



Coping Strategies of Women in the Churches in Dealing With Gender Based Violence

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Abstract

Gender-based violence (GBV) has reached a level where it is now considered as one of the pandemics in South Africa. This article is written in response to the call of papers from Unisa about Black Theology of Liberation and engages literature reviews. The article is methodologically interdisciplinary and intradisciplinary for constructive research findings and conclusions. It sets to investigate the coping strategies of women in the churches in dealing with gender-based violence (GBV) and the role of the church in addressing GBV. As women continue to fill the pews of the churches in South Africa, the question remains on how women are coping with this devastating pandemic of gender-based violence. What are the different strategies that are put in place in churches that assist (empower) women to cope and if they hold a future in dealing with gender-based violence? Strategic initiatives from both social and natural sciences will be engaged towards finding solutions to address this social menace that affect women negatively. The research will also identify the various interventions utilized by the church in addressing cases of GBV. Conclusion determined by research outcomes and strategic suggestions for women to address and cope with gender-based violence contribute towards the solutions of this pandemic.

Keywords: Gender Based Violence, women, strategies, church, theology.

Introduction

This article sets to investigate the coping strategies of women in the churches in dealing with gender-based violence (GBV) and the role of the church in addressing GBV. As women continue to fill the pews of the churches in South Africa, the question remains on how women are coping with this devastating pandemic of gender-based violence. What are the different strategies that



are put in place in churches that empower women to cope and if they hold a future in dealing with gender-based violence? Strategic initiatives from both social and natural sciences will be engaged towards finding solutions to address this social menace that affect women negatively. The research also identifies the various interventions utilized by the church in addressing cases of GBV. Conclusion is determined by how research outcomes and strategic suggestions for women to address and cope with gender-based violence contribute towards the solutions of this pandemic.

It is amazing that historically, as early as the 1600s in England, a revival movement began that released women to minister in unprecedented ways. For instance the founder of the Quakers, George Fox, was of a strong opinion that 'since the Holy Spirit dwells in men and women alike, and since it is He who rightly interprets the Bible, both genders have the same capacity to speak for God' (Strang in Grady 2000:vii). New evangelistic movements such as Methodism, the Holiness Movement, Salvation Army, and Pentecostalism, opened the door for women to grow beyond traditional confines of family or domestic tethers. In our current experiences of life, Gender Based Violence is perpetrated through tradition, prejudice, customs, culture and denominational stereotypes.

Gender Based Violence

Gender Based Violence has reached a level where it is now a pandemic in our country. According to the WHO, in 2016, the country had a death rate for female interpersonal violence four times higher than the global average based on GBV, and five times higher than for GBV (Agency South African Government News, 2021). Approximately 1 in 3 South African women have experienced sexual assault at some point in their lives, and 2 in 5 females have been beaten by their domestic partners, being dangerous in both their homes as well as on the street (Mile, 2020).

Due to rising consciousness of GBV the problem has gained a lot of visibility. Arguably, women and men encounter gender-based violence in a range of ways that define the predictors, underlying forces, and ramification. We are informed by Domestic Violence Statics that 'Unfortunately, the domestic violence statistics in South Africa are notoriously high. Domestic violence which is mainly against women and children, can affect men too.'¹ It is a fact that there are many women in the church on the weekly basis, hence, the Church stands the risk of consigning women to a position of susceptibility, disadvantaged, and relegated to subservience, thus increasing their exposure to GBV acts such as sexual violence and femicide. In such circumstances relations between men and women become unequal and power centred. The rationale behind such tendencies is that they are in accordance with the Bible and God's will.

In emphasizing gender-based violence against women, it is not the intention of this study to suggest that women are never violent against men.

In many denominations and faith confessions women find themselves subordinating their esteem and attracting violence because of their gender identity. Apartheid era violence may to a considerable degree be attributed to the emasculation of men in the current democratic dispensation, even those in the Church. The subsequent trauma was and has been internalised, to the extent that it is currently projected through GBV in recompense for the lived pain and abuse. The purpose for this may be construed to construct a sense of masculinity. Unfortunately, this in

¹ <https://www.ier.co.za/domestic-violence-statistics-in-south-africa/> (Viewed 23 August 2023).



turn propels a patriarchal and vicious circle wherein the younger generation learns and continues the abuse in the Church.

