psychological fallout of these encounters.

Victim-blaming

The study also found that victim-blaming attitudes are prevalent among both the student body and, in some cases, staff members. Victim-blaming occurs when the survivor of violence is held responsible, wholly or partially, for the harm they have suffered. In the context of UFH, female students who experience GBVAW may be questioned about their clothing, their behaviour, or their choice of social activities, implying that they somehow provoked or “asked for” the harassment or violence. These attitudes not only deter survivors from coming forward but also reinforce a culture of silence around GBVAW. When survivors are made to feel responsible for the abuse, they are less likely to seek support or justice, fearing judgment or further stigmatisation from their peers or the institution.

LGBTQ+ students face compounded problems with GBVAW

LGBTQ+ students at UFH reported verbal harassment, bullying and social ostracism. This discrimination and harassment is both gender-based and explicitly homophobic. It places LGBTQ+ students at a heightened risk of experiencing violence and exclusion. The study found that homophobic attitudes are pervasive within the student body, with LGBTQ+ students often being singled out and targeted for their sexual orientation or gender identity. This hostility discourages them from participating in campus activities, forming supportive networks, or seeking help when they experience violence, effectively isolating them within the university

community.

“Gay people experience sexual harassment, and it is hard for them to report it. People don’t take them seriously, and I feel those cases are serious.” (NS, FGD).

“Queerphobia and homophobia [are] prevalent, not to say that it is not happening, but people are not coming forward to report it.” (N, FGD).

There are no specific university support mechanisms for LGBTQ+ students. The resources that exist to address GBVAW are heteronormative and overlook the unique experiences and vulnerabilities of LGBTQ+ individuals. For instance, LGBTQ+ students reported that campus support staff often lack training in LGBTQ+ issues, leading to insensitive or dismissive responses when LGBTQ+ students approached them for help.

Everyday gender discrimination

This is embedded within everyday interactions and institutional practices. Discriminatory attitudes disempower women, especially in academic and

social settings. For example, female students reported feeling overlooked or undervalued in group projects or classroom discussions, where male voices tended to dominate, subtly conveying that women’s contributions are less valued.

The study also highlighted that staff attitudes can reinforce these cultural norms, further embedding them into the institutional fabric. When support staff implicitly or explicitly condone discriminatory behaviours, they signal to students that such attitudes are acceptable or even endorsed by authority figures.

The need for positive male role models on campus

The study identified that GBVAW is seen as a women’s problem. There is a lack of formal male role models and mentors advocating for GBVAW prevention. Senior students, student leaders and faculty members should be engaged to set a powerful example for other men, by being vocal about their commitment to gender equality, perpetuating respectful behaviour and by challenging stereotypes. Male students have also not been empowered to intervene safely and effectively when they witness incidents of GBVAW or behaviours that could lead to violence.



WHAT IS THE UNIVERSITY DOING ABOUT THE PROBLEM?

The research found that the university leadership has demonstrated a clear commitment to addressing these issues. Interviews with the Vice-Chancellor (VC), Dean of Students and key academic leaders emphasise the university’s political will to combat GBVAW and support survivors. The VC and Dean have been vocal advocates for initiatives such as the HeForShe campaign, which encourages male students and staff to actively support gender equality and GBVAW prevention.

The university’s Gender-Based Violence Prevention Unit (GBVPU) plays a central role, offering survivors crisis intervention, counselling and pathways for reporting incidents, while also leading awareness initiatives to foster campus-wide accountability. The Student Counselling Unit (SCU) provides critical psychological support through individual and group therapy, ensuring survivors have access to sustained mental health resources. Safe houses on the Alice and East London campuses offer temporary secure accommodation for those facing immediate safety concerns, though maintaining these facilities has proven financially challenging. Campus Control and Resident Wardens act as first responders within campus grounds and student residences when incidents of GBVAW occur.

However, UFH staff have not received adequate trauma-informed training. Their responses are therefore not consistent or reliable, impacting survivor trust in these university services.

What needs to happen next?

The study’s findings underscore the urgent need for UFH to address institutional barriers and rebuild trust in its GBVAW response mechanisms. There are many steps that the university needs to take if it wants to make a strong stand against GBVAW. These steps include the following:

1. Implementing strict confidentiality protocols, ensuring impartial investigations and establishing independent oversight for cases

involving influential individuals are crucial steps towards creating a system that survivors can trust.

2. UFH must develop inclusive and sensitive support systems that recognise the specific challenges faced by LGBTQ+ students and economically disadvantaged women. For LGBTQ+ students, this could involve training support staff on LGBTQ+ issues to provide more inclusive and respectful responses, as well as implementing policies that explicitly protect LGBTQ+ individuals from gender-based and homophobic harassment.
3. The study also found that UFH must devote efforts and resources to engaging male students and staff as active allies who understand and contribute to a safer, more respectful campus environment. The participants in this study proposed several methods to increase male engagement in GBVAW prevention, including male-only workshops, discussion groups and mentorship programmes that address key topics such as healthy relationships, positive masculinity, consent and bystander intervention. These male-centred sessions would allow male students to critically reflect on societal expectations around masculinity, understand how these norms contribute to GBVAW and explore ways to adopt more constructive and respectful behaviours. This approach recognises that many men may not fully realise how their behaviours, attitudes or silence in the face of GBVAW contribute to a campus culture where violence is tolerated or overlooked.

Healthy relationships and positive masculinity were identified as essential topics for these workshops. Sessions on healthy relationships would address communication, boundaries and empathy, aiming to dismantle harmful notions that equate masculinity with control,

aggression or entitlement. By examining these topics, male students would learn that masculinity can be expressed in supportive, respectful and non-violent ways.

