



Gender - Based Violence in Education: A Systematic Review of Factors, Forms and Prevention

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ABSTRACT

Gender - Based Violence (GBV) in educational institutions is a serious problem that impacts the safety, psychological health and academic achievement of students. This study aims to systematically examine the causes, forms and efforts to address GBV in the educational context using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. The literature search process was conducted in reputable scientific databases using keywords relevant to GBV, education and power relations. Selected articles were selected based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, then analyzed thematically to identify patterns and trends in research findings. The results of the study indicate that the main factors of GBV in educational institutions include rigid gender stereotypes and norms, patriarchal culture, unequal power relations, dysfunctional family backgrounds, substance abuse and the influence of the internet and technology. The most frequently reported forms of violence include physical, verbal, psychological, sexual and symbolic violence that occurs both in person and through online media. The impact of this violence not only reduces students' sense of security and psychological well-being but also negatively affects attendance and academic achievement. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive response strategy through gender equality education, strengthening institutional policies, increasing educator capacity and providing support systems and safe spaces for victims. These findings are expected to inform the development of more inclusive educational policies and practices free from GBV.

Keywords: Gender - Based Violence, Educational Institutions

INTRODUCTION

GBV (GBV) is a widespread issue affecting individuals worldwide. GBV encompasses any harmful act directed at a person based on their gender that results in physical, sexual, or psychological harm (Akhter et al., 2021) ; (Latino et al., 2025) ; (Nazhat Shameem Khan, 2016). It includes rape, sexual assault and harassment, often targeting women and girls due to rigid gender roles (Aguirre et al., 2020) ; (Sciarrino & Davis, 2023). The most extreme form of GBV can be the deliberate killing of women because of their gender (Rojas-Fernández et al., 2022).

Educational institutions, which should be safe spaces for empowerment, equality and character building, often become arenas for the reproduction of hidden discrimination and victimization (Oñate Bastidas et al., 2025) ; (Ngcobo et al., 2025) ; (Yates et al., 2024). Reality shows that GBV (GBV) remains a worrying phenomenon at various levels of education, from elementary school to higher education tinggi (Beyene et al., 2020) ; (Uyanne, 2021) ; (Iliyasu et al., 2011) ; (Mutinta, 2022). In a global context, the issue of GBV in education can hinder the achievement of equitable and inclusive education goals as mandated by Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) points 4 and 5 on quality education and gender equality (Bawa & Kaur, 2023) ; (Martins & da Costa, 2024) ; (Ahmed et al., 2025).

Various studies have revealed that the impact of GBV in educational environments is multidimensional, encompassing psychological (Oñate Bastidas et al., 2025) ; (Laz-Figueroa et al., 2025) academic (Makhanya, 2022) ; (Yates et al., 2024), social (Mdletshe & Makhaye, 2025) and institutional (Burke, 2016) ; (Rakshasa-Loots, 2023).

Previous studies have examined GBV in educational institutions from various perspectives, including causal factors, forms of violence, and mitigation efforts. However, existing studies still show several gaps, particularly the tendency for research to be partial and fragmented, focusing separately on forms or factors of violence without comprehensively integrating them with institutional policies and mechanisms for addressing them. Furthermore, the dominance of studies in the Global North context has limited contextual understanding in Global South countries, particularly Indonesia, and has limited integration of victims' voices in evaluating policies for preventing and reporting GBV.

Building on these gaps, this research's novelty lies in the development of an integrative analytical framework that connects structural and cultural factors, manifestations of violence, and strategies for addressing GBV in educational institutions, placing victims' experiences and barriers to reporting as central elements. Thus, this research is directed to answer questions regarding the dominant factors that trigger GBV in educational environments, the most frequent forms of violence, the relationship between power relations, institutional policy construction, and victims' experiences in the reporting process, as well as the effectiveness of mitigation efforts that have been developed to create a safe, inclusive, and gender-equitable educational environment. Therefore, this systematic literature review (SLR) aims to map related Forms, Factors and Prevention Strategies to GBV in education. The SLR approach allows researchers to identify research gaps, patterns of empirical findings and directions for evidence-based policy development in an effort to create a safe, equitable and inclusive educational environment for all.