Some Expressions of GBV

Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence is one of the most common forms of violence against women and includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and controlling behaviours by an intimate partner (WHO). IPV refers to any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship. As cited by Kinsey Hasstedt and Andrea Rowan (2016): IPV encompasses acts of stalking, psychological aggression, physical violence or sexual violence-behaviors and tactics through which an intimate partner seeks to establish and maintain power over another². Examples of types of behaviour include acts of physical violence, such as slapping, hitting, kicking, beating and sexual violence, including forced sexual intercourse and other forms of sexual coercion. This agrees with Ademiluka (2016:342) that IPV IS 'all acts that a person carries out to hurt another with whom he/she is/was in a relationship, such as between husband and wife or boyfriend and girlfriend.'

Studies from a range of countries such as United Kingdom and South Africa have found that 40–70% of female murder victims were killed by their husband or boyfriend, often in the context of an abusive relationship. *Womankind Worldwide* informs us that in United Kingdom men kill women every three days; while in South Africa a woman is killed every four hours.³ In addition, evidence suggests that IPV increases the risk of a woman committing suicide, and may also increase the risk of contracting HIV, and thus of AIDS-related death (WHO).

The church is the first-place women prefer to report their abuse before they can look anywhere else. It is unfortunate as the church can also be used as a place that perpetuate violence against women. This results in women no longer preferring to report their intimate partner violence to the church. In a study conducted by Landman and Mudimeli (2022), *The spiritual experiences of women victims of gender-based violence: a case study of Thohoyandou*, the following themes emerged:

1. Women do not see the church as a safe place to report domestic violence. Some of them were referred to the wife of the pastor when they tried to talk to him.
2. The women revert to private prayer to bring peace and joy to the relationship or to assist them in persevering or getting out of the relationship.
3. Men's violent, abusive behaviour against women is excused as it is perceived or believed that the devil or evil spirits cause it.
4. The women are mostly unwilling to leave, praying that things will change.
5. Verbal abuse usually accompanies physical abuse and the women were called 'whore', 'witch' and 'slut'.
6. The women mostly regard a good woman to be one who is obedient and persevering.

Sometimes abusers can hide themselves behind church or religion in continuing their abusive acts against women, and it makes it very difficult for the women to fully depend on the church. As cited by Collette Noble (2013):

² Cited in Kinsey Hasstedt and Andrea Rowan, "Understanding Intimate Partner Violence as a Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Issue in the United States," *GPR* 19 (2016): 37-45, online: <https://tinyurl.com/ybup2fqn>.

³ <https://www.womankind.org.uk/resource/a-femicide-factsheet-global-stats-calls-to-action/> (Viewed 23 August 2023)



Abusers will use the church to their advantage in order to promote their right to dominance. This can be a very severe form of abuse since it can isolate their victim in terms of their friends, family, and their religion.

The church has a role that they can play in gender-based violence, more especially in intimate partner violence. Most of the times, both husbands and wives fellowship at the same church and they believe in the message of the church. If the pastor is a male, it sometimes become very difficult for him to side with a woman in cases of intimate partner violence. The church and the pastor needs to be empowered in order to handle cases of intimate partner violence with care, on the same breath, Collette Noble (2013) further states the following:

It is necessary that seminary school integrate domestic violence into its teachings, so pastors become more comfortable addressing it in their church. They can address it in their church through sermons, activism, and public awareness. Church leaders also need to be aware of all the different forms domestic violence can take so they can be more apt at identifying it and understanding it. Knowing some of the causes and ethnic/cultural differences of domestic violence can also be crucial information for clergymen. As domestic violence grows into a public health issue, the church will be an integral part in helping break the cycle of violence.

Child Marriage

Child marriage is any marriage where one of the parties is under 18 years old. The global burden of child marriage is shifting from South Asia to Sub-Saharan Africa. Child marriage is driven by various factors such as poverty, lack of access to education, and the marginalisation of girls linked to inequality between male and female children.⁴

Le Roux (2020) quoted Mudarikwa (et.al) in identifying two specific South African practices linked to child marriage. The first one mentioned is *ukuthwala* which is a cultural practice of abduction, where a woman is forcibly taken by a young man to his home and it includes young girls being married to older men. This practice originated with the Xhosa speaking tribes. The second one that Le Roux mentions is *ukuganisela*, where marriage negotiations are conducted by the parents of both the girl and the boy without their consent. Negotiations are even conducted with older men by the girl's parents and receive lobola without the girl consenting. Child marriage is still practiced in Africa, and specifically in South Africa. With particular reference to South Africa, the most common form of customary practice is *ukuthwala*, which is often carried out in rural areas and involves the practice of a man abducting a young girl with the intention of forcing the girl's family into negotiations for marriage (Longwe, 2020).

