

Understanding Gender-Based Violence

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Gender-based violence (GBV) is a broad concept that many people do not fully understand. As a community activist, I have come to realise that many residents of Eldorado Park are only aware of physical, sexual, and emotional or psychological abuse.

It refers to any harm or violence directed at a person based on their gender. It is often rooted in unequal power dynamics and can take many forms.

Beyond the commonly recognised forms, here are several other categories:

Economic abuse: Denying someone access to resources such as money, food, or shelter, or controlling them by withholding these resources.

Spiritual abuse: Using religion to control or manipulate someone, including misusing religious texts to dictate behaviour.

Stalking: Repeatedly harassing or threatening someone, making them feel unsafe—for example, through persistent calls or unwanted visits.

Property damage: Destroying personal belongings as a means of intimidation or retaliation.

What many in the community fail to understand is that even within these categories, there are further subcategories. Because of this limited awareness, many people do not recognise themselves as GBV victims and so do not seek help. I have encountered two separate instances that highlight this gap in understanding. In one case, someone approached me for assistance, and as he spoke, it became clear that he was experiencing GBV.

Two months later, while assisting Khanya College with recruitment for a health survey and a GBV survivors project, a candidate asked me what GBV was. After I explained it to her, she realised that she qualified for the GBV survivors project. She had previously assumed she was not the right candidate when, in fact, she had a powerful story to tell.

GBV and domestic violence centres, activists, and organisations must increase educational workshops in Eldorado Park and the surrounding areas. Communities need better access to information to recognise abuse and seek help. More information or assistance: **contact Khanya College on 011 336 9190, Email: coordination@khanyacollege.org.za**

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