Breaking the Cycle: A Community-Driven Approach to Gender Based Violence Education for

South African Youth & Young Adults

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1. **Abstract**

The aim of this project was to develop an educational workshop on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) for youth and young adults in South Africa, focusing on cultural and societal norms and the lack of education and awareness. The research addressed the following questions:

1) How could the educational curriculum be adapted to meet the needs of youth in relation to GBV?

2) How effective was the role of community leaders in dismantling harmful gender norms?

3) How did community involvement in planning, execution, and evaluation impact GBV interventions?

Community-based purposive and snowball sampling was employed across three South African communities, gathering data through post-workshop surveys and focus groups with facilitators, including an additional survey for an absent facilitator. An inductive coding approach was applied to identify themes and constructs from the raw data, focusing on lived experiences and community perspectives. Voyant Tools and Google Forms were used to visualize recurring words and organize quantitative data, helping assess the workshop's impact and the knowledge gained. Through analysis, 4 main themes were revealed: (1) Transformative Education and Knowledge Mobilization, (2) Inclusive Engagement and Participatory Learning, (3) Safe Spaces, Trust, and Emotional Connection, and (4) Community as a Catalyst for Change. Findings indicate a strong desire for inclusive, community-led GBV education addressing language barriers, male involvement, LGBTQIA2S+ inclusion, and socio-economic factors. While engagement was high, challenges such as limited resources, cultural norms, and facilitator training highlight the need for sustained efforts to create safe learning spaces that can drive meaningful and lasting change.

2. Acknowledgements

First and foremost, the research team would like to emphasize the importance of acknowledging the land in which this project was worked on in both parts of the world. The land on which the research team conducted work is the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, the Wendat peoples, and is home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Etobicoke is covered by Treaty 13, also known as the Toronto Purchase. In South Africa, this research took place in the Western Cape province. This respective land has been home to the Khoi and San peoples, the First Nations of the Cape, as well as other diverse indigenous peoples. It is important to recognize the communities that have had a deep connection to that land and honour their cultural heritage and presence in Nyanga, Valhalla Park, Atlantis, and beyond. With that being said, special acknowledgment must be given to the community partner for this project, Eunice Oyugi of Sisters4Sisters Cape Town, without Eunice's support and connections this project wouldn't have been possible. It is also important to acknowledge the contributions of the participating community members and leaders within the Cape Town communities of Nyanga, Atlantis, and Valhalla Park. The participants as well as facilitators that joined this project have provided the research team with important data, but more importantly shared their lived experiences, which built up the rationale for this project and supported its evaluation. It's crucial to acknowledge their contributions, and thank them for being so open and eager to join this project to develop GBV related education for youth and young adults. It is also equally important to acknowledge Humber Polytechnic and the team's Capstone Coordinator, Linda Hill, for providing this opportunity to engage in an enriching research project. Without this opportunity, this workshop wouldnt exist, so its existence - as well as future partnerships with Sisters4Sisters

Cape Town - is owed to the connections that Humber Polytechnic has fostered. The research

team's primary hope is that through this project, Sisters4Sisters Cape Town can secure future

funding to run similar initiatives that address GBV through a community-based approach and

break the cycle of harm.

3. Introduction

The disproportionate rates of abuse against women and children in South Africa

perpetrated by fathers and/or husbands, prompted President Cyril Ramaphosa to declare

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) a national crisis in 2019. The alarmingly high rates of abuse on

women and children have expectedly raised concerns on whether the COVID-19 lockdowns have

exacerbated domestic violence situations. During the COVID-19 lockdown, a reported "21

women and children were murdered in South Africa" (Buqa, 2022). A 2024 report by the

Department of Science and Innovation stressed the severity of GBV in South Africa, noting that

in 2020, over 120,000 cases of GBV were reported to authorities - a potentially greater amount if

unreported incidents are included - reflecting a significant increase compared to previous years.

This highlights the need for a comprehensive and meaningful approach to GBV intervention that

can address the root causes while providing adequate support for survivors. Gender-based

violence (GBV) in South Africa is deeply rooted in systemic inequalities, historical legacies, and

cultural norms based in patriarchy. Such injustices have limited South Africa's ability to

effectively address GBV, due in part to the normalization of abuse as a form of effective

punishment in South African households. In a community-based research study conducted within

the rural AmaZizi Chiefdom in Eastern Capetown, researchers emphasized the normalization and

social permission to use violence as punishment, specifically towards wives at the hands of

husbands, and it's connection to the relationship between gender expectations and GBV rates

(DeJong et al., 2023). In addition, the current gender-roles of South Africa are influenced by Apartheid modes of operation, in which there must be hierarchical positions and bodies of power (in this case between children, women, and men) (Moffett, 2006). The current post-colonial and post apartheid structures upheld within South Africa, leave little room for GBV education and awareness, so for this reason, this project is rooted in the necessity of educational interventions that address these complex issues whilst focusing on implementing lasting change.

There is a pressing need for GBV awareness and education, with South Africa facing significant shortfalls in the context of addressing these issues. A 2021 study highlighted that Student Representative Councils (SRCs) at select South African universities noted challenges faced in the promotion of GBV awareness, emphasizing limited support from university management as well as insufficient funding for awareness programs (Von Muellen et al., 2022). Integration of GBV into the curriculum can make learning environments safer and foster GBV awareness at a young age, as current education systems do not address GBV in an adequate or comprehensive manner (Mlamleli et al., 2000; Rammbuda, 2023). Training community leaders to support GBV education can also enhance long term sustainability and empower communities to take action at a local level in the context of generating solutions. To be effective, interventions must incorporate experiential learning, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence to equip youth and young adults with the tools that can challenge harmful gender norms and stereotypes within their communities (Anthia & Lewis, 2018). Research has shown that a participatory, community-based approach enhances the relevance, acceptability, and sustainability of GBV interventions (Harper et al., 2012). However, there seems to be a gap in the application of this approach within a South African context. Through the engagement of community leaders, the research team aimed to leverage youth and young adult activism to strengthen the sustainability

of anti-GBV approaches, and pave a path toward transformative change within South African communities through this developed workshop. The multilayered and comprehensive approach to this project integrates education, community collaboration, and collective support that all sets the foundation for the focus to be on the development and application of an educational workshop that is youth and young adult focused.