Religious and cultural practices are the main reinforcers of this practice and determines the place of women. Concurring with what is stated by Longwe (2020):

The complex dilemmas surrounding child marriage in South Africa point to the fact that the need is not simply to end child marriage. We need to transform how South African societies value women and girls, but also men and boys, and what is considered normal and acceptable within intimate relationships.

⁴ CM Longwe (2020)– An analysis of child marriage as a constitutional violation against the right of the child. https://repository.nwu.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10394/36354/Longwe_CM.pdf?sequence=1 (Viewed 1 December 2022)



Honor Based Violence

The simple definition of HBV is the violence (physical or psychological or sexual) committed to defend the supposed honour or reputation of the family and/or community. It can take many forms, including:

domestic abuse; threats of violence or death; sexual and psychological abuse; acid attacks; forced marriage; forced suicide; forced abortion; female genital cutting/mutilation; assault; blackmail and being held against someone's will (Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation, 2014).

At a basic level, HBV can be understood as a form of gender-based violence involving restoration of a family's honor through punishment of a family member, or a family member's romantic partner, that has brought shame to the family by violating sexual boundaries (Mayeda & Vijaykumar, 2016).⁵ Mayeda and Vijaykumar further states that HBV is connected to a system of patriarchal values and behaviors that reestablish a family's honor after it has been shamed, almost invariably because a woman or girl has transgressed prescribed sexual boundaries. These kind of practice does not place value on the life of women and make them vulnerable to gender-based violence.

DISCOURSES THAT PROMOTE GBV

One of the fundamental problems in African cultures is silence. Discourses on issues affecting quality of life are limited as in some cases people swear secrecy, so that they don't divulge information on emotional or physical abuses they experience. The following discourses are some of the examples:

Cultural Discourses

GBV takes place in spaces that would be considered safe. These spaces include home, place of work, religious centers and even learning centers. These are spaces where cultural initiations and formations are expected to be instituted. It is unfortunate that the spaces have developed into centers of violence. Family violence (husband versus wife, father versus girl-children etc.) takes place in home. Employer-employee violence is common as part of daily events. It has become popular for church leaders of our time to be sex perverts against the congregants, and teacher-learner sex violence is a growing trend in our society. Some examples within the church are referred to below, while on the 10th of June 2023, the Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga has revealed that 19 teachers were fired for sexual abuse and other offences against learners.⁶ According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Lloyd's Register Foundation (LRF) and Gallup, more than one in five people (almost 23 per cent) in employment have experienced violence and harassment at work, whether physical, psychological or sexual.⁷

⁵ Mayeda D.T and Vijaykumar R. (2016) – A review of Literature on Honor Based Violence. <https://www.hra-project.eu/images/library/032020/5.pdf> (Viewed 3 December 2022).

⁶ <https://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/teachers-fired-for-sexual-abuse-of-learners-some-as-young-as-12-95552d0f-7feb-40de-ac65-cf80958d7b6a> (Viewed 23 August 2023).

⁷ https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_863177/lang-en/index.htm (Viewed 23 August 2023).



Gender-based violence has become a systemic social ill in South Africa, and it continues to 'be a social ill with far reaching repercussions' ((Oparinde & Matsha in Champion, 2021:1). This is highlighted by Mahlori et al. (2018:1) that GBV is one of the most pressing social issues affecting South Africa. It is deeply entrenched in institutions, cultures and traditions in South Africa. In some cases it is engrained in male subconsciousness, therefore subliminally carried out in some subtle ways. The major contributors towards its incremental occurrences include patriarchalism, sexism, socio-economic marginalisation, and in some cases political reticence. Civil societies, religious fori, and political formations are constantly in discourse in attempt to address the issue, though results seem to be unobservable. It is historically noticed of the attempts of civil societies across the country demanding a fully costed, evidence-based, multi-sectoral, inclusive and comprehensive initiatives to address and curb this issue.

The cultural discourses on Gender Based Violence have variously been expressed through the civil societies. The arguments are robustly stated from the cultural stances on the dignity of womenfolk. There is enough evidence of the mushrooming non-governmental organisations aiming to address and redress the GBV issue. Amazingly even in some parts of Africa these formations:

...advocate for the annulling of cultural norms in order to advance the status of women. In doing so, they are supported not only by global NGO discourses, but also by a current stream of international academic research (Abramowitz & Moran 2012:142).