METHOD

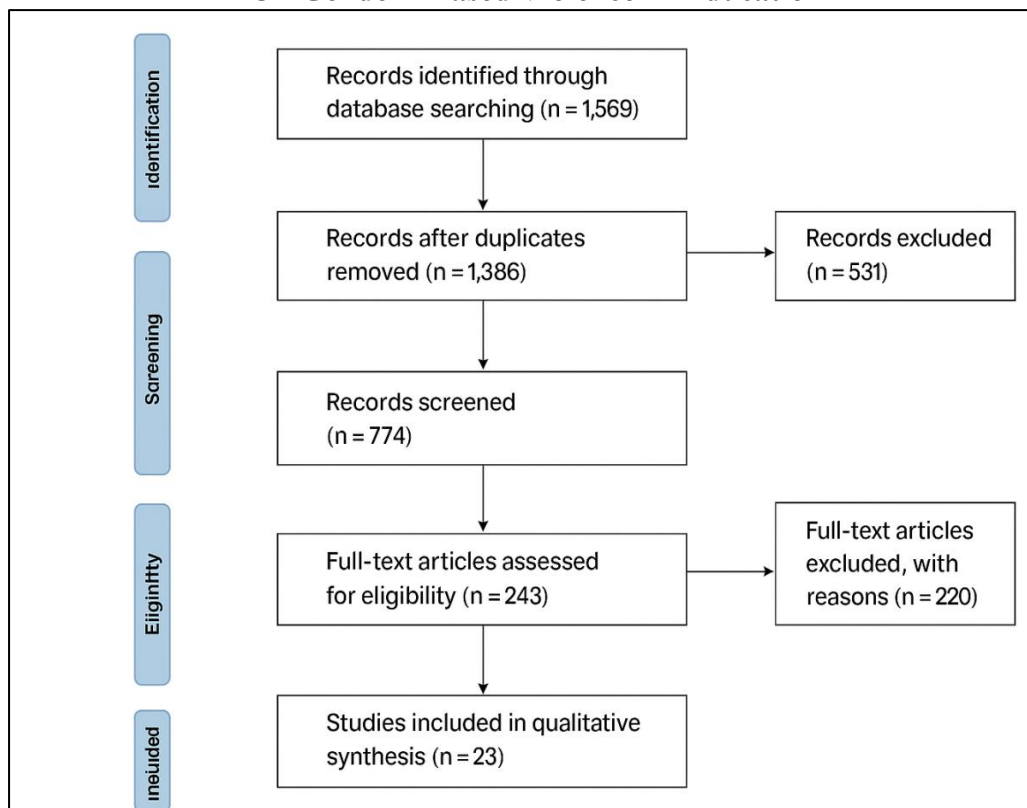
This study used a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach with reference to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. This approach was chosen to obtain a comprehensive and structured understanding of the forms, impacts and interventions against GBV (GBV) in educational settings. The SLR method allows researchers to systematically identify, evaluate and synthesize previous research findings based on established inclusion and exclusion criteria. The research process was carried out through four main stages in accordance with the PRISMA flow, namely: (1) Identification, (2) Screening, (3) Eligibility and (4) Inclusion. The identification stage was carried out by searching for scientific articles through the Scopus database using the keywords "GBV," "education," "school," "university," "intervention," and "policy."

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study used the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method with reference to the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to ensure a systematic, transparent, and replicable literature search and selection process. The search was conducted through the Scopus database and resulted in 1,569 publications related to GBV in the educational context in the period 2015–2025, which were then filtered based on the Social Sciences subject to 1,386 documents. The screening stage was carried out by limiting the document type to scientific journal articles (774 articles), filtering keywords GBV and education (552 articles), and limiting the English language (273 articles). After eliminating duplications and initial assessment based on titles and abstracts, 243 articles were

obtained, which were then fully evaluated based on their suitability to the educational institution context and their relevance to the factors, forms, and efforts to overcome GBV. Thus, 23 articles were selected that met the inclusion criteria and were analyzed in depth in this study.

