

"Human behaviour flows from three main sources: desire, emotion, and knowledge."

Plato

The Impact of Gender-Based Violence



Level 2



8 to 30



60 minutes



Complexity: Level 2

Group size: 8 to 30

Time: 60 minutes

Overview: The participants look at various examples of gender-based violence and discuss the consequences for the individuals concerned and for society as a whole.

Objectives:

- To understand the meaning of gender-based violence recognise and be able to recognise different types of gender-based violence
- To discuss the impact of gender-based violence on those affected by it and on society as a whole
- To consider the question of personal responsibility in relation to occurrences of gender-based violence

Materials:

- Copies of stories (one story per group)
- Flipchart paper

Preparation: Make copies of the stories that can be found at the end of this activity. Prepare two pieces of flipchart paper, with the headings "Consequences on victims" and "Consequences on society". You may also want to read Section 3 of Chapter 1, where different types of gender-based violence are described.



Instructions

- 1) Ask participants if they have heard of gender-based violence. Discuss this briefly with the group, exploring the different examples of gender-based violence which exist. You may also provide participants with a definition of gender-based violence.
- 2) Tell participants that they will work in small groups of 4-5 people to discuss a brief story. They should read the text and answer the questions at the end. Hand out one story to each group and give them about 20 minutes to discuss the cases.
- 3) Once this part of the work is completed, ask the groups to come together and present their answers. They should begin by reading the story aloud. Allow other groups to comment on the group's results. If the groups are unclear about the types of gender-based violence present in the story, you may need to provide the answers yourself.
- 4) When the groups present their answers to the questions about the impact of violence on the victims and on society, write these down on the pieces of flipchart paper. After each presentation, read the summarised answers back to the whole group and ask if they would like to add or change anything.

Debriefing and evaluation



Begin this part of the activity with participants' general impressions of the activity and then discuss the consequences of gender-based violence and what participants can do to prevent it.

- What do you think about the activity? How did you feel doing it?
- Had you heard about all the different types of gender-based violence presented in the stories? Was there anything surprising for you?
- Was there anything common to different groups' responses to the impact of gender-based violence?
- Why does gender-based violence have consequences for the whole of society?
- What causes gender-based violence? Who is to blame?
- Which human rights are violated in case of gender-based violence?
- What can be done to put an end to such violence, and who can help to bring such a change about?
- What can you do to prevent this type of violence, and how can we all act against it?

Tips for facilitator



This activity is based on an activity from *Bookmarks* – Understanding hate speech. The stories in this activity can easily be modified, and facilitators are encouraged to adapt them to local context, where necessary. Some stories include more than one type of violence (e.g. Story 4 – verbal violence, hate speech, physical violence, hate crime).

Pay attention to this when explaining the types of violence: very often different types happen together at the same time. Try also to address the issue of intersectionality, when someone suffers from violence and discrimination on multiple grounds – as in the first story (gender and disability). You can read more about this in Chapter 4.

Participants are deliberately not introduced to different types of gender-based violence at the beginning of the activity: the discussions aim to explore what they already know on the topic. If you think this will be too difficult for participants, you could make a list of different types of gender-based violence on the flipchart and show this to them before they work on the stories.

We use the word “victim” in this activity, which is a word with certain negative connotations. Some people prefer to use other terms, such as: person targeted by violence or affected by violence. However, the word victim is used in several international human rights instruments, for example in the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. The Explanatory report to the Convention specifies:

“The term ‘victim’ refers to both victims of violence against women, and victims of domestic violence, as defined in Article 3 (a) and Article 3 (b) respectively. While only women, including girls, can be victims of violence against women, victims of domestic violence may include men and women as well as children.”

Make sure to emphasise that the only person responsible for violence is the perpetrator. It is never the victim’s fault!



Suggestions for follow-up

If you want to explore further the question of violence in relationships, you could try the activity “Kati’s story”. Violence in online gaming is addressed in the activity “Changing the game” from *Bookmarks*, in which participants devise a small campaign against sexism in online games. Or you could explore further the topic of economic violence, using an activity in *Compass* called “Different wages”. This is a simulation activity that confronts people with the realities of the labour market, addressing issues such as different wages for the same job, discrimination in the workplace and policies of low pay for young workers.

You could also present key points from the Council of Europe’s Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence. You can find a shortened version of the Convention in the Appendices.



Ideas for action

On the basis of answers provided by the participants to the last question of the debriefing, ask participants what they would like to do as a group in order to prevent or act against gender-based violence. Develop a plan together, and then carry out the action.



Stories

Story 1

Martha moves using an electric wheelchair. She lives with her partner in a small apartment, in a small town. They have been together for 6 years. Steven, her partner, has always been a great support to her in carrying out daily activities. However, recently he has been under great pressure to work very long hours. Martha is at home alone and there are days when she does not eat for more than 8 hours. Last Monday, Steven returned home in the morning after a night shift and found that she had been unable to put herself to bed and had tried to sleep in her wheelchair. When Martha asked Steven to work from home in the evenings, he said this was not possible. Martha has no relatives locally, so it is difficult for her to call on anyone else. She also has few friends, as the couple rarely go out. Once when Martha told Steven she was hungry he told her: 'Come on, you are a woman! Make an effort and cook something for yourself or call for a take-away!'.