Furthermore, addressing the root causes in the context of the socio-political legacy of apartheid in South Africa that shapes patriarchal socio-cultural norms (Moffet, 2006; Ntuli, 2023) is essential for shifting societal perceptions and attitudes towards GBV. Addressing GBV effectively involves long-term and contextually informed strategies that engage entire communities, tackling the issue at both individual and systemic levels. By fostering early education, challenging harmful norms, and ensuring sustained support, initiatives like this workshop can contribute to lasting social change.
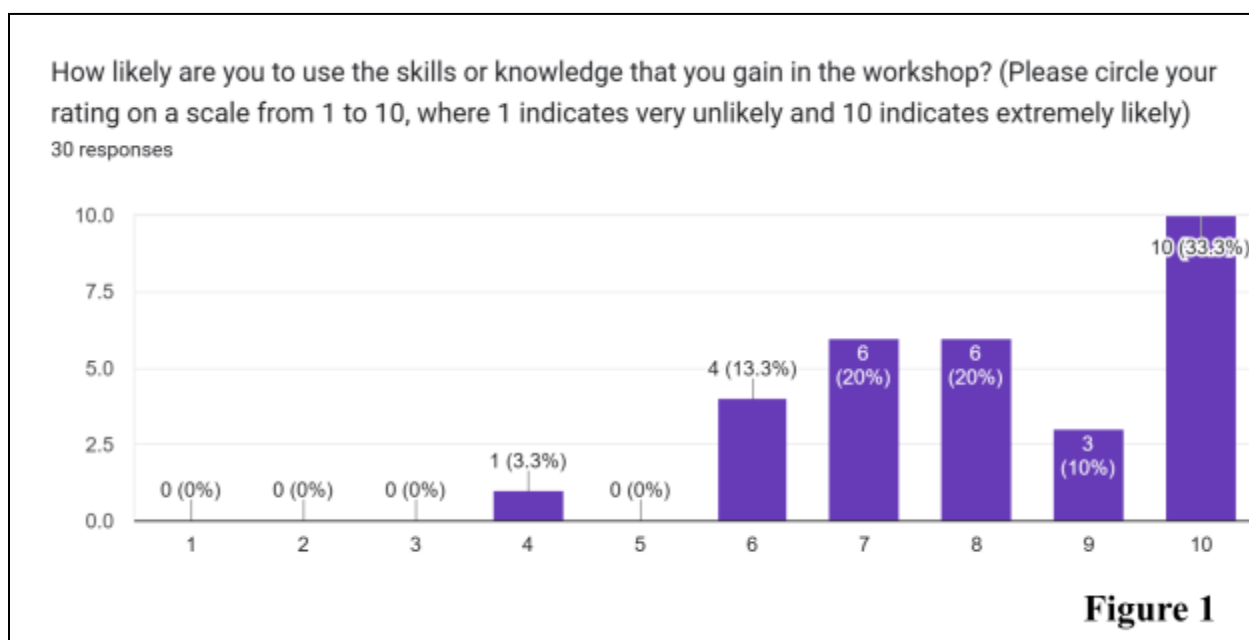
4. Methods

For the purpose of this study, a workshop template was created to be administered by the Sisters4Sisters partner, in three different South African Communities. With the collected data, the aim is to measure and establish the effectiveness of GBV workshops for South African youth and young adults. The three communities to be worked with were established through community-based purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Based on the sampling methods used, the three selected communities were Nyanga, Atlantis, and Valhalla Park. In order to determine the effectiveness of the workshop and GBV education, multiple data collection methods were used, including post workshop surveys and a focus group conducted with two of the workshop facilitators (1 survey was administered to the third facilitator that was unable to attend the focus group). Due to the nature of this study, a mixed-method approach was utilized to

gauge the full extent of the workshop process. This includes incorporating open and

closed-ended questions in the surveys provided for the participants to be completed following the

workshop. Once the data was collected, the following methodology approach was used; thematic

and constructivist approach & community-based participatory approach. Given the nature of this

study, the primary aim was to explore how social realities in South Africa influence knowledge

and understanding of gender-based violence (GBV), and to identify effective approaches for

delivering constructive and comprehensive GBV education. To analyze the data, recurring codes

and themes were identified from survey responses and focus group discussions. This analysis

was also supported by tools such as Google Forms and Voyant Tools, which helped organize and

compare the experiences of both participants and facilitators.

5. Results

In order to analyze the collected data, the research team measured the results of the

workshop based on the experience of the participants (ages 18 to 35) and the facilitators. Due to

the nature of their participation level, their experiences were measured differently, with key

themes being derived from reoccurring codes and trends from the survey and focus group results.

Overall, the survey and focus group responses strongly indicated high engagement and a positive

reception of the workshop. Survey responses showed that 93.8% of the participants rated the

overall quality of the workshop as 'good', affirming its relevance and effectiveness, as well as

73.33% of participants claiming the workshop changed their pre-existing ideas or assumptions

about GBV. The final themes derived from the surveys and focus group are as follows; (1)

Transformative Education and Knowledge Mobilization, (2) Inclusive Engagement and

Participatory Learning, (3) Safe Spaces, Trust, and Emotional Connection, and (4) Community

as a Catalyst for Change.