Figure 1.
**PRISMA Flow Diagram Of The Systematic Literature Review
On Gender - Based Violence In Education**



Source: Processed Scopus database, 2025

GBV (GBV) in educational institutions is a global issue that continues to receive academic attention due to its serious impact on the safety, psychological well-being, and educational continuity of students. Various studies show that GBV occurs not only in the form of physical and sexual violence, but also includes psychological, verbal, and symbolic violence, as well as violence in dating relationships and digital spaces. This phenomenon is experienced by various groups, particularly women and other vulnerable groups, from primary school to higher education, and occurs in diverse social and cultural contexts. The high prevalence of GBV in educational settings indicates that institutions that should be safe spaces often reproduce gender inequality and unequal power relations.

Existing literature reveals that GBV in educational institutions is influenced by intertwined structural and cultural factors, such as rigid gender norms, patriarchal culture, hierarchical masculinity, and social and institutional inequalities. Furthermore, various studies highlight the weak response of educational institutions, reflected in institutional silence, low reporting rates, and ambiguous policies in defining and addressing GBV. This situation not only exacerbates the victims' experiences but also negatively impacts academic participation, educational attainment, and the mental health of both students and faculty.

These findings confirm that GBV is a fundamental gender equality issue in education. These results are illustrated in the table below.

Table 1.
Overview Of Gender - Based Violence Research in Educational Contexts

| Number | Title | Author(s) | Year | Theme | Research Findings |
|--------|--|--|------|-----------------------|--|
| 1 | Surveying “Dating Violence” and Stalking Victimisation | Anna Bull | 2023 | Forms of Violence | Dating violence and stalking are frequently experienced forms of GBV, particularly among female students. |
| 2 | Violencia de género: prevalencia, imaginarios sexistas | Trujillo | 2020 | Forms of Violence | The prevalence of GBV is closely linked to sexist imaginaries embedded in society and educational institutions. |
| 3 | Challenging Violence in South African Education | Pietersen | 2024 | Factors of Violence | Violence in South African educational institutions is structural, influenced by social inequality, patriarchal history, and entrenched cultures of violence. |
| 4 | Construction of GBV in Prevention | Valtýsdóttir | 2025 | Prevention Strategies | The construction of GBV within prevention programs significantly affects intervention effectiveness. |
| 5 | “It’s a Lot of Shame”: Understanding the Impact of GBV on Higher Education Access and Participation | Penny Jane Burke et al. | 2023 | Factors of Violence | Institutional silence around GBV worsens gender injustice and reinforces misrecognition in higher education. |
| 6 | Institutional Confidence, Underreporting and Academic Consequences of GBV among University Staff and Students in Europe | Anne Laure Humbert; Sofia Strid | 2024 | Forms of Violence | GBV is associated with severe academic consequences and negatively affects educational participation. |
| 7 | Suffering in Silence: Reasons Why Victims of GBV in Higher Education Institutions Choose Not to Report Their Victimization | Lungelo Cynthia Mdletshe; Mandisa Samukelisiwe Makhaye | 2025 | Factors of Violence | Victims often choose not to report GBV due to personal fears and institutional barriers. |
| 8 | Determinant Factors Related to Female Adolescents’ Attitudes toward GBV | Rr Dian Tristiana et al. | 2025 | Prevention Strategies | Attitudes toward GBV are shaped by institutional definitions and policy framing. |
| 9 | The Politics of | Sundari | 2023 | Forms of | Ambiguous policy |

