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# GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PREVENTION STRATEGIES AMONG STUDENTS IN ILEMELA MUNICIPAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a worldwide concern that affects secondary school students with different socioeconomic backgrounds. This study examined GBV prevention strategies among students in Ilemela Municipal secondary schools in Tanzania. The study employed a mixed-methods approach to collect and analyse data among respondents in the study area. Quantitative data were analyzed by using descriptive analysis, binary logistic regression and qualitative data were analysed by using content analysis. The assessment covered demographic information and the GBV prevention strategies including, reporting methods, GBV desks, and prevalence of GBV campaigns. The results showed that the study area used various GBV prevention strategies, in which GBV desks, workshops, and counselling services were the most frequently used strategies. Different reporting methods for GBV incidences were used by respondents, in which over 50% reported the use of GBV desks, while small proportions preferred to report to local leaders (6.6%), teachers (3.7%), and religious leaders (0.6%). This implies that respondents had more preference to report in the GBV desks than local leaders, teachers and the religious leaders. Also, the study revealed that among the strategies, peer education, workshops and counseling services had the highest proportions (52.8%, 55.3 and 58.53%), respectively in addressing GBV in secondary schools was further found that workshops and counseling services had statistically significant ( $p \le 0.003$  and  $p \le 0.001$  respectively) influence in seeking GBV help. Basing on these results, this study recommends that the collective utilization of these strategies would improve help seeking thus assisting in combating GBV among secondary school students.

**KEYWORDS**: Prevention strategies, Gender Based Violence (GBV), Secondary Schools Students



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## 1. Background Information

Globally, gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the concerns in secondary school students in different parts of the world regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds. Although developed nations have taken steps towards achieving gender equality, GBV still persists in different rates among countries within these learning institutions. Different researches have been conducted such as, Warrier (2021) underscores the intersectionality of GBV with race, gender and economic status disparities which indicate disparities in responses to violence experiences. Moreover, it is clear from such studies that effective GBV needs a comprehensive strategy to involve all stakeholders including those from various sectors as echoed by Heinzel et al., (2021). This highlights the importance of collaboration among intervention stakeholders by giving information about local contexts that require adaptive actions based on such reports.

GBV presents different challenges among learners in the secondary schools due to their differences in economic status and cultural practices in developing countries (Le Mat et al., 2019). Mutasingwa and Mwaipopo (2023) indicated that there were detrimental effects of GBV on psychological wellbeing and educational achievements among students in Tanzania. Thelma (2024) acknowledges that in developing countries, including parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, GBV has contributed to poor health outcomes for students as well as their educational performances. Similarly, studies conducted by (Munro-Kramer et al., (2024), Muluneh et al., (2021), and Ibala et al., (2021) in Sub-Saharan Africa have explored student perceptions towards GBV and found out some of the reasons why students cannot seek help when they are abused. These studies demonstrate a need for specific strategies to curb GBV in less developed countries whose traditions have been intertwined with its practice

While GBV persists, collaborative efforts between schools and community organisations have shown promise in addressing the problem within secondary school settings. For instance, Patel et al., (2020) conducted a study in India, evaluating a community-based intervention aimed at preventing GBV and promoting gender equality among adolescents. This study (Ibid.) has shed light on innovative strategies to addressing GBV in secondary schools. Bores-Garcia et al., (2020) conducted a study in Latin American countries, focusing on the effectiveness of peer education programmes in preventing GBV among adolescents. GBV is a challenging concern in Tanzanian secondary schools that demands focused efforts (Msambwa et al., 2022). This is supported by Wamoyi et al., (2020) who expressed that the prevalence of GBV is high, especially in Ilemela Municipal secondary schools, Tanzania hence the call for more focused strategies. In this regard, McCarry et al., (2022) has argued for recognising GBV within the wider picture of gender equality in schools, making it clear that schools should come up with innovative responses that address individual situations.