Overall, there appears to be a consensus among the facilitators about the effectiveness of the workshop. They touched on a number of themes (as stated above) that relate to their experience as community leaders. The first identified theme relates to the potential for community through increased knowledge. A great example of such mobilization was shared by one of the community leaders; "We had one participant who's a youth leader at his church. And he was asked to come and present what he was learning… at his church to the youth". Essentially the knowledge that was gained by a workshop participant, was used beyond the workshop setting and was brought into their own community. This example mirrors the overall average rating of 8.17/10 for how likely participants were to use the skills and knowledge gained (refer to Figure 1).

How likely are you to use the skills or knowledge that you gain in the workshop? (Please circle your rating on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 indicates very unlikely and 10 indicates extremely likely)
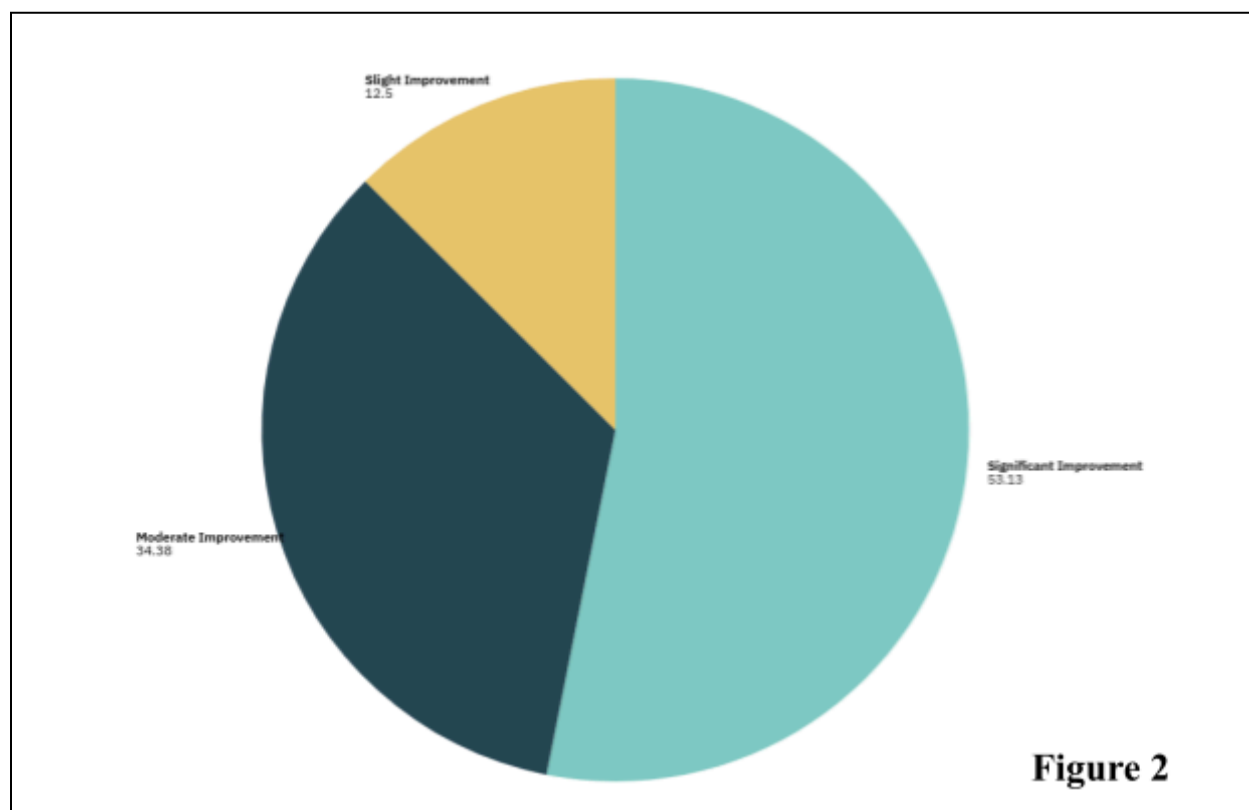
30 responses

