

“It’s not you that needs to change, it’s the system that needs to change” – The narratives of South African women professionals working with Gender-Based Violence



A research report submitted by

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Declaration

I declare that:

“It’s not you that needs to change, it’s the system that needs to change”– **The narratives of South African women professionals working with Gender-Based Violence** is my original work, and all of the research material used or directly cited quotes have been listed and acknowledged in-text and on the list of references. I am submitting this thesis for the degree of MA in Coursework and Report in Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. This work has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university or published in any other form.

Signed this ____25__ day of __June____ 2023 _____

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. M. M. M.', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Acknowledgments

To my dear Mum, thank you for the never-ending words of encouragement, love and support. You believed in me when I could not believe in myself. Your unwavering faith has got me through this overwhelming journey.

To my wonderful Aunt Pear! You are without a doubt the most valuable source of knowledge and my most treasured resource. Thank you for putting up with me during my postgraduate studies at Wits.

To my sisters, I hope you take the time to read my work.

To Joy, who is proof that a soulmate can be your best friend.

To the women in my study, thank you for sharing your stories with me. The work that you do makes an immense difference in the lives of so many people. I am in awe of each one of you, your passion is reflected your narratives.

To Prof Peace Kiguwa, I consider myself lucky to have you as my supervisor and to put your name on my paper. I am grateful for all your advice, thank you for allowing me the freedom to pursue the different avenues of my research as it unfolded.

Lastly to my Dad, your sacrifices has allowed me to further my education. My studies and various other passions were always important to you. I hope I made you proud.

Dedication

I dedicate this research to all the survivors of gender-based violence and those still going through it and hoping for change. Help is available when you need it thanks to the people who work in the field despite the enormous challenges.

Abstract

Professional South African women who encounter gender-based violence in their field have important and potentially transformational experiences to share on addressing this issue. These professionals have experience and in-depth knowledge of the realities of working with gender-based violence. They can use their expertise to conceptualise and explain this phenomenon. They understand how gender-based violence is presented in society and their recommendations are informed by pragmatic reasoning. This study utilised a qualitative research method to obtain the narratives of these women that work in psychology, community health work, social work, legal work and journalism. This paper used a combination of three theoretical frameworks: narrative theory, post-structural feminist theory and African feminist theory. The synergies between these three theories prioritised the voice of the participants and allowed for a critical engagement with the narratives. The use of multiple professions accounts for the complex and multidimensional elements that contribute to the levels of gender-based violence in South Africa. The findings suggest the cultural acceptance of violence and patriarchal values are ingrained into the fabric of society. Gender-based violence is a systemic issue that prevails through insufficient implementation of legislation and the lack of accountability by official personnel.

Key Words: *Gender-based violence, narratives, professionals, women*

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Glossary and Abbreviations

Community health worker – An individual that provides access to healthcare and medication in low-income areas

Legal expert – having qualifications and experience in Law

Social auxiliary worker - an individual who works under the guidance and control of a social worker and provides support service for social work

Professional – defined in this study as a working individual with relevant experience to perform their role

Psychologist - a professional who practices psychology and studies mental states, perceptual, cognitive, emotional, and social processes and behaviour.

Abbreviations

CHW – Community health worker

DRC - The Democratic Republic of the Congo

GBV – Gender-based violence

LGBT - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender

LGBTQIA+ - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transexual, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual/Allies, Nonbinary/Genderqueer +)

NGO – Non Government organisation

POWA - People Opposing Women Abuse

SAPS – South African police service

TCC - Thuthuzela Care Centre

TBC –The Teddy Bear Clinic

Chapter 1

Introduction

South Africa is notorious for gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide; phrases such as ‘rape capital’ and ‘twin pandemic’ are used frequently to describe this context (Dlamini, 2021; Mkhize et al., 2022.). Women being raped and murdered by an intimate partner is a recurrent news headline (Isaacs, 2016). Due to the large number of victims that identify as women, gender-based violence is often misconstrued as violence solely against women. However, GBV is a criminal offence that any person, of any gender may fall victim to. It can emerge in situations of power inequality and can take many forms. Promoting gender inclusivity in this definition is not intended to move focus away from women but rather, acknowledge GBV as a societal issue. Despite the recognition of the GBV crisis; the ever increasing the rate of gender-based violence points towards a lack of action by authorities (Treffry-Goatley et al., 2018). An absolute reliance on the state is not an option and gender-based violence prevention groups in South Africa have expressed concern at the alarming number of cases handled on a daily basis (John et al., 2020). GBV has a heterogeneous nature, for that reason requires multifactorial interventions (Cuadrado-Gordillo et al., 2022). This supports the use of various service providers’ experiences of responding to gender-based violence that target different, but equally relevant issues. These service providers utilise different approaches to combat specific issues related to their area of work.

Gender-based violence work is emotionally demanding and associated with high rates of burnout and secondary traumatic stress (Cayir et al., 2021). However, it is work that is vital in South Africa and the researcher was curious about the kind of people that fulfil these roles. Moreover, the researcher wanted to find out about the different avenues available for women in South Africa to take matters into their own hands and get involved in creating a safer society. Narratives were collected through a series of individual interviews. These narratives were analysed; drawing out information that complimented each other while others offered a contradictory viewpoint – reflecting multiple realities that can coexistence within the same context.

Significance of the Study:

This study is significant as provides insight into the realities of working in the gender-based violence field, highlighting structural and social challenges experienced by both the participants and their clients. The intended readership of this study consists of academics however, topics engaging with social reform have the power to inform and incite critical thinking. In her writing, the researcher took into consideration the accessibility and understanding by the public in terms of language used. This is significant as it removes the gatekeeping of information to a select few. The research benefits of this study consist of the multifaceted, inclusive construction of gender-based violence in South African society that differs from earlier writings. The findings from this study might be useful for individuals and organisations who wish to develop strategies and campaigns against gender-based violence.

Aims and Objectives:

This research had one key aim, and one subsidiary aim:

1. Provide insights into the lived experiences of women professionals who encounter gender-based violence in their line of work. Professional women were chosen with intention of compiling narratives from well informed gender-based violence resources.
- 1.1. The exploration of the various professions sought to consider the different dimensions of gender-based violence.

Research questions

1. What motivates women to work within a field of gender-based violence?
2. How do professionals construct gender-based violence in South Africa?
3. What are the lived experiences of women working within the field of gender-based violence in South Africa?
4. What are their contribution towards a violence free society?

Rationale and problem statement:

Gender-based violence is considered a social health problem which has created global concern and interest (Cuadrado-Gordillo et al., 2022). The prevalence of gender-based violence in South Africa is so great that it is among the highest in the world; the exact percentage is not known due to underreporting of abuse (Moore, 2019). It is one of the leading causes of death among South African women (Isaacs, 2016). The South African context is riddled with various

forms of violence; stemming from structural inequalities that created a socio-cultural tolerance of violence and protection of militarised masculinities that impact everyday life (Bowman et al., 2015) According to Treffry-Goatley et al. (2018) authorities seem unable to respond effectively against the gender-based violence crisis. It is estimated that over 40,000 rapes are reported to the police per year; despite that only 14% of perpetrators face conviction. With the inception of the COVID-19 pandemic the South African healthcare system has been put under enormous pressure. The implementation of the nationwide lockdown resulted in an apparent increase in gender-based violence cases (Dlamini, 2021; John et al., 2020). The absence of social support, health and other support services could be seen as a contributor to this spike in reported gender-based violence (John et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic brought to the forefront the pre-existent deep-rooted struggles faced by women in South Africa (Dlamini, 2021). Multiple organisational domains with government, public, private and community partners are vital to the implementation of strategies to address gender-based violence. Substantial changes include collaborative work between civil servants and civil societies to ensure public accessibility to the different avenues of gender-based violence resources (Carey et al., 2019).

It is important to assess the current intervention to fully comprehend the magnitude of gender-based violence in South Africa and to assess the current interventions to determine what further intervention is required. This study engaged with women that work in various fields in which they come across cases of gender-based violence. These women contribute to the fight against gender-based violence within their relevant to their field of work. The role of psychology in gender-based violence research has played a part in understanding the varied complexities of this phenomenon (Autiero et al., 2020). This includes but is not limited to interpersonal understanding of the risk factors of becoming a perpetrator of violence (Dugal et al., 2018), understanding why people remain in abusive relationships (Bissessar & Huggins, 2021) and the development of healthy coping skills to assist victims (Cuadrado-Gordillo et al., 2022). South African psychological services are limited (Machisa et al., 2018) however, these services do exist. It is important to explore mental health professionals' perception of gender-based violence and their contribution towards a violence free society. Community healthcare workers provide access to healthcare to low-income areas that are unable to afford medical assistance and lack nearby facilities. They work on the outskirts of the health system but they play a vital role in servicing marginalised communities (Tseng et al., 2019). In essence, they are a great asset when government facilities fall short. Social work is another avenue of assistance for

victims of abuse, especially in cases pertaining to children. In a study using a school-based interviewer administered questionnaire, results indicated that 15·6% of girls and 14·3% of boys experienced some form of sexual abuse (Ward et al., 2018). Social workers provide insight into gender-based violence that affect families and young people of South Africa. The legal expert in this study represents a much-needed understanding of South African legislation and legal actions available to victims of violence. Moreover, legal insights are necessary to highlight the strengths and weakness in the current legal system (Graaff, 2021). Lastly, research into advocacy work in South Africa is prominent (Buiten & Naidoo, 2020; Enaifoghe et al., 2021; Moletsane, 2018; Wasuna, 2018), especially with regards to changing public perceptions of victims of abuse and offering an alternate discourse to dominate ideologies that prevail (Oparinde & Matsha, 2021a).

The use of narratives in qualitative research is significant especially in studies that deal with gender-based violence. It allows for accounts to be unfolded in detail that considers contexts shaped by social, political, historical, and cultural forces. It can be seen as giving a voice to women who have been abused (Boonzaier & De La Rey, 2004). Gouws (2016) touches on the considerable amount of victim-focused research available with emphasis on the need to protect and empower women rather than challenging the attitudes of violent masculinities. However, this kind of research can be seen as dated and does not reflect the current research terrain. For example, Harrington (2021) demonstrates how society has come to recognise hegemonic masculinities as problematic. The term ‘toxic masculinity’ has been used to describe a set of characteristics that uphold misogyny and violence. These characteristics are borne from institutional and structural male privileges. The professional women in this study live and work within a patriarchal society that consists of gender inequality and rape culture. This gives them insights into nature of the violence experienced. A wide lens is required to gain a holistic view of gender-based violence in society. The critical eye of professionals portrays a standpoint that is informed by knowledge and training in their field. To capture the complexities of violence, it is best to start from what is considered as the grassroots organisations¹. The sample for this study was selected to gain insight into the challenges and perceptions that these women have regarding this issue in South Africa. By exploring the narratives of women who work within

¹ A grassroots organisation can be considered as community level work - the people within these organisations are at the frontline of gender-based violence intervention

this sector we can identify how they define and address gender-based violence within their respective roles.

This chapter serves as an introduction to this research report, it stipulated the aims and rationale of this study. The following chapter describes the theoretical frameworks used in the construction and analysis of this research report. The literature review chapter cites studies that have contributed to the current understandings of gender-based violence. It included studies that investigated various forms of intervention and studies that aided in the contextualisation of gender-based violence in South Africa. The methodology chapter explains the process of data collection, ethical considerations and the development of the research report. Excerpts of the interviews have been included in the three analysis and discussion chapters. These three chapters have been divided according to themes found within the various narratives. Lastly, the conclusion chapter provides a summary of the findings and suggests areas for future research.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

This study used three theoretical frameworks (narrative theory, post-structural feminist theory and African feminist theory) to explore and analyse the narratives of women working in various fields that encounter gender-based violence. Narrative theory considers the interpersonal, institutional, and sociocultural situation of participants (Squire, 2012). It determines a comprehensive narrative context in which gender-based violence occurs. It is significant for understanding difficult aspects of gender-based violence and formulating successful responses (Squire et al., 2014). Post-structural feminist theory conceptualises gender-based violence as a social problem produced by patriarchal societies (Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2004). This framework moves away from individualist notions that frame gender-based violence as an incidental to domestic disputes (Knoblock, 2008). Instead, it challenges the cultural and political dimensions of society that suppress women and construct masculinity as innately dominate (Murnen et al., 2002). African feminist theory or Afro-feminism places focus on the structural and historic contributions to gender-based violence (Tamale, 2020). The continuous perpetration of gender-based violence in South Africa is linked to systemic problems entrenched in society that tolerates the violation of women (Meyiwa et al., 2017). Furthermore, African feminist theory highlights the various and intersecting forms oppression (Tamale, 2020).

The combination of these three frameworks allowed for a detailed, critical analysis of the participants' varied experiences and perspectives of gender-based violence. This chapter will provide an in-depth explanation for the use of specific elements from each theory and the synergies between these theories that aided in the analysis of the data for this research.

Narrative theory and post-structural feminist theory

Researchers use narratives as an analysis tool for understanding participants' experiences of a wide range of social issues (Esin et al., 2014). Narrative theory gives participants the freedom to construct their own identity, defined by their own experiences and expressed in their own words. Whereas other forms of research may require them to confirm to traditional theorised research norms to fit in a certain 'box'. Narrative theory understands identity as constructed within context and power which makes it both relational and fluid (Boonzaier & Van

Schalkwyk, 2011). This is in keeping with post-structural feminist theory which argues against taken-for-granted categories that assume gendered identities are stable and coherent. This concept was useful in this study for understanding gender inequalities and challenging heteronormative discourses. The use of 'traditional' psychological meaning of identity has been criticised for being unitary and not reflecting multiple realities, resulting in post-structural feminist theorists advocating for subjective analysis. (Boonzaier & de La Rey, 2003). Moreover, both narrative theory and post-structural feminist theory recognise subjectivity is necessary to acknowledge the multiple and changing nature of a person's identity (Boonzaier & de La Rey, 2003). The participants in this study made a distinction between their personal identity and their professional identity. The participants' personal identity provided a background into who they are and why they have chosen a career in community and gender advocacy work. Their professional identity, however, gave insight to their expert knowledge and the skills they have developed to work in their fields. This difference recognised the multi-dimensional existence of a person and yielded sound reasoning for the actions and responses of the various participants.

Post-structural feminist theory and African feminist theory

Post-structural feminist theory has been critiqued for disregarding the various and intersectional ways in which African women experience oppression (Tamale, 2020). The South African context is embedded with historical racial and gendered violence (Sullivan & Stevens, 2010). This country has been subjected to years of colonial supremacist oppression and apartheid that influenced existing social conditions that consist of inequalities and disempowerment. (Meyiwa et al., 2017). These elements intersect with the system of patriarchy and result in immensely different impacts than those faced by women in western cultures (Tamale, 2020). Although this research borrows elements from feminist theory it leans towards African feminist concepts as it contextually relevant. African feminism captures the principles of intersectionality because it acknowledges the power attached to social constructs such as race and gender (Davis, 2008). Intersectionality explains the values attached to social constructs have cultivated politically motivated social hierarchies. An awareness of intersectionality aids in understanding the development of multiple subordinate identities and the ways in which they are negotiated in society (Crenshaw, 2005). African feminism plays a significant role in the 'decoloniality' which aims to eliminate factors that endorse the western superiority complex, by means of attributing power and superiority to race, gender, and geopolitical location. African feminism highlights not only the struggles but also the successes

of African women. It moves away from the Eurocentric categorisation of African women into a stereotypical role of third-world, passive victim towards capable and agentic beings (Tamale, 2020). The narratives of participants in this study reveal activism against patriarchal norms and incitement of change in circumstance.

Narrative positioning and African feminism

Bamberg (1997) places emphasis on narrative positioning whereby participants position themselves within the context of the narrative. It can be divided into three ways: in relation to others (within the narrative), position toward the audience (in this case the researcher) and self-position (seen in descriptions of self). Positioning allows for the assignment of 'blame' or a viewpoint that is central to the structure and meaning of the narrative. Narrative positioning and African feminist theory was integrated to contextually explain of subjective positioning of participants and how this affected the narrative. Some participants recalled moments when race and gender impacted their work and the way their clients responded to them. Indicating both self-positioning and their position in relation to others within the narrative. The manner in which some participants' positioned themselves toward the researcher presented an anticipation of preconceived ideologies. These participants produced narratives to dispute dominate ideologies and highlighted the agency of their clients. The participants' firsthand accounts of gender-based violence work homed in on the problems with structural and social barriers that confines a victim to an abusive situation, validating the use of African feminism as the foundation for understanding the participants' subject positioning in their narratives.

Within narrative theory participants are not seen as the only sources of information, but it takes into consideration the manner in which social reality is constructed and understood (Esin et al., 2014). The content of a narrative is considered as a product of its context because they are inseparable (Squire, 2012). Sullivan & Stevens (2010) considers subject positions to be influential over narrative accounts in ways that are fluid, dynamic and open to interpretation - particularly within contexts that experience systemic forms of oppression. They posit that participants' subject positioning, and the construction of identity are interrelated. Their study on black women's narratives of apartheid racism in South Africa, reveals that these women's identity is both co-constructing and co-constructed. Their participant's self-constructed identity and the role that they play are relative to their race, class, gender, and culture. Thereby, substantiating that identity cannot be extracted from systems of oppression that create subject positions (Sullivan & Stevens, 2010). The use of a narrative framework in this study allowed

for the fluidity of expressions and descriptions that varied between social and racial categories of the participants. The fluidity of narrative theory reduces ambiguity in the construction of the participants' identity and supports the concept of individual agency (Squire et al., 2008). Narrative theory takes into account both the time period and location (Squire, 2005), this was beneficial to this study as the current South Africa context has 'critically high levels' of gender-based violence (Closson et al., 2023). Both African feminist theory and Narrative theory are concerned with social injustices and political reform for the improvement of the social sector (Squire et al., 2014; Tamale, 2020).

