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When developing educational activities, a good practice consists in questioning the messages that are conveyed by our own discourse and content to address the theme of **gender-based violence**. As Coates and Wade (2007) note, talking about violence is never a neutral or impact-free action, as it contributes to a way of thinking about violence that can either counteract it or, unfortunately, contribute to its continuation.

More specifically, educators can make connections between the messages they send out and the principle of accountability in the human rights-based approach with a gender perspective by continually asking the key question: "Who does the message attribute responsibility for the violence to?" By asking this question, it is possible to detect whether educational content that addresses gender-based violence has the effect of reinforcing gender-based power inequalities in three distinct ways:

- **By blaming the victims/survivors of violence**, which amounts to putting the responsibility for the violation of a right on people who have rights.
- **By removing responsibility from the perpetrators of violence**, which amounts to maintaining impunity for aggressor and those who have moral and legal obligations.
- **By trivializing or legitimizing the violence**, which amounts to not recognizing a situation of violation of rights and therefore, attributing responsibility to no one.

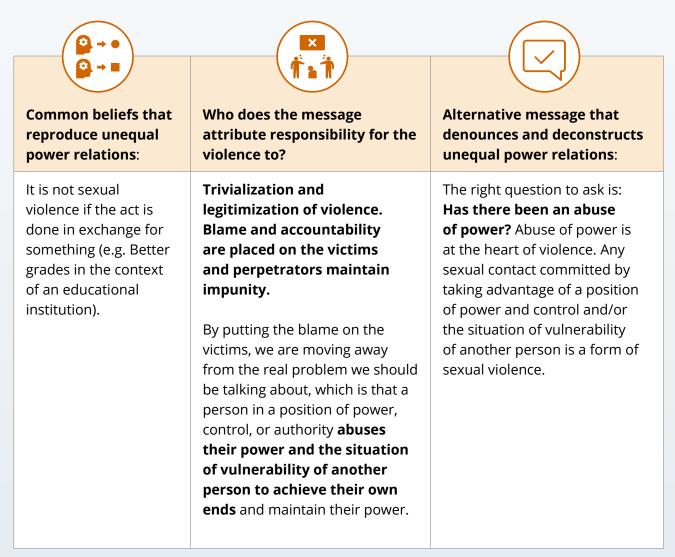




On the other hand, educational content has the power to contribute to deconstructing unequal gender-based power relations when the messages sent by educators:

- Assign full responsibility to the perpetrators of violence, which amounts to putting the
 responsibility for the violation of a right on the right people, i.e., the aggressor and the people
 with moral and legal obligations.
- Remove blame from the victims/survivors, which is tantamount to removing responsibility
 from the rights holders, since a rights holder is not responsible for a situation in which his or
 her own rights are violated.
- **Denounce all forms of violence** as unacceptable, which is tantamount to recognizing human rights as universal and inalienable, regardless of the situation.

Here are some examples of common beliefs that can be analyzed asking the question: Who does the message attribute responsibility for the violence to?





Men cannot control their sexual urges.

This message completely removes blame from the perpetrators of violence and reinforces gender stereotypes.

It also reinforces the belief that victims provoke violence in some way. The burden of responsibility is therefore placed on the victims not to provoke, rather than on the perpetrators of violence to control themselves and not to abuse their power.

Sexual assault is an act of violence. It is not sexual desire. These assaults are about controlling another person. Everyone can control the sexual impulses of their body.

A woman going to a man's home is an automatic invitation to sexual activity. Trivialization and legitimization of violence.

Blame and responsibility are placed on the victims. They may be afraid to ask for help for fear of being guilty or may not feel legitimate to ask for it. They may feel **shame and guilt**, which interferes with the healing and repair process.

A person does not ask to be sexually assaulted by their actions or appearance. Staying out late, drinking, taking drugs, dressing a certain way, or expressing a desire to go home with someone is not an invitation or provocation to sexual assault.

The real responsibility that should be talked about is the responsibility to always have the clear, free, informed, and continuous consent of a person before initiating and continuing any sexual contact with them.



Reference

Coates, L. Et Wade, A. (2007). Language and violence: Analysis of four discursive operations. *Journal of Family Violence, 22*, p. 511 – 522. DOI 10.1007/s10896-007-9082-2

