The nexus between university gender policy and gender-based violence. A social relations approach to gender policy analysis at institutions of higher learning in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a phenomenon that affects society negatively and its impact is heavier on women than men in all developmental settings. While much has been said about this phenomenon at international, regional and national conventions, agreements and protocols, statistics show that instead of decreasing the incidence is even rising. Possible policy interventions have been tabled for implementation but minimal achievement has been recorded if comparison is made to the size of the problem. This study uses a gender analysis approach to establish why the implemented gender policies have been less effective in reducing the occurrence of GBV at institutions of higher learning in Zimbabwe. The gender analysis tool employed is Naila Kabeer's (1994) Social relations approach. Only two concepts (i. Social Relations and ii. Institutional Analysis) from Naila Kabeer's Social Relations Approach were operationalised. The study established that GBV prevails as an outcome of gaps linked to organisational social relations. These relations play a key role in the incidence of Gender Based Violence and the perpetuation of gender inequality in these institutions. The study is of the view that robust gender policy analysis at institutions of higher learning is an urgent imperative so that deep seated social relations that incubate motivations GBV are exposed and properly addressed. Gender based violence is a cancer that is feeding on unattended gender social relations resulting in the increase of this vice. The study recommends the need for more frequent gender policy analysis if policy objectives regarding gender equality are to be achieved. The use of the Social Relations Approach as a tool for such an analysis is highly recommended.

KEYWORDS: Gender analysis, gender-based violence, gender policy, gender social relations, social relations approach, institutions of higher learning