Stories as a perspectival viewpoint

Narrative theory coincides with post-structural feminist theory which regard the process of storytelling as socially constructed within a specific context, in which another individual could have an alternative perspective (Rose, 1990). The notion of 'story' is a perspectival viewpoint, expressing a subjective opinion or rather one side of a matter. Participants produce motivated accounts of their side of the story, whereas individuals situated in another position could have very different view (Stokoe & Edwards, 2006.). Post-structural feminist theory argues that often the dominant discourses positions itself to appear as the 'natural' order of society while disregarding contradictory experiences (Rose, 1990). Therefore, studies utilizing the post-structural feminist perspective recognise that research is seldom value neutral as the manner in which research is conceived shapes the process (Speer, 2002). In a study on sexual violence in the intimate relationships of black married women in South Africa, Mphaphuli and Smuts (2020) challenge 'hetero-patriarchal' ideologies in which participants' have accepted sexual violence as a norm as in marriages. They explore narratives from black women who agree with the concept that men have a right to sexual intercourse within marital relationships – placing black wives in a subservient role with no control over sexual interactions. They also collected contradicting narratives from black women who have classified this as material rape although both women come from a similar context. The researchers side with the latter by questioning traditions that compromises the sexual safety of future wives demonstrating the use of the post-structural feminist perspective. However, the way this study is written does not remove participants' agency nor construct black women as ignorant. Participants are depicted as choosing to accept sexual coercion as a norm, rather than having their family separated, loss of financial stability or conforming to what is perceived as 'white' femininity. The application of African feminism reveals how the concept of femininity within marriage intersect with

blackness, money, and family. This research example shed light on the practicality of the frameworks used in this study. The current study will explore sexual violence in conjunction with other forms of gender-based violence and consider diverse interpersonal relationships.

Conclusion

The complexity of the South African context and the broad scope of this study required multiple theoretical frameworks to conduct a thorough analysis. This study recognises that gender-based violence is multifaceted and has included the narratives of women working on different areas. Each narrative introduces different aspects of gender-based violence and the participants varied contribution to the eradication of violence. Narrative theory assisted in the structuring and provision of intrapersonal elements of this research. While the institutional and sociocultural aspects that influenced these narratives were critiqued using post-structural feminist theory and African feminist theory.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

Introduction

As discussed in the rationale, gender-based violence (GBV) in South Africa has increased over the past few years, providing a strong argument for additional research in the field. The definition and evolution of GBV are the starting points of this literature review. These are followed by a review of studies which include participants whose occupations are comparable to those in the current study. The review of international studies then establishes GBV as a global concern. As the review progresses, the research is narrowed down to the South African context, specifically state strategies and legislation, as well as studies that aided in the contextualisation of patriarchal norms within South African society. Through the review of literature, the researcher realised the complexities of GBV that move beyond just understanding its various forms, towards the consideration of social norms and influences that allow GBV to persist. This chapter provides a succinct review of the current data available regarding GBV highlighting the need for a multi-representative study of various professionals in the South African context.

Gender-based violence in literature

The concept of GBV has evolved over time through various academic works. Several terms have been used to describe this phenomenon, including ‘violence against women’, ‘domestic violence’ and ‘intimate partner violence’ (Bengesai & Derera, 2021). These terms are outdated as GBV is not restricted to women, nor does it only occur between couples in a household setting. GBV is a criminal offence that takes various forms such as physical, sexual or mental abuse (Perrin et al., 2019), in addition to offences such as incest, statutory rape, elder abuse, and the sexual grooming of children (Oparinde & Matsha, 2021b), evidencing that it occurs in various contexts. GBV is constructed as the outcome of unequal and unjust social conditions. Gender intersects with social dimensions such as race, class, culture, and financial standing, which can create multiple subordinate identities (Crenshaw, 2005). There is a vast body of literature that focuses on GBV against women (Bent-Goodley, 2009; Gouws, 2016; Norsworthy & Khuankaew, 2004; Osuna-Rodríguez et al., 2020; Stark et al., 2021). The reasoning for focusing research on women is due to the statistical frequency, severity, and intensity of reported violence specifically towards women (Oparinde & Matsha, 2021b). However, GBV has an impact on both genders. In a study on ‘male rape myths’, there are

similarities with regard to the social sanctions and stigma of rape victims between both genders (Chapleau et al., 2008). Dolan (2014) considers progressive approaches to GBV that move beyond the male-female binary, towards a more nuanced description. He advocates against heteronormative moulds and for promoting gender inclusivity. Inclusivity means to take into account all people, regardless of gender, meaning that men and LGBTQIA+ people must also be a part of the GBV discourse (Graaff, 2021). Furthermore, turning a blind eye to the male experience of GBV contributes to the hegemonic masculinity that suppresses male vulnerability (Dharani et al., 2021). The placement of GBV against men as an outlier not only restricts the disclosure by boys and men of violations and violence against them (Dolan, 2014), but also inhibits the development of a safe context for them to heal (Kiss et al., 2020). The cycle of violence continues through unhealed trauma that is carried on and transmitted from one generation to the next (Dugal et al., 2018). The inclusion of men in this conversation contributes to moving GBV away from being just ‘a women’s issue’ (Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2004).

The current research terrain challenges language that removes the perpetrator of violence and solely engages with victims (Oparinde & Matsha, 2021b). The protection and empowerment of women (in this case, the victims of GBV), while necessary, does not target the root cause: men, who are the most frequent perpetrators of violence (Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2004). For that reason, GBV is regarded as a concern for all members of society. The heterogeneity of GBV and the considerable number of variables that contribute to its continuity and maintenance require an investigation that consists of multifactorial interventions (Cuadrado-Gordillo et al., 2022).

Psychological intervention

One of the main drivers of GBV has been identified as gender inequality. Gender inequality has been developed and maintained through patriarchal beliefs that move beyond an individual household setting, and are situated in the larger society (Dlamini, 2021). The continuous reinforcement of attitudes and beliefs that encourage GBV creates a culture that accepts violence as a normal way of being (Fakunmoju & Rasool, 2018). In a study based in the Palestinian context, Mahamid et al. (2022) explored GBV from the perspective of mental health professionals (psychologists, psychiatrists, counsellors and clinical social workers) during the COVID-19 pandemic. These professionals deal with women living in a military-occupied country who are exposed to continuous social, economic, and political burdens. There was an

indication of a shortage of mental health care institutions and services to assist Palestinian women who are vulnerable to GBV. Participants' perceived GBV as 'incidental' while the structures and institutions that silence women in society were disregarded. This created narratives that consist of depoliticised and decontextualised perceptions, attributing women's silence to shame and fear of stigma from the community. Psychological and psychiatric intervention is a distinct outlet for victims to receive help; one of the main concerns raised by these mental health professionals was the need for education and empowerment of women to stand-up against GBV. The manner in which women are educated and socialised has an influence on the way they perceive themselves, as do the subordinate gender roles and identity of women, which were created by patriarchal legislation (Kumar, 2017). Mahamid et al. (2022) have criticised the psychological responses put forward for the pathologisation and victimisation of Palestinian women, and moreover for the lack of consideration for intersecting physical, psychological, social, and contextual factors. Their study revealed that victims are constrained by political and structural violence that removes agentic practices, forcing victims to conform to patriarchal values for survival. Furthermore, the Palestinian mental health professionals considered the role of men to be negligible and explained violence against women as being due to the perpetrators' frustration with economic constraints exacerbated by the pandemic – overlooking the socio-economic and cultural factors that foster patriarchy in Palestine. This follows the school of thought that leads men who are marginalised, financially or politically, to believe that they are not living up to cultural standards of masculinity. As a result, this feeling of powerlessness turns into 'emasculatation' and in the men's attempts to reassert their masculine identity, women become the target of violence (Boonzaier, 2008). Similarly, rural South Africa facilitates a context in which work opportunities are scarce, deepening poverty and material deprivation, which affects relationships and fuels GBV (De Lange & Mitchell, 2016). Gqola (2015) challenges the concept of marginalised men being prone to violence as it provides an excuse for those men who violate women.

In an Italian study, Autiero et al. (2020) used an ecological approach to explore how GBV can be reduced and managed. Their study represented social and healthcare personnel, which comprised of both volunteers and employed professionals working with GBV interventions. This study included three significant sectors of GBV: participants who work with victims, perpetrators of violence, and family violence. Their study is closely related to the multiple, diversified interventions practiced by participants in the current study. Many non-government organisations (NGOs) in South Africa have adopted a victim focused approach (Gouws, 2016)

as outlined by Autiero et al. (2020), involving intake services, psychological, legal, and professional guidance, and self-help groups. The primary aim of a victim focused approach is the safety, empowerment, and protection of women and their children. Interventions include providing resources to victims and helping them to escape from a dangerous situation. While this type of intervention is useful in emergencies and life-threatening events, many victims withdraw from the therapeutic and legal process. Participants in the Italian study reported psychological and/or economic interdependence between the victim and perpetrator which results in a reconciliation of the relationship. The high dropout rate from victim focused interventions is used as a motivation to investigate other avenues that could lead to a long-term solution to GBV. Consistent with other studies, victims were described as holding onto cultural beliefs about the maintenance of the family unit and had the impression that divorce can negatively impact their children (Autiero et al., 2020; Mogstad et al., 2016; Mphaphuli & Smuts, 2020). Literature also indicates that some victims express feelings of guilt and shame for calling the police or taking legal action against their husbands (Moore, 2020).

Cuadrado-Gordillo et al. (2022) conducted a study in Extremadura, Spain, which explored the perspectives of psychologists specialised in the care of adolescent victims of GBV. Their study provides insights into the role of the ‘Psychological Support Points’ developed in Extremadura to provide advice, diagnosis, and intervention to female victims of GBV. Through a series of interviews with these psychologists, the researchers were able to understand the strengths, weaknesses, and need for psychological care for victim/survivors of GBV. Their participants identified depression, anxiety, and hostility as some of the internal psychological effects of violence. They further explained that risky behaviours such as the consumption of substances are external symptoms. Ward et al. (2018) concurred that adolescent victims misuse substances and further added that risky sexual behaviour often occurs because of childhood sexual abuse. The ‘Psychological Support Points’ in Extremadura provides access to adequate resources and healthy coping skills to assist victims in abusive situations. However, one of the organisational challenges brought forward is the lack of coordination between the ‘Psychological Support Points’ and other local resources and professionals in different fields. The existence of organisational barriers creates difficulties and complicates the successful care of victims. GBV is heterogeneous and requires various professionals to work together. The disconnection found between the various resources hinders the effective care of victims (Cuadrado-Gordillo et al., 2022)

In contrast to the ‘Psychological Support Points’ in the Spanish context, South African psychological services are limited and not readily accessible to the public (Machisa et al., 2018). Psychology in South Africa has been complicit in the processes of colonisation and the preservation of the apartheid state. Psychological studies of black people are directly linked to the pathologisation of black families and black culture (Callaghan, 2003). In post-apartheid South Africa, scholars aim to transform psychology to be contextually relevant to meet the demands of the general public (Ratele, 2017). However, the capitalist nature of society still limits the accessibility of psychological services to those that can afford it or those who are a part of an institution that offers services. The individualistic constructions of psychology and therapy limit the availability of these services to the vast majority of people that need them (Callaghan, 2003). NGOs use lay counsellors and resource referral as a means of response and support services for victims of GBV (Roy et al., 2022). A South African qualitative study revealed that youth workers attempt to reduce violence by implementing ‘empowerment soft skills programmes’ focused on building self-esteem and resilience in young women, as well as the provision of health education (Chauke, 2021). Similar to the Spanish context, NGOs encounter various organisational barriers and there is an apparent disconnect between civil servants and civil societies working against GBV (Gouws, 2016; Treffry-Goatley et al., 2018). NGOs continue to be an integral part of the well-being of society, although they are continuously inundated with cases and heavily underfunded (Vetten, 2019).

State strategies, non-government organisations and community health workers

South Africa has been labelled as the rape capital of the world due to the prevalence of sexual violence (Buti, 2016). To address the high levels of sexual violence, the South African government has initiated a ‘one-stop’ clinic called the Thuthuzela Care Centre (TCC) that was intended to provide multidisciplinary care to survivors of rape. These centres are meant to render medical and legal services to rape survivors by conducting a medical examination and then compiling a report that can be submitted as evidence in court. Moreover, TCCs should offer survivors an opportunity to make a statement with an investigating officer from the SAPS and help to make necessary transport arrangements (Bougard & Booyens, 2015). However, research shows that these centres are understaffed, especially with regard to psychologists and medical doctors, resulting in social workers and nurses being responsible for providing psychological support (Sepeng et al., 2023). The funding of social welfare in South Africa has

not been prioritised and is therefore constantly under-resourced. As a result, many NGOs work alongside the TCCs to provide emotional support services to rape survivors and fill the gaps in services. NGO officials often consider their work to be a vocation and have a sense of moral conviction in performing their duties. Consequently, this has been used as a means of exploitation: NGO officials carry out the work of government employees without the benefits or the recognition (Vetten, 2019). The need for more recognition of NGOs has been reiterated in other studies (Chauke, 2021; Gouws, 2016; Vetten, 2019). In contrast to NGO workers, the attitude of government officials has been reported as apathetic and indifferent towards survivors of abuse (Gouws, 2016; Moore, 2020; Treffry-Goatley et al., 2018). In the Tshwane Metsweding District, Gauteng, Randa and Mokoena (2019) conducted a study that was concerned with GBV victim's perceptions of nurses, and the findings were divided. Some participants described the nurses' attitudes as empathetic and supportive, while others complained of prejudicial and judgemental attitudes together with disapproving comments. The latter of these is grounds for concern.

Parallel to the public health system, community health workers provide health related services to rural areas that are far removed from the health system (De Lange & Mitchell, 2016). In a study that researched the integration of community health workers into the formal health system to improve service delivery in South Africa, Tseng et al. (2019) describe community health workers as essential to providing healthcare coverage and access in low-income and middle-income areas. Community health workers are included in the typically marginalised group in relation to health and social policies, but their contribution to social change in a rural community is prominent (De Lange & Mitchell, 2016). Community health workers do not have a 'professional' qualification, which is outlined by Callaghan (2014) as specialised knowledge gained through formal education, and issues do arise from the lack of training and medical supplies (Early et al., 2019). However, they function as primary healthcare in many underserved communities. Being on the periphery of the health system means that community health workers deal with immense and multifaceted aspects of social needs (Tseng et al., 2019). Community health workers go from house-to-house, assessing the needs of the members of the community. They can come up with culturally relevant solutions, tailored toward what is available to an individual household. Therefore, community health workers have become a focal point of addressing GBV in rural South Africa (De Lange & Mitchell, 2016). Randa and Mokoena (2019) associate the prevalence of GBV in rural and lower-economic areas with

financial dependence on the perpetrator and a lack of information about women's rights. As a result, men use their powerful position and inherently believe that they have the right to abuse women. This reasoning may appear to be convincing but an argument against the lack of knowledge can be put forth. The rising incidence of GBV in South Africa has initiated various awareness strategies in the form of organised marches and protests, awareness talks, and media platforms (Oparinde & Matsha, 2021b). For example, Moletsane (2018) describes an awareness march against sexual violence in Khethani, a rural community in South Africa. This was a collaborative project undertaken by researchers and activists from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, together with girls and young women from within the community. This is an example of the awareness initiatives in place that provide a platform for survivors and young women to speak out against sexual violence in the community. However, this once-off march on National Women's Day is by no means a long-term solution for social change. De Lange and Mitchell (2016) posit that community health workers have the potential to be agents of community empowerment and carry out interventions in their community. The authors touch on the insider cultural knowledge and generational knowledge of community health workers regarding understanding and addressing GBV in townships and rural areas.

Patriarchal and hegemonic masculine ideals

The systemic social issue remains in patriarchal culture that defends hegemonic masculine ideologies and deems gender roles as fundamental to tradition (Gouws, 2016). The socialisation of young girls and boys into specific gendered norms influences the way they perceive themselves and their construction of the world (Stark et al., 2017). The correlation between gender roles and GBV has been echoed throughout various studies over the years (Coast et al., 2019; Gouws, 2016; Graaff, 2021; Machisa et al., 2018; Strebel et al., 2006). Hegemonic masculinities can differ across contexts, however common aspects include the construction of men as having an insatiable sex drive, as providers of the family, and being expected to demonstrate physical strength (Graaff & Heineken, 2017a). Conversely, successful women are constructed as mothers, wives or care givers, and are viewed as dependants of men (Gouws, 2016). It must be noted that African traditions often celebrate motherhood and sisterhood, and there is power in terms of family organisation and a sense of solidarity. African woman often use their role within the family setting as a site for resistance and empowerment (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010). The issue arises when dominant patriarchal beliefs allow men to exert power over women to control their behaviour, especially in instances when women do not conform to

their gendered expected roles or duties (Graaff & Heinecken, 2017a). In a qualitative study conducted in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, a female participant spoke on customary beliefs that expect women to endure abuse for the sake of keeping the family together. She described family meetings as a means to broker peace between the couple and keep the woman from leaving the relationship rather than addressing the abuse (Mogstad et al., 2016). A further example of a patriarchal construct is the expectation of women to be sexually subservient in intimate relationships and endure sexual violence (Lilley et al., 2023), fulfilling a man's 'right' to sexual intercourse (Mphaphuli & Smuts, 2020). Value is placed on the heterosexual men's pleasure at the expense of women's experiences. This also relates to the rape of lesbian women, who challenge the concept of women existing merely to be a vessel for male sexuality (Gqola, 2015). In South Africa, rapists violently punish lesbian women for being unavailable for male sexual gratification and put forth the discourse of rape being 'corrective' in accordance with heteronormative beliefs (Judge, 2018). The term 'corrective rape' demonstrates patriarchal beliefs that women are to be controlled and monitored, and that those nonconforming to gendered roles are deserving of punishment (Gqola, 2015).