Whenever there are court appearances of people suspected of rape, or violence against women, one observes the presence of members of People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA). According to their website, this is a 'feminist, women's rights organisation that provides both services, and engages in advocacy in order to ensure the realisation of women's rights and thereby improve women's quality of life⁸. Their cultural discourse involves provision of advocacy, using a feminist and 'intersectional analysis.'

It is noted that formations such as POWA possess enormous power to eradicate violence against women. They accomplish this through extensive research, learning and supporting policies dealing with or related to the issue, implementing some strategic grassroots plans of awareness. These include workshopping men and women about gender equity, changing attitudes towards violent behaviours, and collaborating with religious and cultural formations to partner in dealing with this social ill, informing them of the negatives of the practice, and how to deal with it. They also provide or connect victims to healthcare and humanitarian assistance programs.

The South African government, realizing that GBV is a socio-cultural menace, initiated the National Council on Gender-Based Violence (NCGBV) in 2012. The Council was mandated to embark on drafting, costing, and implementing a national strategic plan (NSP) to combat GBV. Since its formation, this Council has been destabilised by political changes and lack of funding to execute its mandate.⁹ Its official word or its status since 2014 never echoes in public landscape.

Religious Discourses

One *anathema* in the theological discourse is the hermeneutical tendencies towards patriarchalism. These tendencies are audible in pulpit statements such as 'Women are created by God as inferior beings, designed to serve their husbands', 'Women are not supposed to preach

⁸What POWA does. <https://www.powa.co.za/POWA/about-us>. (Viewed 18 January 2023)

⁹ <https://genderjustice.org.za/project/policy-development-advocacy/stop-gender-violence-national-campaign/> (Viewed 16 January 2023).



to men in a church setting, and she needs to be covered by men all the time when they minister', Women are the weaker vessels therefore pose dangers to menfolk' etc. Patriarchalism has always been associated with women abuse whereby women are maltreated, and this attitude always claimed to be an inherent feature of biblical texts (Ademiluka, 2018:339). Biblical examples are exemplified, quoted and extracted out of context to promote male supremacy over a woman, therefore entitling him to abuse her. Conservative Christian religion through the church always admonishes daughters-in-law to pattern themselves after the examples of Sarah, *who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord* (1 Peter 3:6); Rebekah who responded positively to go with Abraham's servant to become Isaac's wife (Genesis 24:57); Ruth the Moabite who opted to cling to her mother-in-law to her homeland. The Naomi-Ruth narrative expresses a clear example of extended family relationships dynamics, where a new entrant into the clan is given a different kind of treatment.

All examples cited above are incidents within marriage context, though Sarah's one includes the issue of submission. Although it is not evidential that abuse is traceable in these contexts, it can be argued that to a certain degree, submissiveness was a form of abuse as culturally women had no right or freedom to express their feelings.

Submission is one of the bones of contention used by conservative theologians for women to succumb under an abusive situation. Submission hermeneutics is widely applied to convince women that denying man's sexual advances is disobedience to the Bible. This is particularly evident when religion is used or an abuse is perpetrated under some religious hypnotism, claimed to be divine or supernatural revelations. Africans generally, especially women believe in supernatural revelations, hence popularity of prophetesses, wizards more than witches (males), though in different ways and approaches. For Africans, religion is all about mystery, mystics, and divine incantation. There is a strong belief that certain religious leaders possess some special, unnatural powers either to harm others or to facilitate success in any sphere of life such as health, wealth and sexual prowess over the weaker gender. Religionists focus on this, hence, many women succumb to GBV perpetrated by religious leaders under the guise of special revelation, since pastors or prophets are in some cases idolised as hearing from God.