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| | Naming and Construction: University Policies on GBV in the UK | Anitha; Ana Jordan; Nicola Chanamoto | | Violence | language obscures power relations and limits effective GBV prevention. |
| 10 | Dating Violence Among University Students in Indonesia: Help-Seeking Communication Strategies and Barriers to Disclosure | Deborah N. Simorangkir | 2025 | Forms of Violence | A high prevalence of dating violence exists among Indonesian university students, with significant barriers to disclosure. |
| 11 | The Social Right to Education and Cases of GBV in Higher Education Institutions in Brazil | Mario Junior Conceição Carvalho; Valmôr Scott | 2025 | Prevention Strategies | The study discusses institutional policies and responses to address violence against women. |
| 12 | Rogue Readings of a Flashpoint Moment: The Double-Edged Sword of Adolescence | Debbie Ging; Catherine R. Baker | 2025 | Prevention Strategies | Teachers play a crucial role in addressing and preventing GBV. |
| 13 | Overcoming Sexual Harassment at University: The Case of the Training Intervention in the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona | Olga Serradell; Lidia Puigvert | 2025 | Forms of Violence | Mandatory evidence-based training is recommended to support victims and eliminate GBV. |
| 14 | Analysis Regarding the Effectiveness of an Intervention Program for Equality and Prevention of Gender Violence in Adolescents | Elena Vila-Cortavitate et al. | 2025 | Prevention Strategies | Intervention programs significantly improve gender-equitable behaviors among adolescents. |
| 15 | Preventing Harassment and GBV in Online Videogames Through Education | Andrea Gracia-Zomeño et al. | 2025 | Prevention Strategies | Online GBV affects women and non-binary individuals, requiring comprehensive educational prevention strategies. |
| 16 | Hierarchies of Masculinity and Lad Culture on Campus: “Bad Guys”, “Good Guys”, and Complicit Men | Ana Jordan et al. | 2022 | Factors of Violence | Masculinity hierarchies reinforce GBV by obscuring racial and class dynamics. |
| 17 | Adolescent Girls’ Safety In and Out of School: Evidence on Physical and Sexual Violence from Across Sub-Saharan Africa | David K. Evans et al. | 2023 | Forms of Violence | High levels of physical and sexual violence against adolescent girls were reported across Sub-Saharan Africa. |

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|----|--|---|------|-----------------------|--|
| 18 | Students as Victim-Survivors: The Enduring Impacts of GBV for Students in Higher Education | Julia Coffey et al. | 2023 | Factors of Violence | GBV is a major gender equality issue with lasting impacts in higher education. |
| 19 | Healthcare Students' and Educators' Views on the Integration of GBV Education into the Curriculum | Dana Sammut et al. | 2022 | Prevention Strategies | The study highlights the importance of integrating GBV education into curricula. |
| 20 | "What Happened to 'I'm My Sister's Keeper'?" A Case of Abuse at a University in South Africa | Sadhana Manik; Kudzayi Savious Tarisayi | 2021 | Forms of Violence | Four forms of GBV were identified: physical, emotional, sexual, and verbal abuse. |
| 21 | GBV in Higher Education: A Model of Protection and Law Enforcement | Andry Setiawan et al. | 2023 | Prevention Strategies | The study emphasizes legal protection and institutional safeguards for GBV victims. |
| 22 | GBV among Female Students and Implications for Health Intervention Programmes in Public Universities in Eastern Cape, South Africa | Given Mutinta | 2022 | Prevention Strategies | Post-incident services, including counseling, are essential for both victims and perpetrators. |
| 23 | The Safety of Women and Girls in Educational Settings: A Global Overview and Suggestions for Policy Change | Elaina Behounek | 2020 | Prevention Strategies | Comprehensive policies are required to address GBV in educational settings. |

Scopus Database Results Processed with SciSpace, 2025

Discussion

Factors Of Violence

Gender stereotypes and socialization processes play a significant role in perpetuating sexual violence (Makhaye & Dlamini, 2024) ; (Guerra-Marmolejo et al., 2021) Misunderstanding cultural norms and values can lead to sexual violence (Samudra et al., 2025). Family background, including the presence of pathological families and emotional abuse, is associated with a higher risk of sexual violence (Ojha & Mishra, 2020) ; (Rahman et al., 2022). The role of the internet and technology in facilitating sexual violence is significant. Exposure to inappropriate content and online harassment can lead to real-world sexual violence (Rahman et al., 2022). Alcohol consumption and substance use are strongly associated with sexual violence (Esayas et al., 2023) ; (Steele et al., 2024). The factors of gender violence in educational institutions are complex and interconnected. First, rigid gender norms and stereotypes often underlie discriminatory behavior, where women are perceived as weaker and less capable than men (Rincón & Domínguez, 2023) ; (Thapar-Björkert et al., 2016). Second, the patriarchal culture that dominates society also contributes to the normalization of violence, where aggressive acts against women are considered normal or even justified (Kreft, 2023) ; (Guerra-Marmolejo et al., 2021) ; (Rached et al., 2021).