Figure 1

In addition, the workshop gave participants and facilitators the opportunity to reflect on the educational barriers on GBV. According to the facilitators, a number of participants expressed frustration with limited access to GBV education and awareness, in addition to a desire for more information and resources, including information relating to LGBTQIA2S+
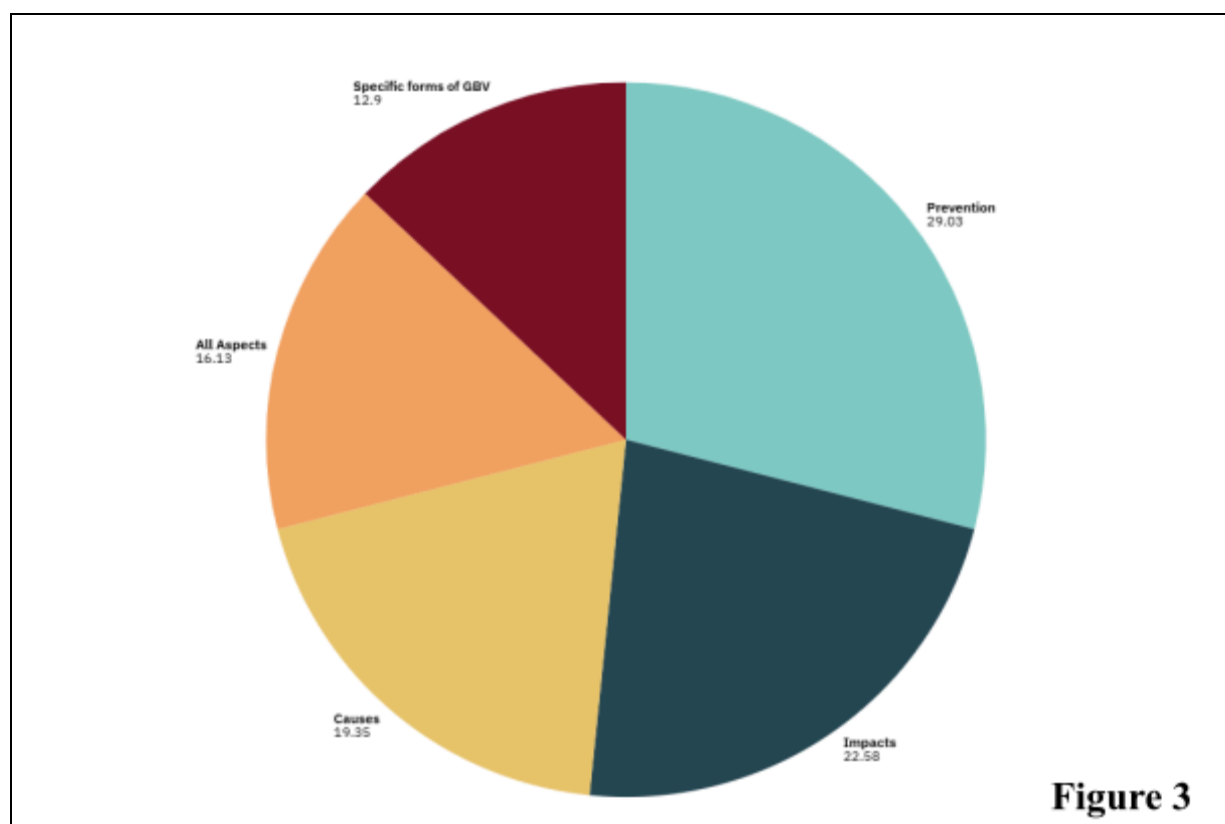
within workshops and a need for inclusion of male participants in GBV-related discussions.

Within the survey, there were 16 responses mentioning topics such as mental health,

LGBTQIA2S+, and job support in the post workshop surveys. The feedback given by the

facilitators reflects the survey results, in which many participants felt that the current educational

system did not address the issue of GBV. The facilitators had also pointed out that it is important

to integrate mental health and trauma into GBV educational approaches. The survey responses

indicated that mental health and trauma, as well as self-care were both identified as crucial

elements of the workshop, with 9.7% of respondents emphasizing these areas. This suggests that,

in addition to addressing GBV, there is a need for better mental health support for participants,

which plays a key role in addressing the broader impacts of GBV. Overall, the participants and

facilitators agreed that the more inclusive and open the discussion, the more likely it is that

people will feel they could make a difference in their communities. The result showed a strong

suggestion that education on GBV should keep evolving to meet the needs of all youth and

young adults, as to ensure it is relevant for the impacted communities.

The Inclusive Engagement and Participatory Learning theme was seen through the

engagement level of the participants. The workshop facilitators shared a number of anecdotes

following the workshop, one of which spoke about male participants acknowledging their role in

perpetuating GBV and expressed a desire for more educational workshops; "they all even said

themselves that we need to have these workshops more and should be attending these workshops

since they are the perpetrators. It was coming straight from them. We men are the perpetrators.

We men need to be taught more than women". The high engagement and interest extended

beyond the male participants, as they demonstrated creative engagement by incorporating

innovative and personalized approaches to the workshop (dancing, acting, creating art). The

majority of participants found that the workshop activities were very helpful, with 96.6% (28 out

of 30 responses) stating that the activities improved their understanding of GBV (Figure 2).

When asked which aspects of GBV were explained most clearly in the survey, 29.03% of

participants identified prevention as the clearest, followed by 22.58% who noted the impact, and

19.35% who chose the causes (Figure 3). This indicates that prevention was the most easily

understood aspect, while the causes and impact of GBV might need more focus in future

workshops. In addition, many showed interest in joining future workshops, with 90.3% (28 out

of 31 responses).