Which examples of gender-based violence can you identify in this story? Who is the victim and who is the perpetrator? What are the likely consequences of violence for the victim? What are the possible consequences for society as a whole?

Story 2

Bernadette works as an accountant in a large company. She has recently received numerous missed calls from an unknown number. When she tried to call back, there was no response. She did not worry until recently, when she received several text messages from a different number. These made her feel uncomfortable, as the texts were very explicit: they called her a slut, suggested that she loves sex and described her body in detail. The last message was even threatening: "I dream about raping you and I will do it one day. You'll love it!". She did not know what to do so she told her friend about the messages, but the friend suggested that she calm down. However, she did offer to drive Bernadette to and from work every day. Bernadette felt slightly relieved, but recently, she noticed an unfamiliar man near her block of flats, looking at her. The same thing happened on the next day.

Which examples of gender-based violence can you identify in this story? Who is the victim and who is the perpetrator? What are the likely consequences of violence for the victim? What are the possible consequences for society as a whole?



Story 3

Linda, who is 17, is a passionate online gamer. In her free time, she plays a lot and she has even made some good friends online. Gaming has always been her passion and she is very good at it, especially at strategic online games. Last time she played her favourite game, one of the male players commented on her avatar (containing her picture) saying: 'God, you are so f... hot! I wish I was near you to show you what a real man is'. Linda did not react, although she felt a little uncomfortable: after all, it was only a game, and just a stupid comment. Two weeks later, she did not do very well in a game she was playing, and some of the players started to send her private messages: 'Go to the kitchen and bring me a beer, woman', 'Get some sex and come back again', 'Playing in a team with women always ends up like this. Never again!'. She decided she would not play the game for the next month.

Which examples of gender-based violence can you identify in this story? Who is the victim and who is the perpetrator? What are the likely consequences of violence for the victim? What are the possible consequences for society as a whole?

Story 4

Jan and Ivan have been in a relationship for 2 years. They decided to spend New Year's Eve at their friends, in a town about 100 km away. After the party, at 6 o'clock in the morning, they were going back to the hotel holding hands. They were close to the bus stop when they saw a group of young men walking towards them. One of the men started shouting: 'Look at those fags! You deserve to die! You are a shame to our country'. Jan and Ivan were scared. Three of the men started to run towards them. They kicked Jan in the belly and punched Ivan in the face. Jan and Ivan cried out for help, but then the bus arrived and the three men got on. Jan asked the driver for help, telling him that those men had just violently beaten him and his friend. They shouted back: 'they are fags!' The bus driver refused to help and shut the door in Jan's face.

Which examples of gender-based violence can you identify in this story? Who is the victim and who is the perpetrator? What are the likely consequences of violence for the victim? What are the possible consequences for society as a whole?

**Story 5**

Martina (16) met Sasha (17) at school. She had always liked him, so she couldn't have been happier when he asked her for a date. After two dates, she was sure she was in love. On the third date Sasha invited her home and started telling her how beautiful she was, and at one moment he touched her leg. Martina said nothing, but when he started to stroke her, she removed his hand. He suggested that they should undress and make love. She said it was too soon for her and that she wanted to wait until they knew each other better. He insisted and started to undress her. She wanted to leave but he forced her onto the bed by force and started to undress her, touching her in between the legs. She screamed and tried free herself, but Sasha was too strong.

Which examples of gender-based violence can you identify in this story? Who is the victim and who is the perpetrator? What are the likely consequences of violence for the victim? What are the possible consequences for society as a whole?

Story 6

After the birth of her second child, Samantha decided to go back to work as soon as her maternity leave was over. She discussed it with her husband, who asked her to wait to make this decision until her maternity leave was coming to an end. As this time approached, she submitted a number of job applications and was invited to an interview, and was then offered the job. She was very happy and shared the news with her husband. He was less happy and started asking about the job, identifying difficulties and problems, such as that the children would need to go to nursery school, there would be problems with picking them up, the family would need to eat out more often, etc. After two hours of very intense discussion, he asked: 'Don't you have enough money? I always give you money when you go shopping. You don't need more. You are a woman and need to take care of our children.'

Which examples of gender-based violence can you identify in this story? Who is the victim and who is the perpetrator? What are the likely consequences of violence for the victim? What are the possible consequences for society as a whole?



Story 7

The government of country X pushed a new law through parliament which decriminalised marital rape, on the grounds that rape is “not possible” between people who are married. The government also passed a law removing sexual orientation from the list of factors classified as leading to hate crime.

Which examples of gender-based violence can you identify in this story? Who is the victim and who is the perpetrator? What are the likely consequences of violence for the victim? What are the possible consequences for society as a whole?

Story 8

Melinda, a high school teacher, wrote a letter to colleagues informing them that in a few months’ time, she would be undergoing sex reassignment surgery from male-to-female. Melinda had worked in the school for 5 years, and twice had been chosen by students as the best teacher of the year. Just one month after Melinda’s surgery had begun, at a meeting for all parents of the school the school board made an announcement about Melinda’s status. About 20 parents wrote in to protest, requesting that Melinda be removed from the staff. The school board decided to dismiss Melinda in September, on the basis of parents’ complaints. Melinda decided to fight for her rights and lodged a legal complaint against the school.

Which examples of gender-based violence can you identify in this story? Who is the victim and who is the perpetrator? What are the likely consequences of violence for the victim? What are the possible consequences for society as a whole?