Changing patriarchal ideologies is difficult because they are deeply rooted in centrism, identity, and power (Wood, 2019). In South Africa, dominant forms of masculinity have developed out of militarised, political involvement and anti-apartheid struggles (Bantjes et al., 2017; Bowman et al., 2015; Dharani et al., 2021; Graaff & Heinecken, 2017a). The apartheid state used racialised and oppressive violence and formed hegemonic masculinities that placed value on the fearless defence of honour and physical domination (Bantjes et al., 2017). The various categories of violence in South Africa have been recognised through complex underlying structures of inequality and violence inflicted by the state. Collective violence continues to be a mode of resistance against structural inequalities and wealth disparities in post-apartheid South Africa. This type of violence is viewed as instrumental to attain access to basic services. A cultural acceptance of violence has become the norm which has disrupted community and family life. Interpersonal violence cannot be separated from contextual and historical violence. Forms of violence are considered as co-occurring, which creates a context of poly-victimisation and poly-perpetration of violence (Bowman et al., 2015). That is not to say that oppressed people are the only sources of violence, but rather it acknowledges the ways in which apartheid has embedded violence into the fabric of South African society. The institutionalised forms of interpersonal and gender violence result from ineffective state structures that continue to exist

and create precarious communities (Kiguwa & Stevens, 2021). Gqola (2015) asserts that rape is a crime of power, and it moves beyond being of a lower economic status towards patriarchal power that is accessible to all men. In her writings, Gqola (2015) discusses powerful, popular, and successful men whose status has protected them against rape accusations and afforded them public support. These kinds of men are often excluded from the category of potential rapist; instead, the victim's credibility is brought into question, and their lifestyle and sexual histories are used as weapon to discredit the violence that they have experienced.

Findings from a South African study regarding hegemonic masculinity revealed a difference in the construction of external and internal hegemonies. External masculine hegemony makes reference to male dominance over women through culture and institutions (Dharani et al., 2021), thus the establishment of systems that do not empower women and make it difficult to receive adequate support (Treffry-Goatley et al., 2018). Internal masculine hegemony refers to the hierarchical classification of masculinities between men and places pressure on men to live up to traditional cultural standards of masculinity such as the 'warrior' archetype linked to Zulu masculinity or the physical attributes which are fundamental to Afrikaner masculinity (Dharani et al., 2021). There is an expectation placed on men to be 'strong' and thereby expected to handle pain without displaying any sign of it (Graaff & Heineken, 2017a). Hegemonic masculinity demands that men conceal vulnerability and restrict emotional expression. Without a healthy outlet to express emotion, these feelings can manifest in various and dangerous ways (Bantjes et al., 2017). Dugal et al. (2018) use the term 'emotional dysregulation' to describe an inability to manage emotions and control behaviour.

In their study, Autiero et al. (2020) included psychotherapists who worked in an Italian National Health Service programme targeting the perpetrators of violence. These therapists considered their intervention as preventive and for long-term restorative services. This is done by creating a therapeutic space for perpetrators who are open to change. They put forward that most perpetrators of violence need to work on managing emotions such as anger, fear, and anguish, as well as acquiring good communication skills. Through therapy, these psychotherapists aim to reduce violent behaviour by working on their patients' inner turmoil. Furthermore, the internalisation of masculine hegemonic values makes it difficult to accept differing views of masculinities. Francis (2021) conducted a study in Mpumalanga, South

Africa, findings indicated the ‘othering’ of young boys who do not conform to the rigid expectations of cultural heteronormativity. Dominant discourses and the construction of ‘real men’ exclude gay individuals and make them the target of bullying and violence. The superiority of the hegemonic masculine identity concurrently denigrates the feminine, which is not only embodied in a woman’s body, but also in any gender nonconforming people and traits that are not considered masculine (Gqola, 2015). The perceptions of what constitutes ‘being a woman’ versus ‘being a man’ have changed. Gender is no longer viewed as a fixed attribute but rather as a fluid variable that fluctuates depending on the context and time period (Lees et al., 2021). The post-apartheid shift towards equality included legislation that supports LGBTQIA+ South Africans (Francis, 2021), including the legalisation of gay and lesbian marriage, transgender people having a choice to amend their gender on their identity document, and the broad and inclusive definition of GBV (Graaff, 2021). Despite these legislative gains, heterosexism still exists (Francis, 2021) together with an insistence of gender norms in society (Gouws, 2016).

The implementation of legislation in patriarchal societies

In a study conducted with adolescent girls from South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and within the Sudanese refugee camps in Ethiopia, participants disregarded experiences of violence as it was perceived as customary. The reasons put forward for the endurance of violence include the provision of basic needs by the perpetrator and the internalisation of victim-blaming that takes place. Furthermore, there is no written legislation protecting young women against domestic violence in the DRC and no protection against marital rape in Sudan. The absence of such laws encourages violent societies as there is no recourse for victims (Stark et al., 2017). However, it is not just legislation that keeps women confined to certain boundaries and categories. In Tanzania, although there have been improvements in political power, gender inequalities still exist. Statistics reveal a large disparity in the level of education between men and women. Women continue to be deprived of ownership of property despite laws that have been put into place to amend inequalities (Lees et al., 2021). In South Africa, there is progressive and encompassing legislation regarding GBV such as: the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act, which acknowledges that all forms of sexual penetration without consent, regardless of gender, are considered rape; and the criminalisation of marital rape through the Domestic Violence Act, which is also inclusive of same-sex couples in the definition of a domestic relationship (Graaff,

2021). Despite this legislation, there is a systemic problem within the social justice system that undermines women and fosters a culture that uses control through silence, shame, and fear (Treffry-Goatley et al., 2018).

In seeking justice, many victims encounter both social and structural barriers that diminish the effectiveness of the policies in place. The complicit behaviour of South African service providers towards survivors of abuse reflects patriarchal ideologies that do not align with legislation and government strategies that attempt to address GBV (Gouws, 2016; Moore, 2020; Treffry-Goatley et al., 2018). In the study conducted by Treffry-Goatley et al. (2018), there are several accounts that describe the systemic problem of women being undermined. The callous attitude of the police towards survivors of sexual assault is emphasised. Victims are at risk of re-traumatisation and therefore have a reasonable distrust in the criminal justice system. This makes it extremely difficult for a victim to report experiences of violence and receive sufficient support. This is reinforced by Moore (2020), who draws a correlation between negative attitudes toward complainants and the withdrawal of charges. The culture of masculinity also acts as a barrier for men to report abuse, as there is a fear of them being ridiculed and humiliated by police officers (Mogstad et al., 2016). In another article, Helman (2018), a survivor of rape, explores the apparent differences in the attitudes of the nurses. One nurse was visibly shocked when she realised the victim was a white woman, revealing the expectation that such violence only happens to black women. Violence against black women occurs so frequently that it is considered normal and mundane by society in contrast to the violation of white women. This illustrates a discourse that constructs poor black women's bodies as 'unrapeable' in the sense that it is safe to rape them. Their rape is either excused when their violation occurs at the hands of men from similar impoverished backgrounds or they are not believed and instead blamed when powerful men violate them (Gqola, 2015). Their vulnerability is compounded by a lack of protection from state agencies within communities that experience high levels of poverty, social denigration, and violence (Gouws, 2016). The term "rape culture" has been used to describe the South African society. Rape culture does not only refer to the act of sexual abuse, but also to patriarchal attitudes that citizens have adopted that normalise sexual violence and victim blaming. It is a mind-set that sanctions men's actions at the expense of women (Frost, 2018; Treffry-Goatley et al., 2018). Gqola (2015) considers rape myths and justification of abuse to be the foundation for the continuation of rape culture.

Not only are rape myths factually inaccurate, they also act as social barriers that discourage the reporting of rape and negatively influence the perception of rape victims (Lilley et al., 2023).

Child abuse in South Africa

Sexual violence against both girls and boys is prevalent in South Africa; in addition, there is a high possibility that victims of sexual violence have experienced other forms of violence (Ward et al., 2018). The vulnerability of South African children is further exacerbated by poverty, child abuse, neglect, and exposure to violence (Haffejee & Levine, 2020). Child welfare falls under the department of social development in South Africa, which is an underfunded sector of government work (Vetten, 2019). Social work especially related to child welfare has been associated with high rates of burnout, vicarious trauma, and compassion fatigue (Denne et al., 2019). Child protection services in South Africa have been described as fragmented and overburdened (Ward et al., 2018). Literature references Childline and The Teddy Bear Clinic as two organisations, among others, working towards addressing child abuse in South Africa (Hendricks, 2019; Van Niekerk & Coetzee, 2020). Childline South Africa is a national child protection organisation recognised for their free helpline. During the lockdown period during the COVID-19 pandemic, Childline continued to provide free counselling services for any child or adult that needed assistance. Information about their services is accessible via their website and social media platforms (Maremela et al, 2022). Researchers acknowledge different types of specialised programmes offered to victims of child abuse by Childline, namely sexual therapeutic programmes, rehabilitation programmes, and prevention campaigns (Hendricks, 2019). The Teddy Bear Clinic is a multi-disciplinary organisation that consists of social workers who deal with child victims of different forms of abuse and work closely with children that enter the criminal justice system (Van Niekerk & Coetzee, 2020).

Similar to adult victims that take up legal action, child complainants are expected to provide a testimony and are subjected to cross-examination to establish the credibility of the charges brought forward (Fouché & Le Roux, 2018). Apart from primary victimisation, the daunting task of retelling and reliving violations can have negative consequences on the psychological well-being of child victims. The apathetic treatment of the role-players within the criminal justice system has been identified as the cause of secondary victimisation experienced. Secondary victimisation occurs not as a direct result of the criminal actions but instead as a result of the behaviour and responses from professionals in the name of justice (Van Niekerk

& Coetzee, 2020). The court proceedings are emotionally intensive, and therefore it makes sense that therapeutic services should be offered to children forced to undergo this process. However, from a study that examines social workers' views on pre-trial therapy in cases of child sexual abuse in South Africa, there appears to be an alternate discourse that advises against therapy for child complaints before trial. The reason is fear of the contamination of the child's testimony and thereby the outcome of the trial. Child sexual abuse usually occurs in secrecy and therefore the child victim is often the only witness. Participants from this study describe a conflict between getting the child immediate therapeutic treatment and the successful prosecution of a child sexual offender (Fouché & Le Roux, 2018). This way of thinking reveals the perception that victims who exhibit physical and/or emotional evidence of trauma hold more weight in court. Court officials are conceivably viewed as holding onto the ideology of a 'real' rape in which a victim has to be visibly distressed (Brooks & Burman, 2017). This school of thought applies not only to child victims but to all victims of sexual violence. Individuals that hold onto this 'real' rape stereotype often disregard instances that do not fall within their predetermined beliefs of what constitutes rape or a victim of rape (Rees, 2010). Society deems the rapes of children and elders as the worst kinds of rape, suggesting there is a gradation in the way rapes are viewed. This is an issue because all forms of rape, regardless of who is raped, should evoke the same kind of response (Gqola, 2015).

Prominent rape trials in South Africa

Many discourses encourage 'speaking out' as a victim of abuse in South Africa but support is not a guarantee. An infamous example is the rape trial of Jacob Zuma in 2005/2006; the way in which this case was handled by the court and the media had severe repercussions for the complainant 'Khwezi' (Gqola, 2015; Gouws, 2021). This trial received significant attention due to Zuma's high-profile status as an ANC hero. Members of the public were vocal about the fact that their loyalties lay with him, and the media followed the trial as it unfolded (Gouws, 2021). Unlike many sexual violence cases in South Africa, the proper collection of DNA evidence was presented to the court and this case was concluded within a matter of months. However, in other ways, it can be considered as a typical rape case brought to trial in South Africa. Zuma's defence resembled the defence of many rape cases: he did not deny that sexual contact had occurred but rather he maintained that it was consensual (Gqola, 2015). Khwezi was a black lesbian woman and an HIV-positive activist, placing her at an intersectional disadvantage (Crenshaw, 2005); she did not have the same status or power as Zuma. During

the trial, her sexual past and sexual violence history were brought to the forefront to question her motive, and she was labelled as a ‘serial rape accuser’ (Gouws, 2021). Her self-proclaimed identity as a lesbian had been dismissed and replaced with an insistence that she was bisexual (Gqola, 2015). Zuma, however, was praised instead of reproached for his sexual history. He brought into court the constructions of culture and tradition of a Zulu warrior. As a Zulu man, Zuma argued that he could not leave an aroused woman unsatisfied, and inferred that had he offered a payment for lobola (the bride price), there would not have been an issue. Zuma was acquitted due to a lack of evidence and went on to become one of South Africa’s democratically elected presidents. Khwezi was demonised for coming forward and attempting to discredit a powerful black man. She received numerous threats and was victimised to the point that she chose to leave the country (Gouws, 2021). This trial is an exemplar of the lived experienced of rape victims in South Africa and does not depict a context that is supportive of victims; instead, it substantiates the fear surrounding coming forward as a victim of rape or abuse, especially at the hands of someone who has a good reputation with members of the community.

Another example is the trial of Timothy Omotoso, a Nigerian pastor who was sentenced to jail for charges of rape and human trafficking. This trial was broadcast on live television, providing South Africans with a front row seat to the court proceedings. As a pastor, Omotoso was in a position of power over complainant Cheryl Zondi, who was fourteen years old at the time of the abuse. Omotoso had a huge following in the Christian community, who jumped to his defence at the expense of Zondi. Members of the public echoed discourses of false accusations for personal gain and victim-blaming. The defence attorney, Peter Daubermann, used similar tactics to infer that Zondi ‘wanted it’ despite her young age. He utilised rape myths that assume ‘real’ rape victims try to escape and report rape immediately, further implying that a victim’s silence means consent (Kgatle & Frahm-Arp, 2022). The Psychological Society of South Africa (2018) criticised Daubermann’s behaviour and disregard for the witness who was testifying, stating that “as a country we need to guard against this, especially considering the high number of sexual violence crimes” (para. 1). Unlike Kwezi, Zondi was one of several other young women and girls who came forward against Omotoso (Kgatle & Frahm-Arp, 2022). In both cases, there appeared to be two trials: one within the courtroom and one between members of the public (Gqola, 2015; Kgatle & Frahm-Arp, 2022). Rape trials in South Africa tend to spark debates, which circles back to the concept of rape culture that normalises sexual violence and victim blaming.

The media and social discourses

Gender activists have examined language that is used in media and general conversation, which gave rise to counter-discourses in the hopes of shifting the responsibility for change away from the victim towards the perpetrator of abuse. For example, the Twitter post made by the South African Government: “Govt is calling women to speak out, and not allow themselves to become victims by keeping quiet. Women who speak out are able to act, effect change and help others” was reformulated as “Govt is calling men to speak out, and not allow themselves to create victims. Men who speak out are able to act, effect change and help others” (Oparinde & Matsha, 2021, p. 6). This rephrasing shows a recognition of the fact that most of the GBV crimes are perpetrated by men in South Africa. The initiation of a masculine-focused call to action speaks to the context in which hegemonic masculinity and gender-related social norms are implicated in GBV (Jewkes et al., 2015). Media outlets have been criticised for headlines relating to GBV consisting of an overrepresentation of extreme cases of physical violence, rather than a representation of other forms of violence that occur. While psychological and verbal abuse may appear mundane, the argument for higher representation derives from media being instrumental in the conveying of information and the shaping of public perceptions. Discussion of less extreme cases of GBV could not only provide insight into the realities of an abusive relationship but also help people to recognise the warning signs, which could be beneficial in a de-escalation of severe violent outcomes (Isaacs, 2016).

Judge (2018) criticises South African media trends that choose to represent the LGBTQIA+ community only when they have experienced a brutal violation, creating an overemphasis on the violence against these bodies that is often viewed as outside the category of GBV. While it is important to highlight and advocate against violence, media portrayal does sensationalise and evoke fear – playing a role in the portrayal of specific bodies as vulnerable and perpetuating discourses that make these bodies targets of violence.