Figure 2

Specific forms of GBV
12.9

Prevention
29.03

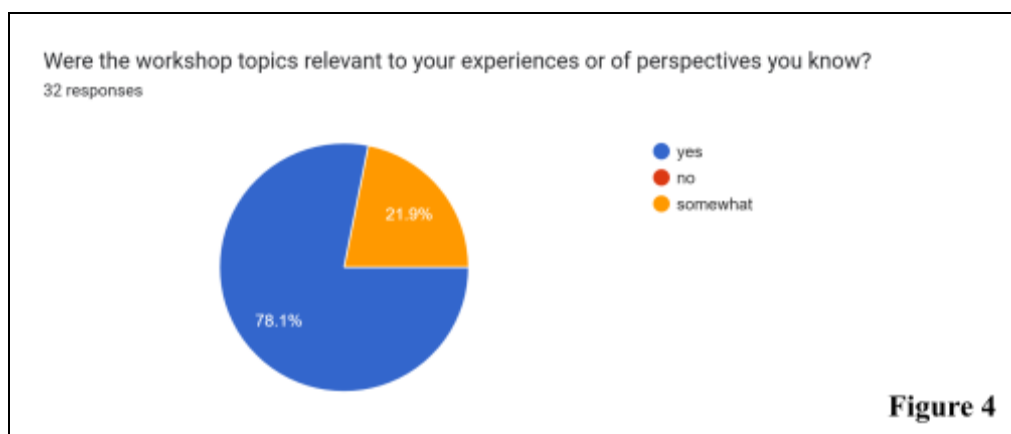All Aspects
16.13

Causes
19.35

Impacts
22.58

Figure 3

When asked about the key takeaways from the workshop, the concepts of prevention and protection, respect and equality, as well as support and helping others were each highlighted by 16.1% of respondents, showing a strong and balanced understanding of these important themes. A contributor to the participants innovation is linked to the community leaders playing a critical role in facilitating and encouraging successful engagement from participants. This can be found in the survey results, indicating 48.4% of participants rated the facilitators as effective and 41.9% as very effective in the delivery of workshop content. One of the facilitators shared that there was "so much to debate about, we had to stop a debate on every topic", which shows the extent of engagement from participants. The participants were particularly insistent on staying beyond the workshop time frame, indicating a strong desire to discuss GBV topics. Additionally, the workshop's format proved to encourage participation from the youth and young adults, with one

facilitator sharing a story of a participant who was characterized as typically 'shy'; "he had a lot

to say when he had to write things down instead of saying by mouth". This statement alone

shows a strong need for alternative forms of communication beyond verbal methods to be

included in future workshops.

Through the focus group discussions, the facilitators highlighted the importance of

having a safe space to talk about GBV openly. A key aspect of the workshop was creating safe

spaces to encourage feelings of equality; "We are all equal…we are all going to learn together

and teach each other together…everybody feels we are part of this". The workshop setting

included a circle seating arrangement, resulting in a sense of equality among participants and

facilitators. In addition, instead of taking on the role of experts, the facilitators joined their group

as learners, which helped participants feel like they were all equal in the learning process.

Participants were also given the chance to share their personal stories, such as what was going on

in their homes or communities. The survey data indicates that 78.1% of the participants felt the

workshop topics were relevant to their personal experiences or aligned with what they already

knew (Figure 4). The participants "had the opportunity to speak from their heart and from their

own experience", which created a welcoming space for everyone to listen and learn from each

other. Everyone felt comfortable sharing, knowing their opinions were respected among the

group, with one facilitator describing the need as a "freedom to speak openly".

Were the workshop topics relevant to your experiences or of perspectives you know?
32 responses

- yes
- no
- somewhat

78.1%

21.9%

Figure 4

 However, safety still remains an issue as facilitators noted participants sharing "I don't feel safe

at home" and "That is not a safe space", referring to their environment lacking the support for

open discussions about GBV. Additionally, trust played an important role in the amount

participants were willing to share. One facilitator mentioned that having trusted people from their

own community in the workshop helped participants feel more comfortable sharing. As

discussed previously in the paper, facilitators found the circular seating placement to be

beneficial for their workshops. The smaller group discussion and a seating arrangement

encouraged participants to engage in open conversations. Essentially, emotional connections

helped create a supportive and safe space for an open discussion among participants. However,

the community leaders highlighted that language is a major barrier that affected participant's

engagement, with a number of participants having difficulty engaging only in English. Some of

the participants also struggled with complex vocabulary, making it difficult for them to fully take

part in the workshop. One facilitator explained, "I don't speak the language, so it was gonna be a

bit of a barrier" and another facilitator stated, "speak with your own language so they could share

more". Using participant's native language in discussions would allow them to express

themselves more openly. Due to the workshop being created in English, a group of participants

were not able to experience the workshop to its full extent and as a result were excluded from the

conversation. These reflections suggest that offering workshops in different languages or utilizing local facilitators can help the participants feel safer and more welcomed.

The focus group discussions revealed that real change comes from within the community, connecting to the Community as a Catalyst for Change theme. Participants shared how important it is to have people from the same area leading and supporting the workshops. The community leaders in the focus group agreed that involving people who already live in the community made the workshop feel more trustworthy and relatable. One facilitator shared that "to just have someone that lives in that community doing the mobilization" made a big difference, because "they already know the area" and "understand the community dynamic". In addition, there was a consensus among facilitators that if an outsider tried to lead, "it wouldn't have been easy, because then they don't know me." This shows that local leaders have a better chance of connecting with participants and building trust, thus creating a ripple effect of change through the community. In essence, in the case an outsider attempted to facilitate the workshop, there is a likelihood of the participants *not* feeling motivated or safe. On the topic of communities, the varying regions will undoubtedly experience cases of GBV. A facilitator shares,"We can have different colours, but the denominating factor is that GBV happens in every single community and this is relevant for this community that we live in". Such an acknowledgement of similar experiences among different communities, is a starting point for action. This gives communities the opportunities to acknowledge their similarities, connect, and activise against their shared issue. Others spoke about the need to support and train community leaders in ways that can fit each townships needs. One of the community leaders noted that "I think in different communities there might be a slightly different way to approach people that are going to be trained as leaders". A township's needs may vary depending on their local issues, such as drug abuse and

how that is connected to GBV; "Gender-based violence is one of the larger causes of our

community being overcome with gangsterism, drug abuse and mental, emotional, financial,

physical and spiritual decline." These points show that the community plays a big role, not just in

raising awareness, but also in fighting against the root causes of GBV. The community leaders

have also noted other major challenges where many communities face limited access to

resources, including safe spaces, funding and trained facilitators. Some facilitators suggested that

a possible solution could be "training some of the youth to be facilitators in these areas". Another

shared their own experience and noted that "even for myself, because it was my first time

facilitating a GBV workshop, I would also appreciate those training so that I know how to do

them myself". This indicates a need for more training opportunities for facilitators. Additionally,

funding constraints were also mentioned as another issue of limited resources. One facilitator

pointed out that "a small documentary would be nice but I know documentaries are very

expensive, maybe one of the long term plans". This highlighted the challenge of securing

funding for important educational tools such as documentaries, and could contribute to raising

awareness but are often too expensive for communities to utilize effectively. In the survey, 12.9%

of participants said awareness was an important takeaway, and 19.4% said the most important

thing they learned was about confidence and speaking up. Essentially, this statement means that

safe spaces are not just about fostering comfort, but are key in supporting youth and young adults

in their journeys towards understanding GBV. This aligns with the data that has been collected,

showing that 34.38% of participants reported a moderate improvement in their understanding of

GBV after attending the workshop.