Several researchers (Bores-Garcia et al., 2020 and Orr et al., 2022) conducted studies on GBV preventive measures, but they did not assess how well they would work in real-world schools. Consequently, there is an unresolved inquiry regarding the most successful strategies to support



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young individuals in secondary schools. Anderson and Claes (2022) conducted a study to examine GBV prevention programmes in secondary school level but their study did not address any environmental factors specific to those institutions. This created a lack of clear understanding on strategies used to prevent gender-based violence at different institutions. During their investigation of GBV victims, Smith et al. (2021) examined the impact of GBV on learners. However, this study ignored other significant viewpoints from significant community members, such as educators, by failing to take into account how GBV affects teachers or school administrators. These findings underscore the research gap, emphasising the need to create GBV prevention strategies that are both comprehensive and specific to secondary schools.

Therefore, the current study was carried out to assess the strategies employed in the secondary schools to prevent GBV within the specific context of Ilemela Municipal secondary schools. It aimed at informing whether the current strategies used are helping students when they face GBV incidences. The obtained findings are critical in informing educational stakeholders like regional education officer, head teachers, curriculum developers and parents to support the strategies so as to create safe learning environments.

#### 2.0 METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Ilemela Municipal in Tanzania involving the population of secondary school educators and students. A mixed approach and embedded design were used in triangulating data. This implies that the data were collected simultaneously but analysed separately and integrated in the discussion of results. A random sampling was used to obtain the respondents from the study population, whereby the district and schools were purposively selected. A total of 353 respondents were used to form a sample size, in which 3 of them were educators and 350 were students. Data analysis was conducted at the Sokoine University of Agriculture, where the collected data were coded, cleaned and entered into the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS). The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and summarized into frequencies and percentages. Also, inferential statistics (logistic regression goodness of fit) analysis was used to show the influence of various strategies towards seeking help on GBV.

The formula for logistic regression used was: logit (P (Y)) =  $\alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5$ 

Where p is the probability that the student uses the intervention,  $\beta$  represents the coefficients for each independent variable, x are the independent variables included in the binary logistic regression model and  $\alpha$  is the constant.

The qualitative data were analysed through content analysis. The recorded interviews were transcribed to text, carefully read then classified systematically by coding to identify and isolate the key GBV prevention strategies that appeared in the narratives. The content validity of the instruments was determined by seeking guidance and authentic approval from the supervisors and peers to make



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necessary changes while the reliability of the instruments ensured consistency of the results or data after repeated trials. Ethical issues were considered in the study by obtaining the permission letter from the University and City Director (CD). Furthermore, confidentiality of the participants was considered to protect the rights of the respondents.

#### 3.0 RESULTS

Gender-based violence targeting secondary schools is a big issue affecting many students around the world, including those around Ilemela Municipal Secondary Schools. This study aimed to investigate respondents' demographic characteristics, and the current strategies used in combating gender-based violence in Ilemela municipal secondary schools.

## 3.1 Demographic Information of the Respondents

Essential understanding of dynamics of GBV within Ilemela Municipal secondary schools are brought by demographic profile of the respondents. Results are in Table 1.

**Table 1: Demographic Information of the Respondents** 

Variable (N=350)		Proportion (%)
Sex of respondents	Male	55.5
	Female	44.5
Age of respondents	12 - 17	79.7
	>18	20.3
Class	Form I	27.7
	Form II	21.2
	Form III	21.1
	Form IV	9.7
	Form V	8.3
	Form VI	12.0
Parent occupation	Farmer	30.0
	Self-employed	48.0
	Government employees	22.0

Source: field data 2024

Table 1 shows that in the study area, majority of respondents (55.5 %) are male while the proportion of female respondents is slightly lower than men44.5%). This distribution fit in to general societal patterns such as more men than women being held responsible before judges. Respondents with age above 18 years old constituted a lowest proportion (20.3%) of the study population, while age group between 12 and 17 years old formed the majority (79.7%) of the study population.

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## **3.2 GBV Report Premises**

In the study area, to capture the information on how individuals respond to the GBV prevention strategies the study analysed the data on GBV reporting premises, which included presence of GBV desks and prefaces on reporting methods for GBV incidents. Results are in Table 2.