Thirdly, the lack of education and awareness about gender issues among educators and students can worsen the situation, as many are unaware of the impact of GBV. Fourth, environmental factors, such as peer pressure and power dynamics within the classroom, can also trigger gender violence, where students feel pressured to engage in aggressive or demeaning behavior toward their peers.

Forms of Violence

Violence can occur in various forms, including physical (Oñate Bastidas et al., 2025) ; (Manik & Tarisayi, 2021), verbal (Jurasz & Barker, 2023), psychological (Oñate Bastidas et al., 2025) and symbolic (Jurasz & Barker, 2023) ; (Ojha & Mishra, 2020) both in the classroom, school environment and in online interactions (Galvez-Palomeque et al., 2025). Previous studies have identified that gender violence is experienced by students, as found in educational contexts (Trujillo, 2020). In educational environments, the phenomena of dating violence and stalking have also attracted attention because they reflect unequal power relations between perpetrators and victims (Bull, 2023). Several articles on gender violence discuss physical violence. Physical violence often occurs in educational settings (McMahon et al., 2020) ; (Santos, 2020). Physical violence negatively impacts students' academic outcomes. Many studies show that students who experience physical violence have poorer academic performance and are more likely to experience difficulties with engagement and connectedness at school (Elise Barboza & Siller, 2021) ; (Smiley et al., 2021) ; (Schneider, 2020). Violence in schools can also reduce students' sense of safety, which is essential for creating a conducive learning environment.

Sexual violence is one of the most visible manifestations of GBV in educational institutions. Research in various countries shows that cases of sexual harassment against students often occur in situations characterized by unequal power relations (Bull, 2023) ; (Keedle, 2024). Meanwhile, sexual violence is a widespread problem in schools and universities. This includes unwanted sexual advances, harassment and assault. Most students experience sexual violence among female students (Sears-Greer et al., 2022). Symbolic GBV in schools manifests in a variety of subtle and often normalized ways, perpetuating gender inequality and discrimination. One form is verbal and psychological abuse, where discursive strategies such as teasing and negative messages written on school toilet walls create a detrimental environment for students (Ngidi & Moletsane, 2023).

Prevention Strategies

Physical violence in schools can lead to decreased student attendance, which is a crucial factor in academic achievement. Children who feel unsafe or experience violence may be more likely to miss school, resulting in lost valuable learning time (Renner et al., 2023). The psychological impacts of physical abuse include increased levels of anxiety, depression and other mental health problems. Victims often experience emotional trauma, which can lead to disruptive behavior and hinder their ability to learn effectively (Kim et al., 2020) ; (Shah & Gu, 2020). Furthermore, sexual violence in educational institutions has a broad and profound impact on students' psychological and academic well-being, making effective prevention and support programs in educational institutions crucial for addressing sexual violence (Wang & Huang, 2021) ; (Adams-Clark et al., 2024).

The perpetuation of GBV is often supported by cultural and structural mechanisms within educational institutions (Mokaya et al., 2025) ; (Lange & Young, 2019), therefore, it is important to raise awareness and training for educators, as well as build adequate support structures for vulnerable groups, in order to create a more equitable and safe educational environment for all students. Thus, it is important to create a safe space for students to reflect and dialogue with educators, counselors and psychologists to challenge and fight gender

inequality in the world of education.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, GBV in educational institutions is a complex phenomenon influenced by various interrelated factors. Primary factors include rigid gender stereotypes and norms, a patriarchal culture that normalizes domination and violence against women and unequal power relations between perpetrators and victims. Other contributing factors include dysfunctional family backgrounds, experiences of emotional abuse, alcohol and substance abuse and the role of the internet and technology in facilitating online violence and exposure to inappropriate content. These conditions contribute to the occurrence of GBV in schools and universities.

In terms of forms, GBV manifests itself in physical, verbal, psychological, sexual and symbolic forms, both in classrooms, school and university environments, friendships and dating relationships and digital spaces. This violence has a serious impact on students' sense of safety, mental health, attendance and academic achievement. Therefore, comprehensive mitigation efforts need to be implemented through increasing gender awareness and education, strengthening victim protection policies and systems, providing counseling and psychological support services and creating safe spaces for critical dialogue between educators and students. These steps are essential to creating an educational environment that is fair, inclusive and free from GBV.

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