6. Discussion

This section will delve into the significance of the research team's findings, connecting them to existing literature, as well as addressing potential limitations and recommendations for long term sustainability within these South African communities. The findings emphasized the critical need for early GBV education and awareness, highlighted through the post workshop survey. Questions like, *has the workshop changed any pre-existing ideologies or assumptions you had about GBV and related factors? (if yes, how)*, directly correlates and assesses whether prior beliefs were inaccurate or misinformed, in turn suggesting the need for earlier access to culturally informed GBV education and awareness, specifically in this case, integrated into the school curriculum in order to create safer learning environments (Mlamleli et al., 2000). The facilitation of a safe and judgment free space for the youth and young adult participants was essential for the workshop engagement as "opportunities for local people to actively participate and make connections in communal spaces, [with] the existence of open and supportive environments to talk about mental health, and community identities and collective narratives… give[s] people a sense of belonging and identity." (Southby et al, 2022) Specifically within communities where GBV is institutionalized, it is crucial for participants to have their experiences be seen and heard, as this creates a space of empowerment, where participants can reconstruct their knowledge around GBV, and ultimately minimize vulnerability within their communities. During the post workshop focus group, a community facilitator noted that the participants felt more confident and showed more interest in understanding and taking action against GBV due to the smaller group sizes, they were "more at ease and confident to express their opinions, [as the] group work gave the participants the freedom to freely discuss amongst their groups - they could speak from their heart… they had the freedom to speak when I was

there and the freedom to speak when I wasn't". This suggests that the community facilitators were effective in creating a safe environment for participants to willingly enhance their understanding of GBV, as to confront harmful norms and beliefs, as well as challenge oppressive hierarchical systems, of which the socioeconomic and cultural positions of men and women are continuously reinforced. "Sadly, patriarchy defines 'women as inferior to men, perpetuating the oppression of women by religion and culture" (Buqa, 2022), and these belief systems have been passed down generationally, harmfully influencing youth and young adult interactions within their communities, especially across the gender spectrum. Having women in the leadership role of community facilitator(s) effectively challenges these traditional patriarchal power dynamics, their efforts directly align with the understanding of why dismantling patriarchal structures is crucial for addressing and preventing GBV. However, simply having women in leadership roles does not automatically dismantle the patriarchy, the efficacy of their efforts rely on several factors, such as whether the facilitators are operating in environments that could potentially limit their impact. For example, the gang activity in the Valhalla Park community being a significant obstacle in the facilitation of the workshop. Facilitators, specifically women facilitators have to be hypervigilant of the spaces they choose to engage with, as gatekeepers within certain communities, are looking to affiliate the children the leaders are trying to reach, effectively framing the community leaders as threats to their agenda.

Throughout the workshop, participants also engaged in discussions regarding the deconstruction of gendered norms, specifically within the Forms of GBV section (each group was provided with scenarios describing different forms of real-life GBV situations), where participants challenged one another to critically engage beyond the content that was provided and bring in differing realities, such as violence towards and amongst LGBTQIA2S+ peoples

and communities. This as a result enriched the efficacy of the workshop, as the team

intentionally considered how intersectionality plays a role in the upholding of harmful practices,

norms, and beliefs that perpetuate GBV, an example being the interconnection between religion

and gender, coined as the religion-gender nexus. This refers to the complex and often blurred

relationship between religious beliefs, institutions, and practices, and gender identities, roles, and

power dynamics. It examines how "gender norms are continuously constructed, while religious

interpretations can enforce, alter, or mirror current power dynamics." (Khalaf-Elledge, 2023, pp.

19) With Christianity being the most influential doctrine in South Africa, and a system of beliefs,

values, and, practices, religious and cultural perceptions of masculinity and manhood effectively

shape gender roles, particularly aimed at the policing, criminalizing, and weaponizing of

femininity, womanhood, homosexuality and queerness (Cazarin, 2024). Cazarin also directly

correlates the androcentric power afforded to men and boys corroborated through scripture, with

the weaponization of religion used to legitimize it. The religiously endorsed power that is

unjustly bestowed upon men and boys, then extends into and enables abuse within domestic

spheres, ultimately upholding patriarchal structures and contributing to the institutionalization of

GBV in South African communities. As addressed previously, a participant mentioned a desire to

take the knowledge they gained from the workshop to their church congregation, highlighting

this participants desire for grassroots level change, as well as how multi-level interventions

targeting different social levels and groups spanning from public policy to churches, can play a

pivotal role in society's perception of GBV, both traditionally and culturally. Due to the feedback

received, it is recommended that the continuation of the workshops be tailored to include

discussions surrounding the LGBTQIA2S+ community and how they are also impacted by GBV.