**Table 2: GBV reporting premises** 

Variable (N=350)		Proportion (%)
Using GBV desk in school premise	Yes	56.6
	No	43.4
Preference on GBV reporting method	GBD Desk	51.1
	Police Station	38.0
	Local Leaders	6.6
	Religious Leaders	0.6
	Teachers	3.7

Source: Field data 2024

Table 2 shows that 56.6% of respondents confirmed the existence of gender-based violence (GBV) desks, and these desks accounted for 51.1% of reported GBV cases. These findings are based on the assumption that the presence of GBV desks would correlate with higher reporting rates of GBV incidents and increased awareness of GBV issues.

# 3.3 GBV Strategies used in Ilemela Municipal Secondary schools 3.3.1 GBV prevention strategies

In the study area, various GBV prevention strategies were employed, including women empowerment programs, workshops, peer education, legal aid, counseling services, classroom discussions and presentation, guest speaker or experts on gender, social media, posters, drama performances, and school clubs. Results are in Table 3.

Table 3: Gender-based violence prevention strategies in Secondary schools

Variables (N=350)	bles (N=350) Proportion	
	Yes	No
Women empowerment programmes	26.2	73.8
Workshop/training sessions	52.8	47.2
Peer education	55.3	44.7
Counselling services	58.53	41.5
Classroom discussions and presentation	22.6	77.4



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Guest speaker/ experts of gender	31.1	68.9
Social media campaigns/online resources	13.7	86.3
Posters around the school	36.6	63.4

Source: Field data 2024

Table 3 presents a comprehensive overview of the current strategies used in dealing with GBV incidences among students in secondary school, accompanied by their respective percentages. Workshop (52%), counselling services (58.5%), and peer education (55.3%) are among the current used strategies with the highest implemented proportions in secondary schools, confirming that these strategies, due to their direct support for victims, would be prevalent.

## 3.3.2 Logistic regression of influence of various strategies in seeking help on GBV

In the study area the influence of various GBV preventions strategies in seeking GBV help was analysed. Results are in Table 4 - 6.

Table 4: Logistic Regression Analysis of strategies used to respond to Gender-Based Violence incidences in Ilemela Secondary Schools

## **Model summary**

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square			
1	176.229 <sup>a</sup>	.184	.252			
a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 5 because parameter estimates changed						
by less than .001.						

Table 5: Hosmer and Lemeshow Test

Step	Chi-square	Df	Sig.
1	10.112	8	.257

Table 6: Coefficients, Standard Errors, Wald Statistics, and Odds Ratios for Predictor Variables in the Logistic Regression Model showing influence of various strategies towards seeking help on GBV

Strategies	В	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Workshop	1.339	.453	8.736	1	.003	3.814
Peer education	.387	.535	.522	1	.470	1.472
Counselling services	1.453	.436	11.103	1	.001	4.278
Women empowerment programs	088	.486	.033	1	.857	.916



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Classroom discussions or presentations	343	.448	.588	1	.443	.709
Guest speakers or experts on gender-based violence	330	.402	.675	1	.411	.719
<u> </u>	.168	.682	.061	1	.805	1.183
Posters or informational materials displayed around the school	.543	.408	1.768	1	.184	1.721
Constant	-2.006	1.884	1.135	1	.287	.134

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Workshop, Peer education, Counseling services, Women empowerment programs, Classroom discussion or presentation, Guest speakers or experts on gender-based violence, social media campaigns or online resources, Posters or informational materials displayed around the school

b. Dependent variable: Experience of GBV

A logistic regression analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between participation in GBV campaigns and various predictor variables. The model collectively explained 18.4% to 25.2% of the variance in help seeking behavior, with a Cox & Snell R Square of .184 and a Nagelkerke R Square of .252. The model exhibited good fit, supported by a non-significant chi-square value in the Hosmer and Lemeshow Test ( $\chi^2 = 10.112$ , df = 8, p = .257). Among the strategies examined, "Workshop" (B = 1.339, p = .003) and "Counselling services" (B = 1.453, p = .001) emerged as statistically significant predictors of responding to GBV. Schools implementing workshop programs were 3.814 times more likely to respond to GBV incidents compared to those who do not participate in workshops. Similarly counselling services have a notable impact on the like hood of responding to GBV incidents. An Exp (B) value of 4.278, indicates that the odds of responding to GBV incidences are 4.278 times when counseling are used compared to when they are not used.