Conclusion

GBV is a persistent social and public health concern in South Africa. Incidents of GBV and femicide continue to escalate despite policies, legislation, and government strategies put into place. The literature reviewed in this chapter can be considered as the tip of the iceberg of the systemic issues that run deep in the fabric of society. For that reason, research on this matter

will continue to be relevant. This review contained global research on psychological interventions and outlined the benefits and challenges faced by clients. The current research study will provide insights into psychological work conducted in South Africa, recognised as a missing piece within accessible GBV research papers. The vast scope of the work carried out by community health workers has resulted in various research interests. They serve communities that have been considered the forgotten parts of society in terms of basic resources and development. Research concerned with these kinds of communities needs to be wary of implied racialisation of violence; community health worker perspectives aid in the provision of an in-depth understanding of GBV that occurs in marginalised communities. State strategies, social workers, and NGOs have been cited in numerous research papers as playing a pivotal role relating to GBV. This literature review presented a socio-political understanding of the context of the participants, including the way in which society responds to different types of victims, the experience of different types of violence, and the ways in which the South African courts have handled cases of rape. This thesis offers insights into the lives of seven remarkable women who have dedicated their lives to social change in South Africa.

Chapter 4

Methodology

Research Design

A qualitative research design was used because of the explorative nature of this research report. The researcher recognised the potential in using a qualitative approach to produce in-depth understandings and insightful significance for gender-based violence research. The ontological assumption of qualitative research consists of multiple views of reality that accept the participants' experiences to be true for them (Creswell, 2013). The qualitative research design allowed the researcher to consider *how* and *why* the combination of social and structural influences generate violent circumstances in South Africa (Bowman et al., 2015). Furthermore, the feminist epistemology applied makes use of qualitative research methods to reveal issues relating to the marginalised sectors of society (Speer, 2002). Narrative research is a form of qualitative research that differs from other qualitative frameworks. There are no overall rules to determine the mode of investigation or a 'best' way to study stories (Andrews et al., 2013; Squire et al., 2008). The researcher chose to conduct individual narrative interviews in which the participants' stories became the raw data for this research.

Research Paradigm

The researcher decided on a critical research paradigm as it is consistent with the use of feminist theory. A critical paradigm is positioned within historical realism i.e. reality has been developed through social, political, cultural, economic, racial, and gender beliefs. (Scotland, 2012). The South African context has experienced decades of colonial supremacist oppression therefore, this research required the application of historical realism. Qualitative research accepts that society consists of multiple views of reality (Creswell, 2013) and works well with the critical research paradigm which investigates power relationships that influence society (Scotland, 2012). Within the narratives, many participants describe members of society as holding onto an internal construction of patriarchal ideologies formed by the country's unequal history. In conducting this report, the researcher took a particular interest in the social and structural influences that contribute to the disempowerment of vulnerable sectors of society.

The critical paradigm further recognises that language is not passive but has the power to shape reality (Scotland, 2012). This research has identified gendered discourse and the construction

of risk avoidance approaches to be significant in shaping a victim-blaming society. The language used within these discourses created the perception that the victim has the power to stop or avoid abuse and ignored existent power dynamics that keep them in a cycle of victimhood (Burkett & Hamilton, 2012; Oparinde & Matsha, 2021b). Critical epistemology reflects on the subjectivism of the creators of knowledge and challenges academics and scientific communities that contribute to systems of oppression (Scotland, 2012). The researcher took into consideration warnings put forward by afro-feminist researchers regarding the use of positivist, westernised methodologies in African-based research. This report rejected hegemonic methods that adopts Eurocentric values which contain bias that stereotype and limit the lived experiences of African women (Tamale, 2020).

Participants

This study used purposive sampling method to gain participants. This technique is used widely in qualitative research to find participants with specific knowledge and experience (Creswell, 2013). Initially it was challenging to find people willing to participate in the research project. The researcher approached people that turned down the invite and several appointments had been cancelled. Through social networks and online searching the researcher contacted many non-government organisations and service providers. The researcher visited possible research sites such as clinics and hospitals; she had been referred to various places and people that may be interested in the study. From her social network, the researcher found one community health worker (Thandeka¹) based in Tembisa and a journalist (Priyanka¹) that advocates for women's rights through an awareness podcast, along with running a website that provides a platform for survivors to tell their story. From site visits the researcher met a doctor that put her in contact with another community health worker (Busisiwe¹) from the Hillbrow clinic. A visit to the Teddy Bear Clinic led to a social auxiliary worker (Hlengiwe¹) agreeing to participate in the research. Due to the nature of the work conducted at the Teddy Bear Clinic, which deals with children that have experienced abuse, further steps were required for the interview to be permitted. The researcher had to speak to the manager of the clinic and send an official email to request permission. The researcher had left her contact details at many of the sites visited, some of whom promised to send it to their networks. In this way, the researcher was contacted by a clinical psychologist (Patricia¹) based at a correctional facility in Oudtshoorn, who was interested participating in the research. The researcher used her resources as a Witwatersrand

¹Not real name

student and contacted the facilities on campus that deal with gender-based violence. This led to two university staff members agreeing to participate in the research project: a psychologist (Ashmika²) who works at the Counselling and Careers Development Unit (CCDU) and a legal expert (Tasniem²) from the Gender Equity Office at the University of Witwatersrand. All participants are professionals, some of whom have experienced abuse and violence.

The table below aids in the categorisation of the various participants, to adequately summarise and provide basic descriptive information pertaining to the participant. It tabulates the participants interviewed, where they are based, their ages and the field of work. The table shows that the range for this study is between 33 to 53 years old. Due to the small sample size of this qualitative study; the findings should not be used to generalise. To protect the identities of individual participants, their real names are not used in the table below and throughout the report. This summary will assist to contextualize the extracts by interviewees:

Pseudonym	Occupation	Location	Age	Organisation/Institution
Hlengiwe	Social auxiliary worker	Central Johannesburg	52	The Teddy Bear Clinic
Patricia	Psychologist	Oudtshoorn	33	Department of Correctional Services
Ashmika	Psychologist	Johannesburg	53	University of Witwatersrand
Tasneim	Legal expert	Johannesburg	36	University of Witwatersrand
Busisiwe	Community health worker	Malvern community/Hillbrow clinic	35	Department of health
Thandeka	Community health worker	Tembisa	33	Department of health
Priyanka	Journalist	Johannesburg	38	Self employed

Data Collection

Data was collected in the form of semi-structured individual interviews. The researcher decided to use semi-structured interviews to have a rough outline of the interview process and ensure that the core research questions were attended to. Opposed to free-association interview questions which opens a possibility for digression from the research objectives. All questions were open-ended so that it did not limit the answers of the participants. Participants were

² Not real name

allowed the freedom to express their thoughts and provide accounts rich in detail. The researcher adopted a casual approach to the interviews that resulted in the flow of a conversation, rather than a formal question-answer interview session. This has been identified as ‘active interviewing’ which is in line with qualitative research methods (Potter & Hepburn, 2005). This method of interviewing put many participants at ease and aided in building a rapport. Within the interviews the researcher invited the participants to talk about themselves which elicited open responses regarding self-identities and contextualised the participant’s experiences. The researcher used prompts and asked follow-up questions to solicit explanations and further develop accounts that were given. This enabled the researcher to extract explicit descriptions of the participants’ narratives. This was important as the collection of narrative accounts is the essence of narrative research (Squire et al., 2014). Narrative research as a method places emphasis on storytelling and makes use of the participants’ own words and descriptions (Creswell, 2013). The exploration of narratives served as a learning experience for the researcher to understand and unpack the various layers of gender-based violence - which has been branded as a systemic issue that infiltrates numerous sectors of the South African society. An attentive listening process enabled the researcher to understand the complexity of abuse (Squire et al., 2014). The researcher was able to identify commonalities amongst the narratives that supported and substantiated the participants’ experiences. Contradictory narratives that were obtained were compared and contrasted to present the difference in experiences and create useful negotiation of contextual understandings (Squire et al., 2008). However, it has been argued that the mediation and moderation carried out by the researcher reduces the participant centred orientation (Potter & Hepburn, 2005). This study addresses this concern by using large extracts of the participants’ narratives. The researcher used the feminist perspective that accepts the premise that research is seldom value neutral and supports the use of critical inquiry (Speer, 2002). A critical lens allowed the researcher to interrogate perceptions and interpretations instead of face value acceptance.

The researcher offered the participants two options of conducting the interviews – either in person or virtually via Microsoft teams. Three of the participants opted to conduct the interview in person at their place of employment: Hlengiwe (social auxiliary worker) was interviewed in her personal office at The Teddy Bear Clinic, Tasniem (legal expert) in her personal office within the Gender Equity Department at the University of Witwatersrand and Busisiwe (community health worker) in a private conference room at the Hillbrow clinic. The rest of the

participants choose to conduct their interviews virtually via Microsoft Teams. Patricia (psychologist) and Thandeka (community health worker) were both located at distance from where the researcher was based. And Ashmika (psychologist) and Priyanka (journalist) preferred meeting virtually as it was convenient for their schedule. Each interview was scheduled according to the availability of the participant and was approximately 60 minutes per interview. When the participants were recruited, the researcher provided an information sheet (see Appendix A) that had a written explanation about the nature of the research. At the start of each interview the researcher mentioned the information sheet and attended to any queries that the participants may have had. Thereafter, the researcher provided the informed consent form for the study (see Appendix B). For the virtual participants, the researcher emailed the consent sheet and explanation prior to the interview; this document was returned before the start of the interview. The researcher ensured that the participants were aware that they could withdraw at any time or choose to not answer any question that they do not want to. Although written on the consent form, the researcher verbally requested permission to record each interview. Only 1 participant, Hlengiwe (the social auxiliary worker) declined this request, the rest of participants gave the researcher permission to record the interview. For the in-person interviews, the researcher used an application on her cell phone to audio record the session. For the virtual interviews, the researcher used the record function on Microsoft Teams. During the interview with Hlengiwe (the social auxiliary worker) the researcher took down detailed notes. The transcription of each interview was done by the researcher herself. With respect to the participant's anonymity, the researcher removed any identifying features of the interview, such as real names and other distinctive characteristics. Signed consent was granted by each participant before the start of the interview.

Data analysis

As mentioned above, this study used a narrative research approach. Narrative analysis focuses on the participants' personal experience using stories (Bamberg, 1997). There are multiple ways to analyse narrative research depending on the social phenomena being investigated and the different aspects of the narratives that requires focus (Squire et al., 2008). Some researchers structure data chronologically as typically used in biographies and historical models which describe various life stages (Creswell, 2013). While other researchers use narratives to address a specific research problem (Squire et al., 2008). The latter is consistent with the analysis used in this study which contained the narratives of women working within gender-based violence.

The researcher structured the data in the manner that provides the reader with a background of the participants before moving onto the participants' varied perceptions and gender-based violence work in practice. The researcher observed the narrative positioning that the participants placed themselves within the context of their stories (Bamberg, 1997). The use of subject positioning highlighted discourse that placed women and gender non-conforming individuals in a subordinate position in relation to cismen within a patriarchal society. In addition, the structural and professional challenges that impact people differently based on subject position, specifically their racial and gendered identities. The researcher transcribed all the interviews with the same level of detail and key extracts were selected from the transcripts to focus on in the analysis.

From the various narratives obtained, the researcher found emerging themes spread out across the interview transcripts. The researcher decided to group together narratives that related to similar patterns of meanings – borrowing elements from thematic qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These themes assisted in identifying and organising data pertinent to the research question from the protracted narratives. The researcher made note of 'particular incident narratives' (PIN) in which participants recounted both personal and work-related experiences of gender-based violence. The researcher made use of 'about-PIN' as these stories were told from the participants' present state of mind, looking back at an emotional distance from the actual experience (Wengraf, 2018). These excerpts revealed pragmatic examples of the gender-based violence crisis in South Africa.

Ethical considerations

Prior to the commencement of the interviews, the Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical) approved the ethical considerations of this study. The researcher provided a brief outline of the aims and nature of the study to all participants. The participants were aware of the procedure that involved individual interviews that took a maximum of 60 minutes of their time. The researcher explained that she needed their permission to use any type of audio recording and respected their decisions. Participants were told that they could choose to not answer any question that they do not want to and had the right to withdraw from the study at any point. The researcher provided an informed consent form that stated in writing what they discussed above. The participants agreed to the terms and signed the documents. They were not offered any incentives or coerced in any way. Confidentiality was be maintained by

conducting individual interviews at a place where both the participant and researcher felt comfortable. In the case of interviews via Microsoft teams - the researcher used headphones and conducted the interview in a closed, private room to protect the privacy of the participant. During the interview four of the participants had disclosed personal experiences of gender-based violence. These participants assured the researcher that have been through counselling and have since worked through their past experiences and trauma. These participants felt secure in the environment to reveal that they are survivors of abuse to the researcher, who listened attentively. The researcher understood the significance of these disclosures and did not press the participants for further details of these experiences. Anonymity was impossible as participants were visible to the researcher, but confidentiality was ensured by the use of pseudonyms and removing identifiable information within this study. The voice recordings and transcriptions obtained have been securely stored in a password protected mobile phone and laptop. Once the research was concluded, these recordings have been deleted and the transcripts with pseudonyms will remain with the researcher and her supervisor.

Conclusion

This chapter explained the use of a qualitative research design for this study and provided the methods used to carry out this research report. It discussed the process involved in obtaining both the participants and the data for this research. There was a brief description of the participants involved and their relevant fields of gender-based violence work. It provided reasoning for analytical choices made by the researcher as well as the ethical considerations required to conduct this research.

The following four chapters (5–8) uses the above mentioned methodology to provide an in-depth analysis and discussion of the participants' narratives. Chapter 5 consists of the narrative journeys toward community and gender advocacy work - it serves as an introduction to each of the participants. It offers a better understanding of the participants' professional position and how it relates to gender-based violence. Chapter 6 sheds light on understanding the multiple and intersectional lens of gender-based violence as described by the participants. This gives insight on the complexity and various perceptions of gender-based violence. Chapter 7 touches on the systemic and structural challenges of gender-based violence – highlighting components of the justice system that contribute to the continuation of violence. Chapter 8 put forward

social aspects that impact gender-based violence - this is the largest of the analysis and discussion chapters. These are various social aspects that have been mentioned in the participants' narratives to have a significant influence on gender-based violence in South Africa.

Chapter 5 - Analysis and Discussion

Narrative journeys toward Community and Gender Advocacy Work

This theme will provide a brief introduction to each participant and their parallel journeys towards gender-based advocacy. It consists of two sub-themes: personal history of gender-based violence and professional history. Each participant provides an account of what motivates them to continue within their current fields of work. Their first-hand experience does not deter them rather acts as a driving force to persevere in the field of gender-based violence. All the participants provided a background of working with marginalised groups. 4 of the 7 participants had personal experiences of gender-based violence.

Personal history of gender-based violence

Although the researcher had not intended on conducting interviews with survivors of abuse, it was revealed that 4 of the participants had personal experiences of gender-based violence. All participants have been through counselling and appear to have worked through their past trauma. These participants willingly divulged this information and how it relates to the work that they are carrying out at present. In accordance with previous studies, this research has found that survivors who engaged in assisting other women that have gone through similar circumstance, not only felt a sense of purpose but also an outlet to advocate against gender-based violence (Sinko et al., 2022). Personal experiences has be associated with motivation and a desire to assist others and affect social change. (Cayir et al., 2021). Two of the participants Priyanka (journalist) and Ashmika (psychologist) experienced childhood sexual abuse and two of the participants Hlengiwe (social auxiliary worker) and Thandeka (community health worker) experienced intimate partner violence. This research reflects on their personal history of gender-based violence, prompting the motivation for helping others.

Priyanka (journalist) talks of the struggle of being a victim of childhood sexual abuse, she states:

“I only told my parents years later. Because fear... Well I was a child - So there was nothing I could do until my family moved house, and moved area. Um and so it was very much a situation of this person was known to us but ya we trusted him. And all of those things that you know, would have ordinarily been a very straightforward relationship of family friend”

The extract demonstrates that as a child Priyanka (journalist) was not able to do anything about the abuse. In the same way, Ashmika (psychologist) also inferred as a survivor of childhood sexual abuse there was nothing that she could do. *“I only told my parents years later. Because fear”* - depicts the inner turmoil of Priyanka (journalist). Hlengiwe (social auxiliary worker) who worked with children that have been abused, acknowledged that when it comes to children it is important for adults to stand up for them. She explained that often the victim feels like they are to blame, they feel guilty for the abuse that has been done to them. Children are groomed and they might even have been threatened not to tell. Sexual offenders not only groom their child victims, but also family members creating a sense of friendship to gain the trust of family and access to victims (Wolf & Pruitt, 2019). *“Straightforward relationship of family friend”* - this statement aligns with various available studies on child sexual assault that indicate that many child sexual abusers are known to the victim’s family (Thuong et al, 2019). Priyanka (journalist) shared with the researcher that she had felt fear when this ‘family friend’ started visiting their new home. She realised that she had to tell her family about the abuse, to ensure that her perpetrator could no longer have access to her and for her to feel safe in her home. Priyanka (journalist) touches on the difficult journey of telling her parents, and the impact being believed and supported:

“It was unspoken, it was very much unspoken by my family. It’s just really sad that I consider myself lucky that my family, one, believed me and two, supported me. Because not many survivors are offered that, that kindness and that space and that grace, it’s something that should come naturally, like yes I believe you, and we will go through whatever motions that you need to go through to make this right, or for you to heal. And my parents afforded me that, um not always in the ways that I needed...But it’s also been like, my parents and my sister floundering as well, they didn’t know how to navigate this. So I don’t blame them for any of the missteps that they took.... But obviously there are hiccups. Even in a family that is supportive. So finding my voice was very much on me.”