4. This study also recommends that UFH conduct bystander intervention training to equip male students with the skills to recognise potentially harmful situations and take action—whether directly addressing inappropriate behaviour, offering support to a friend, or alerting authorities when necessary. Teaching male students that they have a responsibility not only to avoid harmful behaviour but also to prevent it in others, can help foster a sense of accountability and collective responsibility within the student body.
5. The university is also advised to integrate education and awareness about GBVAW into curricula.
6. UFH should pursue alternative funding avenues, such as partnerships with government bodies, NGOs and private sponsors, to sustain the GBV Prevention Unit, safe houses and other critical initiatives.
7. UFH policies must be reviewed regularly and updated to take into account the evolving nature of GBVAW, for example, new forms of digital harassment.
8. It is vital that UFH devote resources to security on campus. This should be done by installing security cameras widely across both campuses. The university must also increase the number of security staff who are visible and well-trained to ensure they handle GBVAW cases sensitively and effectively, particularly in situations requiring gender-specific support. Trained security staff must be hired to work in student residences, particularly mixed-gender housing, to enhance student safety.
9. This study further recommends comprehensive, mandatory training for all staff, particularly

security personnel, residence wardens and lecturers, to equip them to handle sensitive incidents and so that everyone on campus begins to view GBVAW prevention as a collective priority.

10. Importantly, UFH must adopt strict disciplinary measures for GBVAW offenders, including expulsions and suspensions. Clear, transparent communication around the outcomes of GBVAW cases will build confidence among students that offences are taken seriously.
11. This study also recommends that 24/7 support services be made available to provide survivors with immediate and ongoing assistance.
12. The university also needs to foster a more active role for the SRC in promoting awareness, facilitating reporting and advocating for survivors. Empowering female students to assume leadership positions in the SRC and other advocacy structures would amplify their voices and ensure that GBVAW prevention remains a campus-wide priority.
13. Involving women students in advocacy through a young women's forum is another recommendation. This would encourage young women to share experiences and participate in advocacy, reinforcing a sense of collective responsibility in addressing GBVAW. Institutionalised advocacy events like marches and campaigns would ensure that GBVAW prevention remains visible and relevant on campus.
14. A peer support system should be expanded by training more student officers, enhancing their ability to provide an approachable, less intimidating point of contact for survivors.
15. The university must show visible leadership through the HeForShe campaign. HeForShe champions play a key role in reshaping attitudes toward gender, promoting respectful relationships and challenging harmful gender stereotypes. Leadership figures such as the Vice-Chancellor, senior deans and department

heads should be primary champions for this campaign. Their positions allow them to set a visible standard of accountability and solidarity, encouraging the broader campus community to follow their example. In addition to senior administrative figures, respected faculty members who regularly interact with students could also serve as valuable champions.

16. This study found a link between substance abuse and GBV, highlighting the impact of alcohol and drug use on judgment and aggression. The university must implement harm-reduction strategies, such as allowing controlled alcohol consumption on campus, to create safer environments for drinking and reduce the risk of off-campus incidents linked to GBV. UFH should enforce policies on alcohol and drug consumption rigorously, complementing these with preventive education to reduce substance-related GBV incidents.
17. Finally, GBVAW policies must be publicised through multiple channels, such as emails, posters and orientation sessions, to ensure that they are widely accessible.

What are the most urgent priorities?

This study found these three key areas in which work must be prioritised if GBVAW is to be stopped:

- A. Promoting a Cultural Shift and Challenging Harmful Masculinity Norms** - This needs to be a campaign to challenge toxic masculinity and the entrenched norms that condone or excuse violence. Through workshops, panel discussions and events focused on redefining masculinity, the campaign can promote healthy expressions of male identity, encouraging empathy and respect as markers of strength. This shift in mindset is essential to reducing violence and fostering a more inclusive campus environment.
- B. Ensuring the Safety of First-Year Students** - Given that first-year students often face heightened risks and challenges, the campaign will prioritise initiatives tailored to this group's specific needs. A dedicated orientation programme will provide

safety training, resources and peer support networks to help new students navigate university life safely. The Young Women's Forum mentioned above should be set up to support first-year female students by offering mentorship, educational workshops and a space to share experiences and concerns. This focus on young women's safety will embed gender awareness early on, helping to build a culture of respect from the beginning of their academic journey.

C. Engaging Male Students in Active Accountability

- Recognising that peers often have a powerful influence, the campaign must promote male engagement through accountability initiatives as described above, encouraging male students to hold one another to a high standard of behaviour. Through peer-led discussions, training sessions, and role-modelling respectful behaviour, men will be encouraged to intervene as active bystanders, support survivors and advocate against all forms of GBV. By fostering an environment where men challenge harmful behaviours and support positive change, UFH can create a strong network of allies committed to making the campus safer and more equitable.

Conclusion

The EGNF believes that this research offers UFH valuable insights and actionable recommendations for addressing GBVAW on its campuses under the leadership of men in senior positions. By engaging key stakeholders and adopting evidence-based methodologies, the university can strive to create a safer and more inclusive environment for its community members. The project aligns with the broader goal of promoting gender equality and cultivating a culture of respect and dignity for everyone. UFH's involvement as a pilot site in the ENG HeForShe Project is pivotal. The lessons learned from its implementation will serve as crucial recommendations for replicating this project at other tertiary institutions. This phase allows us to gather data, refine strategies and assess the project's impact, offering valuable guidance for universities interested in promoting gender equality and addressing GBVAW.

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