

School Related Gender Based Violence as a Violation of Children's Rights to Education in South Africa: Manifestations, Consequences and Possible Solutions

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ABSTRACT This paper highlights how School Related Gender Based Violence (SRGBV) which breeds violation of children's rights to education and human dignity is prevalent in South African schools despite sturdy domestic legal frameworks that flow from international and human rights treaties. The paper also sheds light on the most predominant manifestations of SRGBV namely bullying, corporal punishment and sexual abuse and how impunity and pervasiveness exposes learners to be victims of SRGBV in the hands of their peers; teachers; principals and school personnel. The overall findings of the paper indicate that both girls and boys are victims of SRGBV and this results in adverse consequences such as: violation of their freedom, security, privacy and integrity, health, death ideation, and high exposure to HIV/AIDS – these compromise schooling and far-reaching physical and social development of the victims. The paper recommends that the solutions and future needs for South African schools to curb SRGBV are: learners should be engaged as collaborators in inclusive and customised SRGBV activities that meet the unique needs and ethos of schools. This will promote human dignity and children's right to education in safe learning and nurturing environment. Adequate human and financial resources should be injected towards redress of SRGBV to assist learners suffering from physical and psychological aftermaths. Teacher training should be inclusive of techniques for curbing SRGBV and should equip teachers on how to address learner misconduct using non-aggressive practices. Anonymous disclosure by victims and swift response by the state on perpetrators should be promoted to abate the culture of silence on victims of SRGBV. Lastly, programmes that have been implemented to guide and redress SRGBV in line with the South African constitution and legislation should be monitored and evaluated to gauge if they have achieved the initial stated goals and objectives.