Participants, particularly the men and boys, advocated for the implementation of men and boy-centered GBV workshops, as they focus on the primary drivers of violence, creating a space for them to acknowledge their roles in the patriarchy, and allowing them to take responsibility for the actions they've perpetuated, either knowingly or unknowingly. As aforementioned, male participants within one of the communities stated that they "need to have these workshops more and should be attending these workshops, since they are the perpetrators. It was coming straight from them. We, the men, are the perpetrators. We, men, need to be taught more than women." Although this initiative could be seen as transformative in terms of how it reconstructs the education and discussions around GBV, potential challenges may still arise in implementing male focused workshops. If they are not meticulously constructed and facilitated, male participants may be resistant to engaging in deep rooted discussions confronting fundamental beliefs and behaviours that afford them privileges in society, potentially opening a space for the reinforcing of harmful gender norms, such as neglecting the experiences of female survivors. Which is shown in this statement, as outside of this context, the statement, "we, men, need to be taught more than women" still implies that these are men that are in positions of power and privilege over populations vulnerable to GBV. These are gender norms and attitudes that have been shaped by the legacy of apartheid, and the harmful patriarchal power dynamics that have upheld it. Equipping both men and boys with the insight, perspective, and understanding on how to empower and sustain respectful relationships, with all members of society, not just those of heteronormative, romantic, or sexual relations, will require the re-education and dismantling of internalized systemic discrimination. These types of discussions are crucial to have within these communities because regressive ideas about what men and women *should* behave and identify as, maintain unjust systems of oppression, where one group is inferior to another. By opening up

spaces for intersectional conversations about gender and sexuality, different forms of violence, systems of oppression, and harmful power dynamics, the workshop can help both expose and expand the beliefs and understandings of the participants, to see beyond what they already know, and engage with what they do not.

In South Africa, school enrollment rates for boys and girls are similar, but girls in particular face systemic barriers, known as *invisible forms of exclusion*, that affect girls' participation and performance at school, often leading them to dropping out, due to reports of sexual harassment, GBV, rape, assaults, and more (Holmarsdottir et al., 2013). Although these barriers are characterized as invisible, there are explicit biases held within systemic policies, cultural norms, and individual behaviours that both allow for these forms of abuse to continue, and actively hinder efforts to dismantle them. Factors such as victim blaming, the lack of funding and accurate data for violence against women and girls, and the normalization of their abuse, all exacerbate this issue. Ultimately, the upholding of these barriers serves to protect the power and privileges of dominant groups and structures, such as perpetrators/abusers and institutions, whilst actively reinforcing the oppression and exploitation of disenfranchised women and girls (Humphrey, 2016). Not only do these factors amplify the gender equality gap between boys and girls, but they also create obstacles that limit girls' confidence and ability to fully engage in their education. As participants from the workshop suggested, if boys and girls were taught about gender equality from an early age, many of these issues could be addressed before they become deeply ingrained in the perceptions of their communities.

Part of the foundation of the GBV workshop evaluation was to support and highlight the need for community driven initiatives and participatory action approaches, as "empowerment and participatory evaluation, are particularly beneficial when working with communities that

have experienced varying degrees of marginalization and oppression, as they offer community

members a true voice in the evaluation process and provide them with new resources" (Harper et

al., 2012). As identified in the team's findings, the lack of education and employment

opportunities, correlate to increased safety concerns within communities, making participants

more susceptible to systemic challenges such as GBV and/or gang affiliation. Intentional efforts

centered and incorporating the lived realities and feedback of participants, not only enrich

workshop content, but also influence learned coping mechanisms, and enhance the

self-protective capabilities of participants, in turn, minimizing vulnerability within their

communities. These workshops should also expand to include skills-building and job readiness,

as in the absence of this opportunity, a person's ability to achieve financial stability, safe stable

housing, as well as build and maintain social support networks is hindered. This aligns with

research indicating that when basic needs such as food and housing are not met, there are

additional impacts that occur (Broton et al., 2022). Within the expansion of this workshop, it is

recommended that a peer-led initiative is created as to increase opportunities for participants to

not only receive early education relating to GBV, but develop leadership skills and contribute to

the long term success of community interventions "informed by more in-depth engagements with

the knowledge of local stakeholders, thereby becoming better tailored to the community in which

they are implemented" (Carazin, 2024).

It is important to note that feedback received through both the post-workshop surveys and

focus group emphasized the need for accessibility relating to language used largely due to

language barriers and academic knowledge. This critique harkened to historical debates on the

hegemonic use of English and the language politics of South Africa, as South Africans have long

debated the need to decolonize knowledge in education (Cazarin, 2024). Language in itself is a

tool of power, and the dominance of the English language used throughout the entirety of the workshop evaluation inadvertently marginalizes non English speaking participants from meaningfully engaging. So, recognizing the importance of African Indigenous languages during and after the apartheid in mobilizing the religious and domestic lives of urban Black families (Cazarin, 2024), is crucial to the application of the workshop structure and design. To address the language barriers identified within the feedback, it is recommended that future workshops be developed in the native languages of participants such as Xhosa and Afrikaans. However, practical complexities arise once multilingualism is a factor in the production of this workshop. Factors such as the cost and time for translation, the availability of willing and qualified facilitators, and the potential for dialectical variations in language (given the region), all play a role in significantly complicating this effort. Additionally, if the workshop is provided in English or a native language, surveys should utilize plain and simple language to ensure both accessibility and inclusivity within the research process. The incorporation of language considerations within workshop development and facilitation not only aligns with the decolonization of knowledge, but also fosters an inclusive environment where participants are able to fully engage with and benefit from the workshop - regardless of linguistic background. However, it's crucial to consider whether modifying the workshop to add native languages genuinely increases education and awareness for disenfranchised communities, or if other factors like their social determinants of health are more significant barriers.