#### 4.0 DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Demographic information

In the study area, analysis of demographic details of the respondents was conducted to examine GBV campaign occurrence ratios, presence of supportive programs and ways through which GBV education is imparted in Ilemela Municipal Secondary Schools. Data on demographics such as gender, age, class groupings and parental occupation is necessary for meagre the particulars of GBV within this specific setting. These variables provide a foundation for tailoring GBV interventions by revealing the composition of the student population that experiences and witnesses GBV. The proportions of genders among respondents (55.5% male and 44.5% female) indicate a clear need for gender-inclusive GBV prevention strategies that recognize the effects on both sexes. Research conducted in developed countries, for example, the study by Smith et al., (2021) in the UK— as well as findings from developing nations like Leach et al., (2013) in Kenya show that men and women experience and



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perpetrate GBV differently which implies intervention programs should be sex-specific. A message deeply inserted within the age distribution under the age group of 12-17, underscores the significance of early involvement. According to Anderson and Claes (2022), the beginning of early adolescence marks a pivotal point in molding perceptions towards violence and gender dynamics. The varied class demography thus hints at the uniform integration of GBV prevention irrespective of educational levels, supporting the findings of Park et al., (2022) who voiced out a compelling call for a comprehensive school-wide approach for adolescents.

The study's findings align with existing literature on GBV prevention, as Anderson and Claes (2022) and Smith et al., (2021) both emphasised the importance of early adolescence in forming attitudes towards gender and violence. Park et al., (2022) argue for the need for GBV education across all school grades, supporting the study's findings on class distribution. The socioeconomic influences on GBV, highlighted by Kamau (2016), reinforce the need for context-sensitive interventions. Studies from diverse settings, including developed countries like the US and developing nations such as Uganda, repeat the importance of considering economic factors in GBV prevention strategies (Few-Demo and Allen 2020).

This study largely supports Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1986), which asserts that individuals learn behaviours, attitudes, and emotional responses by observing others in their social environment. Early adolescence plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes towards gender and violence, which aligns with Bandura's theory of learning behaviors through observation and imitation during formative years (Anderson and Claes 2022). Thelma (2024) also said that socioeconomic factors, like parents' job, can affect GBV experiences, which supports the idea that the environment plays a big role in how behaviour develops. However, while social learning theory provides a strong framework, its adaptation to account for individual and contextual variations is necessary (Bullock et al., 2022).

## 4.2 Gender-Based Violence strategies in Secondary Schools

## 4. 2.1 Presence of GBV strategies

The study examined whether GBV desks and awareness campaigns are present and successful in secondary schools. The results in table 2 are immediately relevant as they provide actual information about the presence of GBV desks and the methods students use to report incidents. The findings indicate that 51.1% of GBV reports originate from GBV desks, which is 56.6% of schools having GBV desks. Comprehensive GBV reporting procedures in educational contexts are necessary, according to recent studies (Reilly, 2024; Guleva-Govender, 2022), emphasising the importance of easily accessible reporting channels to ensure student safety.

The findings highlight significant implications for GBV management and reporting in secondary schools. In Table 2, over half of the respondents acknowledged the existence of GBV desks and used them for reporting. Also, the result aligned with qualitative data from school counselors A who claimed, "there is GBV desk and our students use it as reporting channels for their problems". It



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suggests that these desks play a crucial role in the school environment. This also emphasises the need for schools to establish and maintain GBV desks to provide safe reporting mechanisms for students. It is evident that the presence of institutional support structures, such as GBV desks, aligns with best practices identified in prior studies for addressing GBV in educational settings. Previous research (Kieser, 2023) has emphasised the importance of accessible reporting mechanisms, and the current study supports this by showing substantial reporting to GBV desks. However, the variability in awareness of GBV campaigns highlights a gap also noted in the literature, where the effectiveness of awareness initiatives often depends on their implementation and visibility (DeGue et al., 2014). This aligns with findings from Huffman (2023), which indicate that consistent and visible strategies are crucial for raising awareness and encouraging reporting.