Priyanka (journalist) places emphasis on social support systems like family and friends, then asserts that not all people have this. The work that she currently does aims to let other survivors

know that someone believes them and that they are not alone. *“They didn’t know how to navigate this”* - shows the difficulties of being there for a survivor. Her personal experience allows her to be empathetic towards a victim’s hesitation to disclose abuse to their loved ones. She understands that there is an element of inner strength that is required: *“so finding my voice was very much on me”* however, Priyanka hopes that her work helps victims feel a little less alone. She maintains that simply asking a person ‘what do you need?’ enables her to better assist them. As adults both Priyanka (journalist) and Ashmika (psychologist) display agency that they lacked as children. Although they now work with predominantly adults, they have a conviction that a person has individual autonomy and potential to change their circumstance.

As survivors of abuse, these participants have first-hand knowledge of the skills that they had to acquire to survive. They use their knowledge to equip others in similar situations. They can identify a victim who requires intervention and are aware that there are multiple factors to consider when dealing with abuse. Intervention must be tailored by the options available for the victim taking tremendous precaution. Hlengiwe (social auxiliary worker) maintains that her personal experience has allowed her to be non-judgemental and understanding. Her perspective on dealing with victims is to be encouraging rather than finding fault in their actions.

Thandeka (community health worker) explained that although she was experiencing abuse, she was unaware that it was abuse until she attended an awareness talk conducted by ‘POWA’ (people opposing women abuse). She realised that her ex-partner displayed some of the warning signs and abusive behaviour that were mentioned. Listening to someone talk about the reality that she was living in had opened her eyes and made it clear that abusive behaviour is not acceptable. She expands on the stages of abuse which does not begin with physical violence, is difficult to recognise and often overlooked. This is supported within literature that indicates the absence of physical violence is difficult to differentiate between low grade aggressive acts and emotional abuse (Heise et al., 2019). This is maintained by another study in which participants that indicated having emotional abusive experiences rarely acknowledged it as abuse (Goldsmith & Freyd, 2005). The perpetrator uses various forms of manipulation and coercion as a means of control. The use of verbal and non-physical behaviour can purposely cause mental or emotional distress to one’s partner (Dugal et al., 2018). Thandeka (community health worker) communicates the way emotional abuse and financial control eventually led up to physical violence:

“The person can demoralize you very verbally. The person can, can tell you stuff that you don't even know, and then a person can abuse you financially. And it starts with your emotions, it start playing tricks with your mind, and then it comes to the financial part. You don't have money and not working. And then you can see now this person is using that as an advantage on, on you because you have needs. You still need money, but he's using that. To keep - If you, if you leave me, where will you get the money? You are not thinking this out. These people have been there, then after that, that event then that's where the physical part starts.”

The emotional and financial dependence on a partner can be used as coercive control to keep a person submissive (Kaukinen, 2004). This is the reality for many South African women, who are unable to leave violent circumstances due to socioeconomic factors. The lack of financial resources and awareness of accessible services contribute remaining in violent situations (Machisa et al., 2018). Women endure violence as the perpetrator provides of basic needs (Stark et al., 2017). *“It starts with your emotions, it start playing tricks with your mind”* - this demonstrates a sense of confusion that is common with emotional abuse. There is a difficulty trying to pinpoint who or what went wrong in the situation causing the victim to have a sense of self-doubt. *“The person can demoralize you”* - when a person has experienced emotional abuse cognitive distortions may develop changing the victim's self-perception. The tearing down of the victim's self-esteem and making them feel inadequate increases dependence on the perpetrator. Feelings of worthlessness and responsibility for the abuse perpetrated are often expressed by survivors of emotional abuse (Delara, 2016).

Within the narratives an emphasis was placed on warning signs. The ability to recognize risks or to identify warning signs of abuse in romantic relationships has been associated with reducing dangerous outcomes (Kearney & O'Brien, 2021). Ashmika (psychologist) explains warning signs:

“I would say the warning sign is the first bit of aggression shown to you. The first kind of shove, push, hit that immediately, that's a warning sign. You may see the aggression beforehand”

Thandeka (community health worker) emphasises the importance of warning signs of abuse in relationships and getting out before the situation escalates. She says that found the strength to leave her relationship in the realisation that her life was in jeopardy:

“It took me to, to realise that if I continue to stay there, I’m gonna die. Because that is, the day that I left that house, was the day he poured, poured spirits on the top of my head and told me that he's gonna burn me. And nobody can do anything about it. Then realised, like I had a wake-up call, then that if a person is able to pour a spirit on me and burn me alive while my father never put his hands on me. Why am I still here with this person? I might lose my life for the sake of love.”

The above excerpt can be placed in the “breaking free” stage as described in Wuest & Merritt-Gray (2001) feminist grounded theory study that categorises ‘leaving’ into a cyclical, iterative process has four stages (counteracting abuse, breaking free, not going back, and moving on). Breaking free is described as a stage of disengagement, where the survivor realises the dangers of the relationship and draws on their own competency to leave the relationship. POWA’s community awareness talk and the participant’s own journey to recognise that she is being abused, in combination of the threat of death pushed her to get out of her relationship. Thandeka (community health worker) knew that she had to seek help and fortunately she was empowered with the knowledge to know where to go. *‘I had a wake-up call’* - can be considered as a turning point for Thandeka (community health worker). Turning points are viewed as a moment consists of trauma recognition, speaking out and working towards recovery (Sinko et al., 2022). She describes trying to suppress her emotions as killing her or eating her up from the inside. Actually coming to terms with the fact that you have been violated is a part of the process. Thandeka (community health worker) reflects on her own process of speaking out and how it helped her release her emotions. The benefits of speaking out is reiterated by Priyanka (journalist):

“Well the benefits of somebody getting their story out is, speaking their truth. Being validated in terms of this actually happened, this is not just in my memory, but being supported”

This highlights the importance of talking about abusive experiences and the therapeutic impact it has on survivors. Thandeka (community health worker) uses her personal experience to bring awareness within the work that she does. She tries her best to educate her community about the warning signs of abuse. Priyanka (journalist) provides a platform for survivors to tell their stories. Ashmika (psychologist) focuses on rebuilding the self-esteem of her clients, to empower and help them feel stronger. As survivors of abuse, these participants been through similar situations that gives them an empathic understanding of their client's reality. They know that a life free of abuse is possible even though it is difficult, multifaceted process. Not only do they do they provide a listening ear, also they provide helpful resources and tools to get through and move past abuse.

Professional history

A professional is typically understood as an individual who has specialised knowledge gained through education, followed by training that allows for an income (Callaghan, 2014). While this holds true for most of the participants that were given the opportunity to study, for Thandeka (community health worker) and Hlengiwe (social auxiliary worker) this was not the case. They found a way to establish an alternative structure of professionalism by hands-on learning rather than institutionalised education such as attending a university. Their experience and years working in the field is what makes them experts. Priyanka (journalist) on the other hand, while formally educated prefers not to be associated by a capitalist institution. She defines herself as a professional who has dedicated her time and knowledge towards her website which is her primary income. Within the various narratives there is a trajectory of working with marginalised individuals throughout their career that has guided them towards the role that they currently hold within this study. ‘Passion’ seems to be an underlining thread throughout the different narratives of the women. In addition, the narrative of helping those in need gives them purpose and a sense of fulfilment.

“It was a bit more of a passion at the time, like love at first sight kind of thing...You get to fell in love with getting to see someone smile at the end of the day”

Busisiwe (community health worker) states above the reason for getting into her field as passion. She comes from a marginalised background and grabbed the opportunity to study nursing to become an enrolled nurse. She was trained and deployed at Hillbrow clinic, under the ward out-project. She works with two squatter camps around the Malvern area. She enjoys getting to know the people and recognises that her job makes their life easier. Her main role is to ensure that her clients are well at home and that they adhere to their treatment. Thandeka (community health worker) explained the circumstance that got her into community healthcare as her grandmother falling sick. Being unable to find assistance she decided to get into community health to educate herself on how to properly take care of her grandmother. She describes her grandmother illness as being bedridden and in a lot of pain. She states:

“So, like taking care of my grandmother gave me this sense that there are other people out there who are alone who need help. That’s when the passion started”

The above statement depicts Thandeka (community health worker) as recognising a need within her area. Lower income areas in South Africa have been associated with high levels of precarity; it consist of a population that lack social and economic networks of support which puts them at a higher risk for illness, violence and death (Phillips & Petrova, 2021). The unequal and exclusionary urban configuration forces people from these communities to walk long distances to access the clinic facilities. Due to low availability of public transport and high cost of public transport fares walking has become one of the main modes of black urban mobility (Oviedo et al., 2021). Therefore, the work that Busisiwe and Thandeka (community health workers) carry out is essential to wellbeing of the members of the community. The separation between the community and the clinic was constructed to remove professional healthcare workers (doctors, nurses, psychologists) from being integrated into the community (Callaghan, 2003). Thandeka explains her role as building a relationship between the community and the clinic. To provide an understanding of what the clinic does, promote the

services offered at clinic to ensure community members know where to go immediately when they have an emergency.

Thandeka states that her job goes further than health related issues, she refers people to different stakeholders or relevant institutions in which people can receive help. These include family planning, SASA, home affairs and assisting people with registration for social and disability grants. Both participants that work in community health realised that they have the capability to assist and make a difference in other people's lives. From the onset of their work, they knew that they belonged in this field and attained a sense of purpose.

Hlengiwe (social auxiliary worker) had begun her career as a volunteer at the Teddy Bear Foundation. Once she gained the relevant experience, she then became court preparation officer. Her job entailed assisting and preparing children that have experienced abuse for court. She had to explain to these children the rules of the court, who they were expected to see and the role that they would have to play. She was a witness to the suffering of children which prompted her decision to step up and advocate for them. As a part of the Teddy Bear Clinic, Hlengiwe conducts awareness programmes for members of the public. She has held presentations at different schools to inform learners about abuse. At present she is an intake worker, this means that she is the first point of contact, and she works with the parents instead of the children.

While the above participants describe the start of their career as the foundation for the force that drives them to carry out their work, Priyanka (journalist) and Tasniem (legal expert) claim that they have always been passionate about advocacy. Priyanka (journalist) states:

“I’ve been in women’s rights organisations for as long as I can remember. So it’s kinda second nature”

Giving an indication that she has always been invested in the fight against gender-based violence. Priyanka uses her skills as a lecturer and a freelance journalist to bring awareness to the multiple layers of gender-based violence. She encourages critical thinking that involves

looking at the intersectional oppression of individuals based on reality of their context. She runs a website that provides a platform for survivors of gender-based violence to tell their stories anonymously. She assists women's rights organisation that reach out to her to write or edit pieces of work and further takes on individual action to assist members of her community. Similarly, Tasniem (legal expert) states:

"So my passion has always been to help, to use the law for good which sounds really cheesy but it really is the truth."

Tasniem (legal expert) graduated and did her articles at the University of Witwatersrand. She chose to do her articles at a law clinic which worked with refugees and individuals who are destitute. She explained that she always wanted to be involved in human rights work. She completed her masters in human trafficking and refugee law. Subsequently, she worked for a pro bono organisation to provide legal services to people in the country who cannot afford it, especially in areas that accessing an attorney is difficult. Eventually, she was given the opportunity to work specifically with students, around making the University of Witwatersrand a safer space. In the same way, Ashmika (psychologist) another staff member of University of Witwatersrand, makes use of the word 'passionate' to express her feelings about the work that she does. Furthermore, she has a long history of working in the psychology field.

Conversely, Patricia (psychologist) had not set out initially to be a clinical psychologist, having obtained a Bachelor of Commerce in her undergrad. However, her parents, who work within the clinical psychology field had influenced her and she realised that this was her calling. Once she had this epiphany, she felt as though her life started to fall into place. She describes it as a long journey to toward becoming a registered and practicing clinical psychologist. Now she works with perpetrators of rape however, she mentions that she had worked with rape victims in the past. She states:

"It's just the scope of this, the enormity of this problem is just becoming increasingly apparent for me and I think that's why I've also felt so moved to just investigate this and to understand the underlying psychological dynamics at play here because it's just so shocking"

Currently Patricia (psychologist) is doing her community service at the prison in Oudtshoorn. The population group that she predominantly works with consists of males who have a sentence of 10 years or longer, for assault, murder, and rape. Concurrently she works at the female prison, doing group therapy and initiating projects such as a food garden. She does individual and group therapy, along with various interventions however, she describes the bulk of her job to entail doing risk assessments to determine what is the risk of her client of recidivism or reoffending would be. Her reports go to the parole board.

While carrying out their different areas of work, the participants recognised that there is a need for the work that they do. Seeing the progress and being able to provide assistance to those in need inspires them to continue. Working within gender-based violence may seem daunting to some people however, these participants are passionate about the work that they do.

Chapter 6 - Analysis and discussion

Understanding the Multiple and Intersectional Lens of Gender-Based Violence

This theme comprises of the participant's varied understanding of gender-based violence. The participants mention the types of violence that falls under the category of gender-based violence. Patriarchal societies are recognised as a causal factor that positions men as more powerful in relation to women. Participants share their assessments of abuse, abusive relationships and provide insights into the various intersections that also contributes to the oppression of another. Homophobia and transphobia has been identified as a form of gender-based violence. Participants support the concept that gender-based violence can happen to any race, class, and gender. Bowman et al. (2015) suggests that there is variability in the definitions of violence and warns researchers of the challenges in finding an explicit definition of violence. Rather violence is multifaceted, both the individual agency and the situational, contextual, socio-cultural, and historical must be considered within the analysis. Unfortunately, the various interpretations can lead to a misrepresentation of gender-based violence. All the above is reflected in how the participants provide their understanding of gender-based violence.

The main types of violence

Patricia (psychologist) touches on the different types of abuse, and states that vulnerable people are impacted the most:

"It's a very broad umbrella under which you would find and physical, verbal, psychological, economic and sexual abuse mostly directed towards women and children as the name suggests, you know, gender based violence. So it's about targeting the weaker sex, not necessarily the weaker sex, but you know, the more vulnerable, parts of people, of our society. Yeah. So that would be my general understanding of gender based violence."

This aligns with Ashmika's (psychologist) definition:

“For me it's violence as well as the type as that kind of term suggests, it's violence on the basis of gender... With a bit more to it where I feel that as much as it happens to both genders that it's predominantly against women because there is that sense of men being more physically stronger and having, you know, based on our whole patriarchal system, even some of the religious systems, it's always, you know, men that's kind of 'superior' in some way, in inverted commas. And so I do feel that although it's based on gender, that it happens more to women than men... So yes, there are some men, but that's not the predominance.”

Ashmika (psychologist) touches on the patriarchal systems that keep women subordinate. Gender-based violence may be viewed as a symptom of a patriarchal social system (Hadi, 2017). Within South Africa, the violent behaviour of men against women can be identified through social norms and beliefs. Legros & Cislighi (2019) explain societal norms as unwritten rules that are shared by members of the same society. These ‘rules’ are passed on through socialization and through the organisation of collective practices that lead to significant influence over cognitive processes: *“our whole patriarchal system, even some of the religious systems”* – explaining social norms as sexist religious practices and learnt gender roles that subordinate women. Patriarchal beliefs impacts both women and men not only on an individual level, but also as a society (Dlamini, 2021). Ashmika (psychologist) elaborates on emotional abuse:

“It is verbal. But it's a level of what's being told at you. That leads to negative emotional consequences. So were you insulted? Um were you teased? Were you, um your self-esteem is attacked, your sense of identity is attacked. Your confidence, competence, your identity, you're your physical identity, even. When all of that is attacked and you made to feel small or less, then that's emotional abuse.”

Overt examples of verbal abuse include screaming, swearing and publicly degrading the victim. Whereas subtle forms of verbal abuse can be recognized as belittling, patronizing behaviour, minimizing the victim’s emotions or experiences, and always placing the blame on the victim

(Porrúa-García et al. 2016). Ashmika (psychologist) further explains how emotional abuse is used in combination with other forms of abuse:

“So whether it's physical, whether it's verbal, it's emotional too. So the emotional abuse and sometimes it's just emotional but physical and verbal leads to emotional level of emotional kind of consequences too. So I would say all of that involves emotional abuse... Because if they feel, the women feel that they are so dependent and they so inadequately, so useless, no one else will love them. Yeah. I mean that's, that's the, the, the kind of typical cycle of an abusive relationship.”