Recently, the sex scandals associated with religious practitioners had been rolling out into the public space. For instance, Timothy Omotoso of Jesus Dominion International is facing various sexual offense charges, including human trafficking and rape. The City Press newspaper in 2019 carried a headline: '*Pastor Lukau demanded sex from me*' in which a young lady claims that Alph Lukau of Alleluia Ministries International, suggested that they needed more time together and she was instructed to arrange another meeting with him through his assistant "very soon", where the sexual assault took place. Shepherd Bushiri, a fugitive self-exiled prophet in his homeland, Malawi, faces money laundering charges, with some sex scandals added to charges. The televangelist, who is known as Prophet Angel Bazuuka Nyameke to his church members and on social media, is also facing separate charges of rape and intimidation. In 2021, another sex scandal rocked the church when Pastor Johannes Masilela, (44), of Good Shepherd Christian Centre, faced 16 charges, including rape, sexual grooming of a child, and exposing his genitalia. His alleged victims, aged between 16 and 26, are members of his church, which is situated in Sun City Village, KwaMhlanga.

Pastor James Devine Thubakgale of Devine Deliverance Church in Seshego, Limpopo Province, South Africa, preyed on his multitude of followers by presenting himself as a powerful man of God, who could heal the sick, cast away evil and was sent to this world to save them. While already serving two life sentences for raping minors, he was found guilty of three counts of rape,



common assault, and calling another person a witch.¹⁰ The list can continue endlessly both nationally and continentally. What is important for one to know is that religion entwines GBV with divine anointing. Once one attains money power, the demon of dominance in the form of sexual abuse rises. The unholy triune (Money, Power, and Sex) of male ego and prestige comes forth. Christian ethics of human dignity and respect for women receive a red card. The bottom line is that abusers subdue women for egoistic gratification. Theological meaning of submission is misinterpreted to justify GBV by many religious people.

Marriage is still used as a permit for GBV. Abusive partners feel entitled to a spouse, that when expectations are not reached, the spouse becomes open to some form of abuse. Oxfam South Africa in its policy on women's rights and gender justice claims that 'Although gender non-conforming people can marry in South Africa, they still face relentless prejudice and exclusion from mainstream society, some of which manifests in extreme violence'¹¹ This statement leads one to look closely into Naomi-Ruth narrative, where Ruth was to the contrary, accepted.

Shamefully, victims of GBV are mentally pelted with preaching of *ukubekezela* (Zulu), *kakarela* (isiNdebele), or *bambelela* in the abusive situation. They are told that marriage is to be preserved at all cost including sacrificing their own dignity, self-esteem, or humanness. In some cases they have to *bambelela* even to the point of dying. Landman and Mudimeli (2022:7) in researching women's experiences in GBV around Thohoyandou discovered a strong conviction that says, 'A woman who is domestically violated must remain silent and honour the sanctity of marriage.' The victims are further marginalised or experience salt added to their wounds to be constantly reminded that 'A good woman perseveres in her marriage or relationship. God does not want a woman to leave her marriage, even when she experiences abuse' (2022:7).

In some cases, GBV is related to child-bearing expectations. The empty womb is regarded as a curse in some cultures. The woman who, after marriage cannot conceive receives emotional abuse in diverse ways. The biblical narrative of Hanna in 1 Samuel finds the replica and repetitions in the gender-violent societies. Woman infertility has become a social stigma and is a prejudicial weapon and a patrimonial heritage against the barren womb (Alemnji & Thomas 1997, Gerrits 1997, Sundby 1997). There has been some recent research on theology of the womb by various scholars such as Oduyoye, Oliver, Van Wyk, Mothoagae, Masenya etc.

What adds fuel to the fire is the societies that uphold and embrace male child as an epitome of womanhood, hence the reason for Hannah to be praying for a male child. A woman can be discriminated and violently abused for giving birth only to female children without a male child. It is defined by Gabor (2016:5):

Male child preference is a socially determined bias in a patriarchal society where couples prefer to raise a child who has the culturally accepted characteristics, status and economic potential associated with the male gender. It often influences behaviour and may result in gender biases that negatively affect girls and women's welfare, health and survival.

In some patrilineal societies, sonlessness is sometimes regarded as childlessness. 'Women with female children but without a male suffers, to a large extent, the plight of a childless woman (Abasili, 2015:599). A woman who does not bear sons opens possibility for her husband to opt

¹⁰ <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2021-03-25-limpopo-pastor-gets-third-life-sentence-for-raping-minor-congregants/> (Viewed 23 August 2023).

¹¹ <https://www.oxfam.org.za/what-we-do/programmes/womens-rights-and-gender-justice/> (Viewed 17 January 2023)



for a second wife. Sonlessness and polygamy contribute towards GBV emotionally and in some instances, physically.