These findings, within the broader context of GBV research, contribute to understanding how institutional structures in schools can support GBV victims and promote reporting. The study underscores the necessity of not only establishing GBV desks but also ensuring their accessibility and functionality. The mixed awareness of GBV campaigns suggests that while some schools are making steps in GBV prevention education, there is a significant need for standardised and effective implementation strategies across all schools. Studies by Crooks et al., (2019) and Prezenszky et al., (2018) highlight the need for standardised strategies and training to ensure the ability and consistency of GBV prevention programmes in educational settings.

#### 4.2.2 Gender based violence prevention strategies

## 4.2.2.1 Accessibility and Equity of Support Services

The descriptive data from Table 3 revealed the prevalence of certain support services in combating GBV in secondary schools, such as counselling services and peer education. This aligns with the viewpoints expressed by a 34-year-old female teacher who is a student's counselor during the interview. She emphasised the significance of counselling and peer education in addressing GBV in secondary schools. She claimed, "counselling and peer education has been recognised as an essential strategy used to combat gender based violence". This perspective aligns with the study's findings, highlighting the importance of these services in creating supportive environments. Studies done by Crooks et al., (2019) and Women, (2016) bolster this assertion by highlighting the crucial role of counselling and peer support networks in addressing GBV in educational settings.

These findings are important within the broader context of GBV intervention strategies in educational settings. They suggest that while counselling services are widely recognised as essential, their current implementation may be insufficient or unequally distributed, impacting their overall effectiveness. This underscores the necessity for a more comprehensive analysis of the provision and accessibility of these services, to guarantee their alignment with the needs of all students, especially those most at risk to GBV. This aligns with the findings of recent studies such as those conducted by Casey et al., (2018) and Tappis et al., (2016), which highlight the importance of equitable access to support services for effective GBV intervention.



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Various studies (Acharya, 2022; Sinko et al., 2022) have evidently shown that there is a difference between the theoretical value of counselling services and their practical outcomes, highlighting the potential of counselling to provide critical emotional support and facilitate recovery from GBV. However, schools with counselling services may not fully utilize or effectively implement these services in their current form, possibly due to resource constraints, a lack of training, or inadequate student engagement. This observation resonates with the findings of studies such as those conducted by Zulu et al., (2024), which underscore the need for enhanced implementation strategies to optimise the effectiveness of counselling services in addressing GBV.

While the prevalence of counseling services and peer education programs in addressing GBV in secondary schools is promising, the effectiveness of these interventions requires further study. The findings underscore the need for enhanced quality and accessibility of support services to ensure they meet the needs of all students. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on GBV prevention and response, highlighting critical areas for improvement and suggesting avenues for future research to build upon these findings.

## 4.2.2.2 Effectiveness of Workshops

Table 6's data revealed that using workshops as one of the strategies emerged as pivotal in reducing GBV incidents among students in secondary schools. This finding supported by Tappis et al., (2016), studies on significant of using workshops when dealing with GBV incidences so as to raise awareness to students. The participatory nature of workshops fosters a supportive environment where students feel empowered to discuss sensitive issues, recognize signs of GBV and understand the importance of reporting incidents (Vanner et al., 2022). This inclusive atmosphere cultivates a culture of openness and proactive behavior, encouraging students to break the silence surrounding GBV and contributing to a more informed and responsive school community. This aligns with the viewpoints expressed by school counselor participant B who has been actively involved in GBV intervention programs claimed that:

"Our workshops have been transformative; our students are not only learning about GBV but are also developing the confidence to speak out when they meet GBV incidences and help other peers to report when meeting violence."

This observation aligns with findings from Yamile, (2021) where the interactive nature of workshop was found to significantly enhanced students' understanding and responsiveness to GBV issues.