Ashmika (psychologist) makes emotional abuse a key element in intimate partner violence, she maintains that emotional abuse is present in physical and verbal violence. Emotional abuse consists of manipulation and coercive tactics that has a detrimental impact on the victim's mental well-being. Psychologically abusive strategies comprise of monitoring and restricting the movements of the victim (Porrúa-García et al. 2016). This gives the perpetrator an element of control over the victim's life. Ashmika (psychologist) touches on the cyclical structure of abuse that keeps women in abusive relationships. The cycle of abuse is described as an interpersonal progression through the stages of Tension, Explosion, Remorse and Honeymoon phase (Enck & McDaniel, 2012). Victims often get stuck in this cycle: after an explosion (violence occurs) they may feel motivated to get out of the relationship however, it is the remorse and honeymoon phase that draws them back into the relationship. In this phase the perpetrator is likely to show changed behaviour and it could last for a significant period until tension builds up again (Collins, 2000). During the negative stages, the abuser reinforces the idea that *“they so inadequately, so useless, no one else will love them”* verses the remorse and honeymoon phase, in which the abuser manipulates their partner into believing that they are apologetic and behaves like the perfect partner. This is a crucial understanding in why people stay in abusive relationships. An abusive relationship is extremely complex as the perpetrator exhibits positive qualities together with cruelty. The victim often appears to be simultaneously in love with and afraid of their abuser. There is a deep psychological thread that considers ‘the splitting defence’ in which an individual is either abused or hopeful. Victims that use the splitting defence prevent themselves from viewing both the good and bad side of their abuser

at the same time (Bissessar & Huggins, 2021). Hopefulness is often exhibited during the remorse phase, when the abuser seems ‘more themselves’ rather than the person who inflicted violence (Collins, 2000). Splitting allows the adult victim to remain with life-threatening partners without fear as though they are blind to their state of reality and convinced of a hope for a better tomorrow. Characteristics of the splitting defence include verbally and mentally erasing memories and events as well as minimizing extremely dangerous behaviour (Bissessar & Huggins, 2021). ‘Love’ can be viewed as a social need that makes the victim emotionally dependant on their abuser (Chimeri et al., 2019). Hlengiwe (social auxiliary worker) uses the word ‘bullying’ to describe gender-based violence. It is fitting that she labels gender-based violence in this manner as her work relates to children. She explains bullying as inflicting pain onto others which aligns with definitions in literature that described it as deliberate negative and harmful behaviour inflicted on an individual by someone more powerful (Mahabeer, 2021). Hlengiwe talks about identifying signs of sexual abuse in children that include but not limited to inappropriate play, hyper sexualised behaviour, becoming withdrawn or very angry.

Intersectional components of gender-based violence

Priyanka (journalist) takes an intersectional lens in her understanding of gender-based violence:

“This is interesting because even though it should be fairly standard, not many people have that working definition of gender-based violence that actually comes from a place of understanding those intersections... And gender-based violence is not just about gender, it’s never just about gender, it’s about systems of power. It’s not about beating somebody up because they’re a woman, it’s about having the ability to assert power over somebody and asserting that power regardless of the consequences because generally when there are points of oppression, they are no consequences... So it is an interlocking system of oppression. That continues to, to see women, especially the most marginalised women, being black Trans women, black disabled Trans women, at the bottom of the food chain ... These interlocking systems of oppression are not there arbitrarily. Because it is about how patriarchy, racism uh ableism or anti-disableism, I should say, more than ableism. Um all of these systems work in conjunction with capitalism because of the need to exploit.”

The theory of intersectionality considers the power attached to social constructs like race, gender, sexual identity etc. in combination with an assessment of how power is used to create a subordinate identity. Social hierarchies stemmed from political motives that placed people into categories and attached different values to them (Crenshaw, 2005). *“It’s about systems of power. It’s not about beating somebody up because they’re a woman, it’s about having the ability to assert power over somebody”* The social constructs placed on an individual forces them to navigate through society in accordance with the power, or the lack of power that they hold. The focus is placed on pervasive social ills such as racism and sexism that enforce social hierarchies (Bent-Goodley, 2009) *“Black disabled Trans women, at the bottom of the food chain”* – describes the most marginalised intersections. Although lesbian and trans women fall under the overarching category of women, their struggles differ. The idea of heteronormativity creates a reluctance to recognise and include the intersecting oppression that affect a person’s reality and assigns a minority status (Dolan, 2014).

Homophobia and transphobia as gender-based violence

Tasniem (legal expert) explained gender-based violence as more than physical violations, her understanding of gender-based violence is as follows:

“Any violence against a person because of their gender, sexual orientation, sexual identity. Um and that’s not just a physical violence which I think is often how gender violence is understood, it could be verbal, it could even be... excluding people on the basis of their identity or sexual orientation, that’s a violence. Um ya so I understand it quite broadly... Um as I say I think we’ve just over time, as a community started understanding gender violence to only be a physical, um a physical thing”

Tasniem (legal expert) touches on the elements of gender-based that can be considered overlooked, i.e. the non-physical aspects. *“As a community started understanding gender violence to only be a physical”* – this can be attributed to the media’s representation of gender-based violence primarily physical violence, rape and murder (Isaacs, 2016). She elaborates on the added violence that the LGBTQIA+ community faces:

“The added violence the queer community faces, is the violence of having to fight to exist, right. So a lot of people are whether it’s subtly or openly homophobic, there’s a lot of homophobia that makes just existing as a queer person a daily potentially fighting for your life thing... There are students who come here who can only be openly gay here and have to go home and go back into the closet... Um and even how they are allowed to be queer on campus maybe be dictated by how they how they feel, you know, if I’m staying at men’s Res can I be an openly gay man? And what does that mean for my safety? If I stay off campus and I am, I dunno, if I’m an individual who, who presents as male but dresses quite femininely, do I run the risk of being attacked walking from my residence off campus, onto campus? Um so I think that the violence’s there are, are also opened in other ways, um that maybe aren’t open to cisgendered people.’

Tasniem (legal expert) provides an important excerpt as it is representative of a frequently ignored part of society. Much of the focus of gender-based violence research relates to (heterosexual) women and (heterosexual) men. However, sexual identity or orientation is an intersection should not be isolated. *“The violence of having to fight to exist”* – expresses living within a patriarchal society that uphold hegemonic discourses that construct gender roles and as a result, consists of intolerant behaviour towards the LGBTQIA+ community. *“Who presents as male but dresses quite femininely, do I run the risk of being attacked”* – demonstrates a concern for aggressive, violent forms of homophobia. In which a person is punished being perceived as defying gender norms. This categorises gender, sexuality and gender-based violence together. Homophobia and transphobia need to be recognised and included within the various definitions and forms of gender-based violence (Dolan, 2014).

Misinterpretation of gender-based violence

While the above definitions attempt to explain the varying and multifaceted nature of gender-based violence, however, not all participants understanding were accurate. Busisiwe (community health worker) provides her understanding below:

“Making another person, uncomfortable by what I’m doing... That’s violating them... So should I think of doing something, that makes another person, uncomfortable based on their gender... If should a male, treat me differently from

another, from a male employee... That, according to me, is gender-based violence. They cannot treat me differently from the male employee. We have to be treated equally”

While there are non-physical aspects to gender-based violence, what Busisiwe seems to describe is differential gender treatment. Differential treatment and gender roles do contribute to the prevalence of gender-based violence (Randa & Mokoena, 2019). However, it cannot be reduced to this definition, as it takes away the seriousness of the issue of gender-based violence. This problematic and inaccurate understanding of gender-based violence that could affect the awareness spread by the community health worker. She takes an individual approach to the problem of gender-based violence. When asked about recommendations to combat gender-based violence she states:

“Well, it starts with each person individually... at the end of the day, a person has their own mind. They decide what they want to do, whether they get to see the message somewhere, or they don’t... And should you be in a situation where you make another person uncomfortable, you need to be open enough to say if I made you uncomfortable in that manner, I’m sorry I didn’t mean to, if we can have that kind of, community or, people, then we can combat gender-based violence. Because its, it starts with you. It starts individually, before it gets to the government, the government can spread as much message as it can, but if we do not want to listen. We spread so many messages, we forever delivering pamphlets, but it’s an individual choice”

Busisiwe (community health worker) places emphasis on individual agency in the perpetrator choice to use violence. Gender-based violence within her perception is not a set of social norms that fuel violent behaviours, rather there is a focus on individual behaviour and choice. This seems to follow an old school of thought that places gender based violence as a personal trouble or a private matter between couples. Yet, there has been overwhelming research that situates gender-based violence as a public issue (Knoblock, 2008). The action of an individual contributes to the collective action of society. The perpetrator of violence cannot be isolated from the context that facilitates a violent society. *“At the end of the day, a person has their own*

mind. They decide what they want to do.” Describes the concept of an individual consciousness that influences attitudes and behaviours. Busisiwe (community health worker) has direct interactions with the community, in a close, personal setting. In this perspective there is the belief that there can be change in an individual situation without the entire system change. It requires a closer look at personal relationship dynamics and the responsibility is placed on individual behaviour. *“We spread so many messages, we forever delivering pamphlets, but it’s an individual choice”* – possible indication of being worn down and frustrated by the ineffectiveness by current gender-based violence intervention at community level. Shifting the responsibility towards the individual and away from a public health perspective. Busisiwe’s day-to-day encounters leads her to believe that not all people have a violent mind-set, as there are members of the community that go against the discourse that promotes the idea that violent conditions produce inherently violent people:

“We need to look at our males. And not just look at them as these people who are so, scary and all that of things. We just need to get through to them, find a way. Because it’s not everyone whose, who has that kind of mentality. Most of our males, are very good people. Most of them are hell bent on protecting the other person, the second person.”

Here, we see agency within the males that Busisiwe describes in contrast to beliefs that depict the masculine identity as violent. In her experience, the men have the potential to protect others, rather than to be the face of violence. *“Most of them are hell bent on protecting the other person, the second person”* – assigns of the role of ‘protector’ to the men reinforcing patriarchal ideals that deems men to be stronger than women, thus configuring women as weak and in need of protection. Within her narrative she has made it clear that not everyone can be labelled as violent, her view moves away from painting all men with the same brush. *“Because it’s not everyone whose, who has that kind of mentality”* – relates to the rhetoric of ‘not all men’ in which depicts men as a group that has been unfairly targeted (PettyJohn et al., 2018). While feminists acknowledge that not all men are perpetrators however, all men have the potential be dangerous and women are predominantly the targets of violence inflicted by men (Jackson et al., 2019). Insistence that it is *“not everyone”* adds an element of protection of the men within her community. It must be noted that she is a representative of the community she works in, which consists underprivileged black people that resides in informal settlements. Her

perception and defence of this population, could be positioned against racist and classiest discourse that tend to stereotype black men as dangerous criminals (Durrheim et al., 2005).

Gender-based violence can happen within any social class

Tasniem (legal expert) expands on the multi-contextual occurrence of gender-based violence:

“Often you will find that the abuser, whether they are the bread winner or not, they exercise a power over the home that means they will not leave. And you are depending on cops to come and enforce a protection order to remove this person. And even if they do, there’s no guarantee that this person won’t come back the next day and just move in.... I don’t think it’s only in the lower income communities where there is that problem ... Part of what allows perpetrators to perpetrate is that they know that people are dependent on them. And so you can create a violent home. Knowing that people have nowhere else to go um whether that is for religious, cultural, economic reasons.”

“Whether they are the bread winner or not” – A clear indication that financial support is not the only factor that contributes to gender-based violence. Abuse can occur within any context and economic dependence may not be the only factor. Rather it is *“power”* that is reiterated in this narrative, together with religious and cultural reasons. Research on female breadwinners that experience abuse in South Africa reflect this assessment. The reasons cited for remaining in abusive marriages move beyond financial independence, such as for the children, love as a social need or their commitment to marriage (Chimeri et al., 2019). The concept of "traumatic bonding" portrays the power imbalances and intermittent good-bad treatment that are prominent features in abusive relationships (Dutton & Painter, 1993). Emotional abuse is significant in understanding why well established women remain in abusive relationships (Kaukinen, 2004). Victims often describe the cycle of abuse in which emotionally manipulative tactics are used to maintain control and prevent them from taking action. Abusive relationships are often described as a mixture of love, good times and hope for change in behaviour, together with intimidation and fear (Collins, 2000).

The manner in which the participants conceptualise gender-based violence is influence by their education and training. Moreover, the different definitions arise from the various sectors of

their work. Significant commonalities include the domination and over-powering of vulnerable persons in society. There are many forms of gender- based violence that exists in the South African context. The participants' definitions reveal the multifaceted and complex elements of gender-based violence.

Chapter 7 - Analysis and discussion

Systemic and Structural Challenges of Gender-Based Violence

Within the various interviews, three main structural challenges have been highlighted: **the court system, the South African police service (SAPS)** and the **lack of shelters**. This chapter will focus the problems faced by victims who choose to take legal action against perpetrators of violence. It will provide insight into underreporting due to distrust in the criminal justice system and the fear of re-traumatization.

Priyanka (journalist) touches on the systems in place within South Africa:

“Our system is definitely failing... And yes you can change policy as much as you like, you can uh, you can put forward all of the research that you like, if those changes are not enforced, if it’s not enacted, I have very little faith in our legal system... It’s not you that needs to change, it’s the system that needs to change. And it’s an absolute gaslight. When people say... You need to do something for your, to fix yourself when it’s the system. You can’t therapy or self-care your way out of the system of oppression... So expecting, individuals, to, one-on-one with their therapist or whatever support system they have, um expecting individuals to deal with structural oppression and institutionalised oppression, it’s a gaslight. Because it’s a problem with community.”

Priyanka’s excerpt highlights the importance of structural change: *expecting individuals to deal with structural oppression and institutionalised oppression, it’s a gaslight* – demonstrates it is not just the victim’s responsibility for change in circumstance. Placing the emphasis on individual agency and disregards the situational, contextual, socio-cultural and historical. There are a variety of challenges that a victim must overcome while taking the steps to get out of an abusive situation or seeking justice. South Africa has many policies in place that are meant to address gender-based violence at different levels however, there is a disjuncture between policy and legal institutions (Wykes & Artz, 2020). The narratives indicate changes “*are not enforced... not enacted*” reflecting poor implementation. Priyanka has expressed the difficulty of navigating through a society with the odds stacked against the victim. There is a systemic

problem that infiltrates various aspects the justice system. Tasniem (legal expert) refers to government failures within the legal system:

“I think at every point there are things that, that don’t work. You know wait, years and it’s known you wait years for criminal matters to proceed. Unless you are one of the lucky ones, and I say that very sarcastically. Who end up in papers and have a country pushing for your murder or your rape to be finalised immediately. If you don’t have that, it’s likely your matter will never be finalised. I know way too many people who started the criminal process, who have just completely given up on it. Because there is no hope for them.”

The court system

Hlengiwe (social auxiliary worker) recalls one of the most haunting experiences while carrying out her work. She was subpoenaed to testify at court, in this case, a minor was sexually abused. The minor had come forward about the sexual abuse when she was 14 years old. She explained that this child’s name would get scratched out of the court register without reason nor explanation. Her case got postponed numerous times; it was after many years later she was allowed to testify. Hlengiwe’s narrative echoed the findings of Van Niekerk and Coetzee (2020) who touch on the lengthy periods of criminal proceedings in child abuse cases. Hlengiwe stated that by the time the victim was permitted to testify she had turned 18 years old and at this age she was an adult. The court did not allow her to provide her testimony in the special court as it is meant for children under the age of 18. As a result, she was required to give her testimony in the same room as her perpetrator, who was her uncle. She was unable to articulate what had happened to her while he was in the same room, so she froze. She was visibly terrified; she cried and was traumatised to the extent that she wet herself. It was not her fault, that she was had to wait so long to testify, in fact none of it was her fault - that she was sexually assaulted and had to go through this process. Hlengiwe was subpoenaed on behalf of this child, she had to explain that this minor was able to talk but she needs to be offered a special court room. Hlengiwe was interrogated by the advocate, but eventually persuaded the court to grant the victim a special court room. However, the court procedure had already caused secondary victimisation to the child. This narrative reinforces Priyanka (journalist) decision for not taking up legal action against her perpetrator:

“Immediately ruling out the court system because the family lawyers said it would be my word against his, and there’s um insufficient evidence. And yeah I was told from multiple people that perusing it legally would just result in more trauma. And I understand that, because the court system does re-traumatise survivors, hectically... So ruling out legal action was almost a blessing in disguise. Because even though I feel now like I didn’t pursue my case, I encourage people to report, I encourage people to seek help in terms of the legal system, um should they feel the need. Um and you want to change the way that the legal system works because if, if something isn’t working for the majority of uh the people who need to access it, you don’t change yourself you change the system.”

Priyanka (journalist) further elaborates on how her decision does impact her personally when dealing with her clients:

“But feeling quite powerless, because I didn’t pursue legal action. And also feeling quite like a hypocrite because I’m encouraging people to um to do things that empower other women but I didn’t do it myself... And it makes me angry every single day that we do not have a system of restorative justice, where we have punitive justice, if justice is ever attained. In that, in that sense of the word. But there’s no form of restoration for, for survivors. And it also keeps survivors in the cycle of victimhood. So every time I read a story it’s all of these feelings, all of these thoughts and I have to focus on the task at hand”

It is evident from the above extract that Priyanka’s personal history of gender-based violence does seep into the work that she carries out. *“There’s no form of restoration for, for survivors”* – possibly indicating that she had to learn how to carry on and survive with the knowledge that her perpetrator got away. It must be noted that she chooses self-preservation to not endure the court process. Had she taken it to the court there would be no guarantee that there would be a different outcome. Although she advocates for victims to come forward: *“I’m encouraging people to um to do things that empower other women”* she also supports their decision not to proceed with legal action.

Tasniem (legal expert) uses a well-known trial to discuss the failures of the court system:

“So let’s use Omotoso’s trial as an example right? The way that Daubermann was asking questions of survivors of rape, of very violent stuff was problematic and he wasn’t called out on it. Right, so asking a survivor how deeply did his penis penetrate? What does that matter? The law doesn’t require a certain depth for penetration to now be considered rape. There was penetration, end of story. Asking, asking survivors were you drunk? What does that matter? ...Were you wearing certain attire? Were you in the wrong part of town? Those questions shouldn’t be permitted in a criminal proceeding... Um because that’s not what’s on trial, it’s not the actions of the survivor. It’s the actions of the perpetrator, um of the defendant and that needs to be questioned. So I think that’s a failure.”