Women's Coping strategies in the Church

Black Theology of Liberation plays a much bigger role to chart some coping strategies for the victims of GBV. It was pointed earlier of how community formations such as POWA implement some strategies of interventions. Black Theology can become that crucial voice to intervene on behalf of the voiceless i.e. victims of GBV.

The church has some significant roles to play. For instance, many churches have women's weekly meetings, especially on Thursdays – the so-called Sheila's Day, These meetings can be utilized as platforms to raise awareness of GBV, advocacy for those affected, and empowerment through teaching about these social ills. Many women attending these weekly services are already Christians and they need to be empowered. They have to be engrossed with the resilient spirit of the daughters of Zelophehad, who, according to Resane (2021:2):

...internalised pragmatic consciousness organised around practical reality of life strategy. They pursued the strategy of resilience to break the traditional or patriarchal red tape. Their particular feminine identities did not bar them from accessing or owning the land – the commodity that enhances any human selfhood.

These women pursued righteousness and justice by freeing themselves' from the constraints of paternalism and patriarchy, and pursued ideals of earning their own livelihood in order to continue to grow and maintain their households' (Bozzoli & Nkotsoe, 1991:236–237).

The women church services should be utilized for women empowerment against GBV and by being moved from the traditional simple Bible reading, liturgy and prayers. GBV conscientization should be included as a curriculum for their meetings. Mudimeli (2021:4) correctly points it out that 'Women have to be empowered by deconstructing the problematic cultural discourses that keep them disempowered against violence.'

Another strategy to empower women against abuse is prayer. Prayer is a weapon against any adversity and can be used to bring healing to the victims of violence. It is a language of communion, self-expression and intimacy with one's creator (Psalm 27, 130, 2 Corinthians 1:3-11). It is through prayer that in communion, one is propelled towards experiencing the love and the presence of God (Jones, 2002:89). Indeed, the victims of GBV in the church or elsewhere can, through prayer experience 'the presence of God's love, alerting and preparing them to experience the changing power of the Spirit and involvement of God in their everyday living' (Van der Merwe, 2022:5). Prayer has some therapeutic power to those feeling powerless and disempowered, disrespected and devalued.

GBV can also be addressed through intersectoral cooperation. It is important for women leaders to be intersectoral in their approach to interventions for victims of GBV. Victims should be empowered towards financial freedom which will assist them to be free from suffering under abusive circumstances. Resane (2021:6) emphasises that women 'should be empowered with the skills and abilities of calculating risk-benefit analysis... Risk-taking is inherent in economic survival, and it is the driver towards successful entrepreneurship.' People with financial understanding should engage GBV victims and lead them towards sound financial literacy as many women fall GBV victims due to financial dependency on men who may turn to be abusive; and hold women at ransom with financial promises.



Involving legal expertise in attempts to address GBV is an important strategy. Advocacy is almost well done through people who have some judicial expertise. Lawyers can make some invaluable input for the GBV victims. They can conscientise women of their constitutional rights and judicial privileges promoted by human rights activism as entrenched in South African Constitution. These victims need to know 'how the South African Constitution and the law can be used to advance the ethics of the common good' (Sekhaulele, 2022:2).

Mentoring is another and last strategy suggested here. The apostolic instruction to Titus (2:3-5) is that older women should teach or disciple younger women on how to grow in godliness in their distinct relationships and calling. This is a call to mentoring. Mentoring include loving, caring, assuring, comforting, and leading towards self-recovery and self-assertiveness (Resane 2005). Older women are the sources of encouragement to those feeling vulnerable. Their stories speak volumes as they demonstrate God's power in history and human life.

Again, Black Theology of Liberation steps into the foray where pastoral counselling becomes vital for the victims and the perpetrators of GBV. Pastoral care is without condemnation, but full of embracing and assuring. The church needs to come closer to offer shoulders to cry on, and to assure the victims and perpetrators that God's grace is not limited.

Conclusion

Gender Based Violence is a social and ecclesiastically phenomenon, therefore, inevitably a component of Black Theology of Liberation discourses. Since Black Theology is a contemporary theology, speaking prophetically into the cultural menaces of the modern societies, it is justifiably accepted that it should address violence against women by the patriarchal dictates dominating the Christian world existing under the duress of the West. Gender Based Violence in all its formations should be an ongoing dialogical engagement whereby women in churches should be empowered to deal with it from within. Religious and cultural discourses are to engage Black Theology whereby strategies are designed and supported so that victims of GBV can be liberated and find their roles in society with full self-confidence.

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