6.1. Conclusion

The team's research and evaluation has effectively determined the significant impact and outcome of the project's rationale, in addressing Gender Based Violence education, the importance of community involvement, and the leveraging of community leaders. While

significant barriers in Gender Based Violence education and awareness are still present, the

feedback received from both the post-workshop surveys and focus group session, shed light on

the ways in which early education curricula can be better adapted to meet the needs of youth and

young adults in Cape Town, South Africa. High participant engagement and strong desires for

intersectional, community-driven Gender Based Violence initiatives, indicate the potential for

transformative change when addressing barriers such as LGBTQIA2S+ inclusion, male

involvement, and more. Regarding the role of community leaders in challenging harmful gender

norms, the findings indicate that their involvement was vital to the building of trust and fostering

of open dialogue. As expressed by participants, community leaders contributed to creating an

environment where they felt comfortable enough to address sensitive issues, as well as encourage

capacity building, through their ability to connect with participants, and understand their

community dynamics. Community involvement in the planning, execution, and evaluation of the

workshop, had a transformative impact on its success, as workshop content was intentionally

designed with their needs, concerns, and cultural contexts in mind. Making it far more relevant

and effective in addressing Gender Based Violence challenges faced by youth and young adults.

However, achieving genuine community involvement entails engaging in various approaches to

capacity building. Levels of involvement, from consultation to co-creation, can all lead to

increased relevance and self determination, but choosing the adequate level of involvement all

depends on the project/programs goals, the available resources, and the community's capacity to

address the challenges they face. Social challenges such as power imbalances, conflicts of

interests, and limited resources, all may be significant obstacles in a collective coming to

agreement on their next steps, as communities are not homogenous and are subject to diverse

perspectives and realities. Nevertheless, the workshop's success highlights just how important it

is to create intentional spaces for education, the fostering of engagement, reflection, and healing when it comes to Gender Based Violence, as this has the capability of paving the way for transformational action, within disenfranchised communities. The aim of the research and recommendations is to shift narratives and beliefs around Gender-Based Violence among youth and young adults in South Africa, whilst also acknowledging the limitations of their resources, as to focus on the sustainability of future community-driven interventions. Ultimately, the research team's goal was to empower these communities to address Gender Based Violence effectively, and to foster long-term change through a culturally significant, inclusive, and accessible initiative.

6.2. Recommendations

Within the survey results, the participants expressed a high level of engagement demonstrated through their personal storytelling, effectively creating a safe space for the facilitation of meaningful discussions relating to GBV. On this note, a recommendation for future workshops, largely requested by participants, is for the allocation of more time for these workshops to be facilitated. Additionally, feedback suggested that individuals would like the opportunity to participate outside of speaking or performing, as some participants expressed discomfort presenting in public spaces. This highlights the need for diverse forms of participation that can ensure all participants engage in ways that are comfortable and meaningful to them. The community facilitators/leaders also played a pivotal role in the process of facilitating this workshop within their communities, serving as the bridge between the workshop and the participants. The involvement of the community leaders was integral in the process of fostering a safe environment for the particpants that supports them as well as their ideas. The participants demonstrated both the potential and the desire for change in relation to GBV,

showing interest in taking action within their communities. The focus group held with the community leaders echoed the success of the workshop and the concerns around limited access to resources, which remain a significant barrier to the long-term effectiveness of workshops such as this one. However, training in facilitation, education and trauma-informed practices would be beneficial for the community leaders, as many community leaders and even participants have been exposed to GBV themselves. By equipping facilitators with coping strategies for handling stress and supporting other GBV survivors (Alemi et al., 2022), the quality of facilitation will be enhanced and also ensure the sustainability of these efforts. Skills such as self-confidence can help tackle burnout and by offering training to continue to build these skills, facilitators can stay motivated and better equipped to navigate the challenges in dealing with such a heavy and sensitive topic (Ben-Porat & Itzhaky, 2015). To ensure the workshop can continue in the future and have a lasting impact, it is crucial to consider long-term plans. There is a strong suggestion to secure stable funding and give the community more power over how resources and services are managed. When community members are involved in the planning and decision-making processes, they will feel more responsible and invested in the success of the workshop. Another key strategy is to invest in the training and the development of local leaders and community members, equipping them with the necessary skills to facilitate workshops independently. This approach not only supports capacity building within the community, but also strengthens leadership and knowledge. By empowering the local communities to take active roles in addressing GBV, programs can become more sustainable and impactful in a long-term context. (Harper et al., 2012).

Based on the team's findings and analysis, the following actions are recommended for sustained impact:

- Implementation of workshops centered around facilitator and/or community leader training

- Earlier access to education and awareness relating to Gender Based Violence

- Implement a workshop series that expands into peer-led programs that further address Gender Based Violence and build community capacity

- Workshops developed in the native language(s) of the communities they're facilitated in (e.g. Xhosa & Afrikaans)
    - Equip fellow community leader or facilitators that are fluent in the community's language

- Workshops centered on and eventually led by men and boys, directly addressing the root causes of GBV and challenging harmful constructs to empower them as agents of change in their communities

- More time and space designated for deep rooted and transformational discussions within workshops as to ensure high levels of engagement and learning

- Offer more opportunities for participation beyond speaking or performing to accommodate participants uncomfortable with presenting publicly

- Expand workshops to include skill-building for participants, particularly focusing on employment and job readiness to address systemic factors linked to Gender Based Violence vulnerability

- Modify the workshop to be inclusive of intersectional perspectives, particularly those of the LGBTQIA2S+ community, to acknowledge their complex experiences with Gender Based Violence within the community context

- To ensure accessibility and understanding, use simple and plain language within the

  contents of the workshop and surveys, and/or offer them in local language

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