The language used in court places the blame on the victim, and further reinforces the idea that there was something that the victim could have done to prevent the violence from occurring. *“So asking a survivor how deeply did his penis penetrate? What does that matter? The law doesn’t require a certain depth for penetration to now be considered rape.”* – Tasmiem (legal expert) identifies this as an absurd question which has no legal consequence. Rather the inappropriate line of questioning was intended to humiliate and cause distress to the victim. Attorneys are allowed rigorous questioning and cross-examination, however, there should be legal grounds for the questions asked. *“That’s not what’s on trial, it’s not the actions of the survivor. It’s the actions of the perpetrator”* – refers to questioning the motive and behaviour of the victim rather than the defendant. The victim’s choice of clothing and lifestyle becomes the subject of scrutiny. Placing responsibility on the victim to prove that she did not consent rather than on the accused to prove innocence. Rape should be viewed within the same stipulations as other crimes (such as assault and robbery) in which it is understood that it occurred without the victim consenting to it. This will move focus away from the victim’s state of mind and actions at the time of the rape, towards the perpetrator’s (du Toit, 2012). This trial was broadcasted on live television providing the insight of what victims are subjected to in a South African court. This problematic behaviour not only intensifies fears of survivors, but also discourages them from reporting and testifying in cases involving sexual violence.

Patricia (psychologist) touches on the low conviction rate and false accusations that lead innocent people being convicted:

“About a lot of men who are accused of rape, they don’t get convicted, so there’s a little bit of a. How do I say this without? Yeah. So I think there’s a lot of problems in our legal, in our justice system.... A lot of men who should be convicted are not convicted. They get bailed, they go out and they reoffend. And then a lot of men who actually did not even – who are innocent, they, they get convicted for a very long time, like let’s say 15/20 years even. It’s quite severe. Because I’m working with quite a few men who are convicted were convicted of rape just based on the women’s testimony. And then the women had another agenda, which was a personal or financial or. Something else? And. I’m just become aware that it’s quite a big problem because without DNA evidence, without eyewitnesses, all of that, it’s just based on the woman’s testimony. A man can get sentenced for 10/20 years”

A common criticism of cases of sexual assault relates to false allegations. If the premise is accepted as true, it holds very serious consequence for the defendant who is found guilty of a crime that they did not commit. It plays into the discourse of ruining a man’s life or future and vilifying victims that come forward. While false allegations cannot be undermined it should be noted that research indicates that the rate of false rape allegations are no higher than false allegations of any other type of crime. It is difficult to ascertain genuine rates of false allegations, studies in the UK show between 1% and 6% of rape allegations are likely to be false (Lilley et al., 2023). *“I’m just become aware that it’s quite a big problem because without DNA evidence, without eyewitnesses, all of that, it’s just based on the woman’s testimony. A man can get sentenced for 10/20 years.”* The backlog in DNA analysis has negatively impacted the efficiency of the justice system. This backlog has caused the sexual offences courts to experience delays in proceeding and securing convictions (Bana, 2022). It effects not only the plaintiff but also the defendant in receiving a fair trial. Contrary to Patricia (psychologist) statement of convictions based the women’s testimony Ashmika (psychologist) states that a lack of evidence stops victims from coming forward:

“You know where there is that worry, how will they prove it? And I think that does affect whether they report or not because especially if, if they didn’t do a rape kit, if they didn’t come straight after it. So then yes, the concern there for not reporting is that they don’t want to go through the whole process because there’s no evidence and then it’s, it’s re-traumatizing.”

Ashmika (psychologist) explains that victims are afraid that they will not be believed. Often abuse happens behind closed doors and there is no witness to the abuse. It merely becomes a case of his word against hers or vice versa. Without concrete evidence the victims do not believe that it would result in a conviction. Patricia (psychologist) does concur: *“A lot of men who should be convicted are not convicted.”* Supporting Ashmika’s clients that hold the belief that they would be subjected to a traumatising process without a possibility of conviction. Nonetheless, Patricia believes that some of her clients have been wrongfully convicted without evidence, indicating a problem with relying on testimony alone. There is an underlying acceptance that there needs to be evidence of physical injury for non-consensual sex to be considered as rape. This is referred to as the ‘real rape’ stereotype (Rees, 2010). Tasniem (legal expert) explains that over time, as a community the understanding of gender-based violence related to physical harm, she states:

“An example is rape right? A lot of people say there aren’t scars, there isn’t tearing you weren’t raped. Most rapes, rapes won’t have physical evidence in that way. Um because often it doesn’t happen in very violent ways like that. But our law still recognises that as rape. Um how it’s prosecuted and the failures of that is a different story. But laws recognise that to be a violence.”

Forensic medical studies support Tasniem’s statement revealing injuries to be rare in rape cases. Even if there are injuries present, the medical examiner will not be able to prove or disprove consent. As a result forensic medical examiners generally produce neutral reports that neither confirm nor deny the complainant’s allegation (Rees, 2010) leaving it up to the judicial system to determine. If the prosecutor uses the stereotypical concept of a ‘real rape’ consent is based on the presence of obvious injuries. However, Tasniem (legal expert) states in the above excerpt that South African law understands rape to be dependent on consent rather than injury. Framing consent as the determining factor for rape, hence any form of non-consensual sex is

rape. *“How it’s prosecuted and the failures of that is a different story”* – relates to the way in which victims are put on trial to prove that they did not consent. The issue with consent being the determining factor is that it positions rape as an act of a sexual nature rather than an act of violence. If rape is perceived as an act of violence, then consent has no role to play. Literature acknowledges that rape is not about sex, but it is about power (Murnen et al., 2002). Therefore rape is not driven by sexual desire rather it is intended as violence (du Toit, 2012). Patricia (psychologist) further states:

“The woman who falsely accused men are actually making it much harder for women to report actual instances of rape because they, they are contributing to this general conception that that women are using this to their advantage, which some of them are. But the majority, you know, they actually really need help and they need this man to be convicted and, and brought to justice.”

“This general conception that that women are using this to their advantage” – refers to societal norms that contribute to the mistrust of women who come forward about sexual assault. Priyanka (journalist) talks about the media and public opinion regarding women who accuse well-known men of rape. She touches on treatment of Khwezi, the woman who took ex-president Jacob Zuma to court for rape:

“People like her, who took it to the courts, were demonised. Like... Uh we were having this discussion with my class, the other day, every single person that they can think of who has been accused of any sort of sexual violence, their accusers are demonised.”

Priyanka (journalist) raises an important point about public perception of women who come forward and the portrayal of victims in the media. The scrutiny and interrogation of victim’s behaviour continues outside of the court room through news coverage and social media. The speculation of the victim’s intentions can prolong victimization and lead to negative consequences. The portrayal of domestic violence and sexual assault victims within the court system plays a huge role discouraging legal action.

South African Police Service

It is common knowledge that the SAPS should be one of the first point of contact after a crime has been committed. Ideally, civil services such as the police should be spaces for people to come forward and get assistance. Thandeka (community health worker) explains the typical process that occurs within her district when a person has experienced sexual violence:

“That’s what they call it at the police station in crisis centre when the person is being raped. Umm I think for now what is happening there is that when the person is sexually violated, they go to the police station and then comes the police. The police will take the person to the health care centre... We haven't had that incident that a victim has come to the clinic after being sexually abused.”

To her knowledge, Thandeka (community health worker) explains that victims first go the police station before they are brought to healthcare centre. Priyanka (journalist) offers a counter-narrative:

“Like cops do nothing, if anything the cops re-traumatise survivors... It’s an M.O [modus operandi] of many very lazy cops um to say you need to get a rape kit done before you file a report. Or for hospital staff to say you have to file a report before you get a rape kit done. Sending survivors from pillar to post.”

From the above two excerpts there appears to be opposing narratives regarding the procedure in which sexual assault cases are handled. Thandeka (community health worker) describes a working relationship with the SAPS in her area, as they are known to bring victims of sexual assault to the clinic. Priyanka (journalist) expresses a predicament in which survivors of sexual assault are unsure of where to go after being violated. In her experience, rape victims are told to go to healthcare facilities without police officers escorting them: *“sending survivors from pillar to post.”* Priyanka’s perspective is representative of a generalised experience in which survivors get turned away by both the SAPS and healthcare practitioners. Not knowing where to go to receive help is an added trauma that survivors face. Priyanka (journalist) holds a negative perception of the SAPS: *“cops do nothing, if anything the cops re-traumatise survivors.”* However, this is not without merit as the following narratives also touch on secondary victimisation at the hands of SAPS. Research shows that persistent incidents of

brutality, criminal behaviour and abuse of authority has led to a decline in trust and confidence in the SAPS (Burger, 2011). Public distrust of the SAPS is reflected in the under-reporting of cases to the police (Jewkes et al., 2012; Meyiwa et al., 2017). Tasniem (legal expert) provides her thoughts on reporting accounts of gender-based at the police station:

“Reporting in itself is a nightmare. Students never want to go to the cops after coming to see us. Those who do often drop their cases. Um you know, you will go to the police station to report, you supposed to be taken into a room separately, it’s a private matter. Sometimes the conversation is happening out in the open where some guy is coming to report his cellophane stolen or get an affidavit and you’re describing a rape that just occurred. That is very traumatic for someone. And often puts people off when they realise oh I’m going to have to retell my story in front of everyone. Having only male policemen on duty who can take that statement is a failure.”

“Students never want to go to the cops after coming to see us.” – Another example in the lack of trust in the SAPS. Tasniem (legal expert) has described the uncomfortable nature of going to the police station to disclose incidents of abuse. She states: *“you supposed to be taken into a room separately, it’s a private matter.”* Referring to the victim’s right to report any violation within a surrounding that offers reassurance. This is supported by Thandeka (community health worker) who mentioned a ‘crisis centre’ at the police station, earlier on in this chapter. From the student’s experience that Tasniem describes: *“Sometimes the conversation is happening out in the open”* it is evident that not all police stations make use of separate rooms for sexual assault victims. Tasniem (legal expert) goes on to explain the trivialisation of victims experience and refusal to implement protection orders:

“And our cops have to take more seriously people who say they’re at risk. Um. You know a few years ago there was that matter of a a women who had gone to the cops to say this man is going to kill me. He has guns in the home, I want him out, I have a protection order. And the cops told her he’ll cool down, like, give it by morning things will be fine. He shot her literally outside a hospital. Point blank shot her. The only reason she survived is cause she was shot outside a hospital. And there’s just no accountability for

that. No one was dismissed from the police station for not taking her seriously, for not enforcing her protection order. Um and so even I, I heard it when you say to people to get a protection order, it's like why? So like my body must be found with a protection order that was never enforced. Like what does it prove? And I agree with that. I think that we can't, ya, we can't say that people should report and do the things to protect themselves when there is no follow through from those who actually make the difference, so protection orders should mean something. It should mean something that I have gone to a court and said this person is dangerous and should not be in my home. But when you have, very lackadaisical, couldn't care cops needing to enforce that. Telling you people will calm down"

Within literature reviewed for this study that effectiveness of protection orders revealed mixed results across existing studies. Furthermore, there has been variation between victim data (i.e., surveys/interviews with women who obtained the protection order) and archival data such as police reports and court documentation, the latter proving it to be effective (Cordier et al., 2021). Victim data cannot be downplayed as once again we see the severe consequence of a protection order that was not enforced: *And the cops told her he'll cool down, like, give it by morning things will be fine. He shot her literally outside a hospital. Point blank shot her".* The protection order should be evidence that this person is dangerous however, there was a lack of response and protection. There were no grounds to believe that this person will 'cool down' or act in a rationale manner. Yet, this is the reality that victims find themselves in, even though they have gone through the court process, they still have to convince the police to do something. *"Very lackadaisical, couldn't care cops needing to enforce that."* - This points to the attitude that arises when there is no consequence for the failure to act. Police officers exercise discretionary powers about when to act. Corruption is sustained in this context when there is no accountability (Newham & Faull, 2011). The attitude and treatment of victims by SAPS is a major problem that contributes to the continuation of violence. Patricia (psychologist) relates a similar experience with a police officer using his own discretion to conclude that victim cannot open a rape case against her husband:

"In my personal experience, what I've found is that the service providers on the other side like working at clinics and especially at police stations where the women would have to retell the story and they are not trained to handle this

with care. So, so I mean this one lady that I've that I've been working with she got raped by her, her husband and quite severely assaulted and she initially didn't want to report it, but I, I just encouraged her and eventually she went and she said that the first thing that the, the officer who interviewed her said that, he said, well, it's impossible that he raped you because he's your husband. He's my husband. And. He's allowed to do it even. Basically, he's allowed to do whatever he wants to you... And hence you belong to him. So that's the kind of general mind-set of a lot of the service providers even especially when it's when it's when they come from that similar kind of masculine culture where that's marriage and women in general”

“It's impossible that he raped you because he's your husband. – Demonstrates that the police officer does not consider rape in this context as morally reprehensible nor, does he acknowledge that rape can occur between marital partners. The differential treatment of rape victims based on the context protects perpetrators that are known to the victim. The initial agreement to be in a marriage or relationship is taken for granted that the woman consents to intercourse whenever the man feels like having sex (Mphaphuli & Smuts, 2020). Displaying a patriarchal belief that men have a right to sexual intercourse within marital relationships and women do not have any control over sexual interactions (Graaff & Heinecken, 2017b). Configuring the man in a dominate role within a sexual relationship while expecting women to play a subservient role (Lilley et al., 2023). This exempts rape and sexual assault in a martial context by justifying and excusing the behaviour of the husband. Individuals that endorse the belief that as a wife *“you belong to him”* places an expectation on a married women to endure sexual violations. When overt or violent rapes are not believed and difficult to report, it is even less likely that coercion, another form of sexual assault, would be taken seriously. Coercion generally occurs among intimate partners but remains underreported (Farvid & Saing, 2022.). In most instances of sexual violence, the perpetrator is known to the victim (Dartnall & Jewkes, 2013). Therefore, having a police officer not believe a victim because the nature of their relationship is concerning. The officer’s attitude could be further interpreted as holding the ideology that real rapes are dependent on specific factors. The ‘real rape’ construct involves an unknown perpetrator or a stranger using or threatening to use force on an unsuspecting woman in the dead of night. Within this construct victims need to appear as highly traumatized and should therefore report it immediately to the police (Rees, 2010). Holding this ‘real’ rape construct causes doubt on the victim’s credibility when the rape has occurred in any other

context (Brooks & Burman, 2017). *“She initially didn't want to report it but I, I just encouraged her”* – relates to overcoming fear and the courage it takes to speak out. This statement debunks the idea that victims want to go straight to the police report a rape.

Hlengiwe (social auxiliary worker) provided her personal experience as a survivor of physical abuse, as an example of police officers abusing their official power for personal gain. Her perpetrator was her ex-husband, also a police officer. Hlengiwe explained that he beat her up and then proceeded to call the police to arrest her. The violence she experienced can be viewed within the category of intimate partner violence and structural violence. Not only did her ex-husband use physical violence but also, he used his position as a police officer to exert his power over her. Her arrest was based on an accusation of fraud because she had used his medical aid. However, as his spouse at the time and was allowed the benefits of medical aid but still they arrested her. Moreover, the police officers did not care that he beat her up or that she had opened a case of domestic violence against him. She could not get him arrested, his status of police officer made him untouchable and allowed him to perpetrate violence against her without consequence. This demonstrates the culture within the SAPS, to take care and protect their own. This can be regarded as an intense loyalty towards their fellow officers, whom they consider as part of their group, regardless of their behaviour (Newham & Faull, 2011). Instead, the police provided mediation as a solution for the violence she experienced. The power that a police officer holds makes them untouchable, above the law – because they are the ones to enforce the law.

Lack of shelters

“Another government failure. There aren't nearly enough shelters to move people to... We saw it in the height of COVID Um I've, I was recently told that there is one queer shelter in Joburg with about a 6 month waiting list. You know these are things that government should be putting money into, it's safe spaces for people so the they don't have to live with their abuser”

Tasniem (legal expert) states above that the lack of shelters should be included as a structural challenge. The COVID-19 pandemic brought to light the severity of gender-based violence in South Africa. Coined as “twin pandemic” gender-based violence and femicide rates escalated during this period revealing government facilities to be desperately ill-equipped (Dlamini,

2021). To counteract government failures many gender-based violence prevention work is carried out by non-governmental organisations which are heavily underfunded (Roy et al., 2022). To make matters worse, due to underfunding many shelters and non-government organisations have been forced to close its doors. When funds run out or when the shelters reach capacity, they are forced to turn away those that are in need of a safe space (Parry & Gordon, 2021). *“There is one queer shelter in Joburg with about a 6 month waiting list”* – touches on need for more shelters that are inclusive for different types of people. Hlengiwe (social auxiliary worker) provides the names of some resources for that support female victims of gender-based violence. These include: POWA and Ikhaya Lethemba, which has residential/shelter services that accommodates women, girls and young boys. She stipulates that there is an age limit for boys within these shelters. This makes finding a safe space for a mother and a teenage son a challenge. Hlengiwe (social auxiliary worker) explained that at a children’s shelter there are usually different dormitories for girls and boys.