#### 4.2.2.3 Effectiveness of counseling service

Despite their vital role in providing emotional support and aiding GBV victims, exhibit a lower likelihood of response to incidents as indicated in Table 6 with an odds ratio of 0.284. Studies suggest that challenges such as limited resources, trained counsellors hinder the effectiveness of counselling



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practices (Vanner et al., 2022). This aligns with the interview result from student counselor of 47 years emphasized the challenges and potential of counseling services who commented;

"While our counselling services are crucial, we face significant hurdles such as lack of offices as you know counselling need confidentiality. Also trained counselors even we save the students but there is a need of expertise so as to make this service in a professional way."

Similarly, a 35-year-old teacher expressed concerns about the limited effectiveness of one-time counseling sessions and guest speaker sessions he complained: "limited counselling sessions may not effectively address the complex and ongoing nature of gender-based violence" this supported by studies such as those conducted by Lambie et al., (2019) and Klein et al., (2020), which highlight the need for more frequent and comprehensive counseling interventions in schools. Continuous engagement and reinforcement are necessary to effectively combat violence. By improving counseling services based on scholarly insights schools can establish multifaceted strategies that not only raises awareness and builds confidence among students but also provides strong support mechanisms for victims of GBV.

## 4.2.2.4 Need for Comprehensive Approaches

Table 6 reveals the presence of various strategies to addressing GBV in schools when students need help towards GBV incidences, such as workshops, and counselling. However, there is a need for a more comprehensive and integrated approach, as emphasised by Participant C claimed, "Posters displayed in school areas serve as visual reminders and educational tools to raise awareness". The insights from the interviewee underscore the significant implications of adopting a holistic approach to GBV prevention in schools. Comprehensive strategies that include emotional support, interactive workshops, visual reminders, and peer support initiatives can create a more supportive and proactive environment. This holistic approach is crucial because it not only addresses immediate issues but also promotes long-term cultural change within the school community. According to Casey et al., (2018), such multifaceted interventions are essential for creating lasting change in attitudes and behaviours related to GBV. Furthermore, Levtov (2014) emphasises the need for integrated educational strategies to provide students with the necessary skills and knowledge to challenge harmful gender norms.

Also, the significant participation in peer education programs led by students highlights the potential for youth empowerment as emphasised by school counselor B who highlighted the significant of peer education in dealing with GBV cases, she claimed: "Peer interaction of our students through school clubs and cluster discussions for our students helps in building awareness as they share different views and incidence and teach each other the importance of reporting such incidences"



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Placing these findings within the broader context of GBV prevention in educational settings reveals a clear need for comprehensive strategies. The current study contributes to the expanding body of knowledge by highlighting the significant impact of integrating individual initiatives like workshops and counselling into a cohesive strategy, despite their value. This research underscores the necessity of combining multiple elements of GBV prevention to address both immediate and long-term needs. Storer et al., (2016) argue that a blended approach that includes educational programmes, support services, and community engagement can address the multifaceted nature of GBV more effectively.

#### 5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### **5.1 Conclusion**

This study concludes that attendance to workshops and counseling service increases the likelihood of help seeking behavior in face of Gender based violence. These strategies indicated a statistically significant association with students help seeking behavior. Additionally the qualitative data from teachers' interviews established that peer education could serve as an educative measure where students themselves inform each other on the importance of help seeking strategies are paramount in the fight against GBV ensuring that victims receive the necessary support and protections. Therefore, the ultimate goal of GBV interventions which is to improve help seeking behavior among victims may be well served through workshops, counseling and peer education especially when dealing with secondary school students.

#### **5.2 Recommendations**

It is recommended that more workshops on GBV should be held where students should be made aware and trained on how to access and use various support services. Also, counseling services should be improved by employing more trained counseling experts in schools and creating private premises where the services are to be provided. Furthermore, peer education programs regarding GBV should be recognized as part of school academic activities and specific time should be set aside for their implementation. The collective utilization of these strategies would improve help seeking thus assisting in combating GBV among schoolchildren.

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