It is evident from the above narratives that the criminal process in South Africa requires a great deal of resilience on behalf of the survivor. It is a long-drawn-out process with obstacles at each step of the process. At times, when survivors do report instances of gender-based violence, there is no real recourse or action due to the callous attitude of service providers. For a person that has been victimised fear and reluctance to report abuse is rational response as there is a high possibility of re-traumatization during the criminal procedure. The narratives describe a systemic problem that undermines the survivors of gender-based violence. The survivor has to overcome the various structural challenges with no guarantee that justice will be served. Supporting the concept that interpersonal behaviour cannot always result in a change in circumstance. On-the-ground operations do not align with legislation and policies implemented by the government to address gender-based violence. The government is failing to provide sufficient support to victims of gender-based violence and are complacent contributors of the high levels of gender-based violence in South Africa.

Chapter 8

Social aspects that impact gender-based violence

The social aspects that make up a society are multifaceted and have an influence over the way in which people think and conduct themselves. This chapter will purposely touch on the social aspects mentioned in various narratives that are perceived to have a significant relationship with the prevalence of gender-based violence in South Africa. South Africa's apartheid system is the reason for existing social conditions which consists of impoverished and under resourced communities (Mudiriza & Edwards, 2021). Furthermore, South Africa's violent history generated a culture of toxic masculinities that formed a patriarchal society (Dharani et al., 2021). This influenced current socialisation and the maintenance of gender roles that limit ways of being in society in accordance to dominant discourses. Through the process of socialisation a person learns 'rules' or rather, social norms that govern attitudes, beliefs and practices (Legros & Cislighi, 2019). Thus makes navigating through a patriarchal society difficult for those who are oppressed and do not conform to these social norms. Another major concern is the lack of societal support for victims that have been violated. Participants provide recommendations to societal change and discuss their current interventions. As discussed in earlier chapters gender-based violence is a systemic issue that infiltrates every part of society. Civil servants that display problematic social norms uphold systemic and structural violence. This chapter will engage with the systemic issues but in terms of their social dimensions.

The systemic cycle of violence

Patricia (psychologist) talks about systemic, generational disempowerment that increases with a lack of economic opportunity:

“And the other component would be a general sense of disempowerment. And stemming from all the way back from our roots in in apartheid, you know, where men were very severely disempowered. And then there's this, there's generational thing going on, where with each generation, not just is there the cycle of trauma, but there's also the cycle of disempowerment, mostly obviously connected to socioeconomic status and opportunities. And yeah, discrimination and all of that. So there's definitely a big theme surrounding disempowerment with these men. And you know, because their perception is that they have to be the breadwinners, they need to provide for

their families. So if they are unable to do that, especially now that there's such a huge rate of unemployment and all of that, you know that they would feel the only way to gain a sense of power or control over their lives is to overpower another more vulnerable person, which is women, usually a woman or a child, to gain that sense of empowerment"

Patricia (psychologist) unpacks the socio-cultural and historical context of South Africa. *"And stemming from all the way back from our roots in in apartheid, you know, where men were very severely disempowered."* This accounts for South Africa's historic system of inequality and discrimination against black men, that maintains to the perpetual cycles of violence against women (Meyiwa et al., 2017). Cultural standards of masculinity, such as the *"perception is that they have to be the breadwinners, they need to provide for their families"* are unattainable by those men who have been marginalized and cannot find employment. Boonzaier (2008) uses the term 'emasculatation' to describe this feeling of powerlessness. And in an attempt to reassert the masculine identity, women become the target of violence: *"overpower another more vulnerable person, which is women, usually a woman or a child, to gain that sense of empowerment."* However it can be argued that this way of thinking is the basis for circumstances that tolerates and excuses the violation of black women (Meyiwa et al., 2017). Black women have also experienced disempowerment under the apartheid regime, and are further marginalised by the patriarchy. Dominant white ideologies that continue to prevail tend to disregard the structural violence against the disadvantaged population, As a result, black lives, in particular the lives of poor black women, are treated as insignificant (Helman, 2018). The present and historical legacies of violence in South Africa has implicitly accepted precarity as a norm for the oppressed sectors of society. It continues to produce barriers that make it extremely difficult for victims to leave violent contexts. Priyanka (journalist) has described the kinds of questions that need to be asked to adequately assist a victim of gender-based violence:

"Do you need therapy? Or do you need legal help? Or do you need a support structure? Do you need somebody to speak to your family and explain that this is why that abuser that is living under your roof is dangerous for your child? You know? A lot of the time it's taking not just um our systems into consideration, it's take demographics into consideration, it's taking all intersecting forms of oppression and

privilege into consideration, what do you have access to? Do you have to private healthcare? Do you only have access to public healthcare? Um do you have language requirements? Something as simple as like do you need somebody who speaks your language primarily? Um do you prefer a therapist who is of a certain gender? Who is LGBT friendly? Who is trans supportive? Um you know all of those kinds of things that people generally don't think about"

The way the South African society is constructed is exceptionally unequal. The socioeconomic factors inhibit changes to be made in violent circumstances and this is the reality for many women. A combination of the lack of financial resources and low accessibility of services in low-income settings contribute to remaining in violent situations (Machisa et al., 2018). Priyanka (journalist) places emphasis on intersection and recognises that intervention must be tailored to the needs of the individual due to limited available resources and their capacity to access these resources. The more layers of oppression, the harder it is to find an appropriate intervention that would lead to a permanent solution. At a micro level it is important to clarify what a victim requires within their specific context. A contextual understanding acknowledges that victims cannot afford to leave their partner or take up legal action. Majority of South Africans live in precarious circumstances resulting in people relying on day-to-day wages. Seeing as income is uncertain an unforeseen expenditure (such as going to court) can cause irreversible damage to their livelihood (Standing, 2016). Therefore, many people simply cannot afford to take days off to go court and pursue legal action. Intervention will depend on what the client can do in their context which may require innovative thinking. Poverty has created a context in which vulnerable people are forced to endure violent conditions. Hlengiwe (social auxiliary worker) has encountered young girls that have been taken advantage of by older men known as "blessers". These blessers coerce young girls into performing sexual acts in exchange for financial favours. The prevalence of gender-based violence within rural and rural and lower-economic areas has been linked to a lack of information about abuse and financial challenges (Randa & Mokoena, 2019). Thandeka (community health worker) explains how she reacts when she comes across a victim of abuse within the community:

"If I see that the person that is being umm, is being abused in any sort of form, of way um I try my very best too um give a person, like to say like 'oh we have a function at this place um would you mind come and join the

food and drinks?’ So like there’s an, an – OK, a drop-in centre there and they [POWA] used to have a workshop there... I would invite the person there to go and attend the session so that she can also have her own decision. She can take her own decision rather than me pointing to her that you are emotionally being abused, but I made sure that the person attends the session and then they get to understand the difference between emotional, verbal, sexual and physical abuse that they are going through”

Thandeka (community health worker) understands that people have agency and she ensures that her clients have the knowledge to make an informed decision of how to proceed. She is diplomatic in her approach, she does it in a manner that does not offend the client by building a rapport before intervening. She is aware that a victim has to come to terms with the fact that they are being abused: *“rather than me pointing to her that you are emotionally being abused”* – possibly referring to the stigma attached to be labelled as ‘an abused woman.’ Within society, there is a level of judgement when a woman is a victim of abuse as well as an internalised stigma that causes a victim to blame themselves (Kennedy & Prock, 2018). As a result, many emotions arise when coming to terms with one’s own abuse. Thandeka inserts her own agency in the intervention used by referring her clients to POWA. She further states:

“So we did have the course is just like a mini, umm a mini course just for you to understand umm violence, you know? And then how to identify and how to see if a person is seeking for help. And not to be more involved with a client... But the training was not umm much more intense about how to counsel and how to console a client. So basically what we know is that we have to refer... They have to give us more education on, especially on the things that are, are really happening in the health sector. They need to give us more information because we are the first contact of, of the people we meet the people in their houses. So like the more training they give us as community healthcare workers, I think the better the health system would be”

From the above excerpts Thandeka (community health worker) provides evidence of the usefulness of gender-based violence awareness and training at community level. Not only does she use her basic training to help individuals from her community, but she also advocates for further education to better assist her community. The people from lower economic communities have been historically disadvantaged and rely on services of non-government organisations and community health workers for their wellbeing. The work carried out by Hlengiwe (social auxiliary worker) assists in providing awareness at community level. In particular, she mentioned an intervention that transpired in Yeoville, following the exposure of abuse in the community. This initiative was planned and carried out by those that work with gender-based violence, involving various stakeholders: the Teddy Bear Foundation, the police and child welfare. The Teddy Bear Clinic informed the community of the signs of abuse and the services that they provide to ensure that people know where to go to get help. Similar, to the kind of training Thandeka (community health worker) received from POWA. *“The training was not... about how to counsel and how to console a client”* – this provides reasoning for the steps Thandeka took to get her client the help that she needed. However, as a community health worker, Thandeka should be entitled to receive comprehensive training in order to be equipped to handle situations that may require counselling skills. Emphasised by: *“They need to give us more information because we are the first contact of, of the people we meet the people in their houses.”* Her work involves reaching out to people that can be considered as the ignored and forgotten part of society. The legacy of apartheid and the unequal distribution of wealth skewed in favour of the white minority, has left predominately black areas without basic infrastructure (Mudiriza & Edwards, 2021). As a result limited social infrastructure, such as resources like therapy and education impairs the quality of life (Azolibe & Okonkwo, 2020). Thandeka’s role aims to provide access to people living on the outskirts of a resourced society. As she explained that it is important to be properly trained to adequately help people, this is further reiterated by Priyanka (journalist):

“In a township close to where I worked in, um, I did volunteer work, years and years ago. And there was a child who was raped and instead of taking her directly to the hospital to check for internal injuries, they took her to the police station first. And knowing that a child is more susceptible to internal injuries during rape than an adult, could have save that child’s life because she died of internal bleeding...And when we say that

knowledge is power, it is so undervalued, because there's a reason that the Taliban doesn't want girls to be educated. There's a reason that marginalised people are kept from quality education because education empowers"

Priyanka (journalist) emphasises the dangers of not knowing how to respond in emergency. Her narrative supports Thandeka (community health worker) statement: *"they have to give us more education on, especially on the things that are, are really happening in the health sector."* Priyanka (journalist) describes the withholding of information as a tool to keep people subordinate. The racist systems of apartheid are preserved in the existence of townships and the disempowerment that continues to impact low-economic communities. Despite the democratic government, society remains divided by means of race and socioeconomic status (Pillay, 2020).

Socialisation and gender roles

Patricia (psychologist) provided her experience of working with the perpetrators of violence:

"More and more I'm recognizing that there's this perpetual cycle of trauma that is that I'm seeing. So most of these men grew up in households where their fathers were or stepfathers, were abusive towards their mothers and to them and. And if not in an abusive household, then in an abusive community or peer context. So most of these men have suffered quite severe early trauma and I think because of the current culture of masculinity where boys are taught that, you know, men don't cry or they're not allowed to show their emotions. Most men don't really get to work through the trauma that they experience as children and thus they either then try and escape it. Numb it through substance abuse, which is often the case. And then as soon as those ego defences go down and there's a situation, then they would externalize the internal trauma by inflicting trauma on someone else. So that's the one major cause, underlying cause that I would say that I've experienced with the men that I'm working with"

The term “emotional dysregulation” can be used to describe the inability to manage emotional responses and control of behaviour under different circumstances. It is also perceived as a contributing factor to abuse as it increases the risk of an individual becoming a perpetrator of violence (Dugal, et al. 2018). *“Most men don't really get to work through the trauma that they experience as children and thus they either then try and escape it.”* Prior exposure to forms of abuse is significant in the continuation of the cycle of violence (Heise et al, 2019). As people who have experienced abuse, without seeking help, do not develop the ability to adequately manage emotional responses (Dugal, et al. 2018). As a result, there is a transmission of violence from one generation to the next (Haselschwerdt et al., 2019). *“Numb it through substance abuse, which is often the case. And then as soon as those ego defences go down and there's a situation, then they would externalize the internal trauma by inflicting trauma on someone else.”* – Accounts for the high levels of drug and alcohol consumption in South Africa and its contributions to gender-based violence. Patricia (psychologist) explains it as an unhealthy coping mechanism to escape the trauma experienced by the individual. The individual attempts to minimize their aversive emotional experiences but increases the potential to cause harm to vulnerable people in close proximity to them. Situational characteristics like heavy alcohol consumption to escape one's own demons may attempt to rationalise violent behaviours. However, it is this behaviour that perpetuates the cycle of violence by creating traumatic experiences for others. Furthermore, substance abuse has become normalised in the South African context, especially among young people that endure social and economic marginalisation. Substance abuse and intimate-partner violence are indicators of an underlying need for power and control regarding inequalities and insecurities (Masiko & Xinwa, 2017).

“The current culture of masculinity where boys are taught that, you know, men don't cry or they're not allowed to show their emotions.” – speaks to the socialisation of young boys into hegemonic masculine roles. To contextualise, dominant forms of masculinity developed in the fight against the violence inflicted by the apartheid state. The racialised and oppressive violence experienced at the time induced heroic displays of toughness, fearless defence of honour, physical domination, risk-taking and male camaraderie. As a result hegemonic masculinities placed value on characteristics such as physical strength, showing no emotion and an acceptance of hierarchical authority. (Bantjes et al., 2017). This ideology of masculinity still exists today and is passed down to young boys who are taught to be a dominant ‘macho’ version of themselves. This endorses and perpetuates narrow and oppositional understandings of masculinity and femininity. Hegemonic constructions of masculinity denigrate any concepts

considered as feminine, such as showing emotion and promotes the ideas that masculinity equates to displays of aggression, physical domination and violence (Keddie, 2006). The endorsement of a “macho personality” is evident within societies that have a high level of interpersonal violence and rape statistics (Murnen et al., 2002). Patricia (psychologist) adds on to the issue of gender inequality:

“This patriarchal culture that we need to look at, the gender inequality. Where women are often taught that men, they have to be the, the head of the house, you know. So in that way, women are supposed to be subordinate to them to, to respect them. And if they don't, then that's kind of their right to discipline them... And connected to that, I would say, is just the way that men are socialized, boys are socialized, you know, often without healthy fathers. Without healthy role models in their lives. And it's just a natural. It's a natural need for men to be guided and initiated into manhood. And if they're not, if they don't experience that at home with a, a healthy father figure, then they go out seeking that in, in, in gangs, you know, that's also the situation and that becomes their role models.”

“Boys are socialized, you know, often without healthy fathers. Without healthy role models in their lives.” – Touches on the high level of absent fathers moreover, the lack of good male role models in South Africa. Like the earlier discussion that focused on growing up within an abusive context, the lack of a healthy role model to emulate, can negatively impact the well-being of a young child. An absent parent is a significant loss in a child’s upbringing that places the responsibility of raising a well-rounded child on the remaining parent. The concept of a nuclear family is not an appropriate fit for the South African society as there are diverse and multicultural ways of raising of child (McEwen, 2017). It is a given that extended families and the community play significant role in the child’s upbringing. Whereas in westernised cultures the exposure to men was limited to the immediate family (Dharani et al., 2021). Therefore, the role of a father figure can be taken on by the men within the child’s community. *“It's a natural need for men to be guided and initiated into manhood.”* – relates to a belief that young boys require and look out for a masculine figure in their lives. This accounts for young boys being susceptible to peer influence and adopting the values of the men from the surrounding environment. The struggle of teaching a young boy what it means to be a decent man without

an example to follow is not dependent on the presence of a father. Rather, it is based on the values attached to masculinity in society that is the issue.

Gender inequality can be identified not just in the assignment of gender roles, but also how these roles privilege men. *“Where women are often taught that men, they have to be the, the head of the house, you know. So in that way, women are supposed to be subordinate to them to, to respect them.”* - Demonstrates a patriarchal society that uphold hegemonic discourses which has a ripple effect that starts with the home but impacts larger society. The socialisation of men and women to fit into categories based on their gender, positions women into a care giver role that services the needs of a household. The feminist economic thinker initiated the concept of care economy, which is a key role in society that is left unpaid throughout history. This is including household chores, historically deemed a ‘women role’ without compensation (Tamele, 2020). Revealing the dismissal of care work in the private sphere to be recognised as work. It also shows the institutionalised culture that devalue traits historically considered as feminine. Whereas masculine roles have an expectation of cultural dominance that places the responsibility of earning an income on men (Dharani et al., 2021). The construction gender roles within relationships such as women as mothers or care givers and men as hyper-masculine and dominant providers threatens the existence of women who do not conform to these roles (Gouws, 2016). *“And if they don't, then that's kind of their right to discipline them”* – this is evidence of a patriarchal ideology that excuses abuse when women do not act within their expected gendered role. Reinforcing the power and control that men hold over women in a patriarchal society. Cultural and social norms that accept violent masculine roles implicitly allow and normalise abuse (Randa & Mokoena, 2019).

Ashmika (psychologist) touches on the way mothers uphold hegemonic and patriarchal discourses:

“So I think part of the intervention needs to be awareness raising for men. What does it mean to be a man? What is it, you know like being a man says you respect a woman's right to say no. And you don't abuse the woman. But I also think that another level of intervention has to come at mothers. Because Mother's raised men to be like this. And so if you don't prioritise your son as the only thing, if you've got children, they all need to be prioritised. Not because, you know, this whole system of patriarchy is

reinforced by mothers. That's my belief, because mothers don't stop that idea of men being the be all and end all of life... Because the other thing is women are brought up more independently now and we allow we -not allowed to- look at me even where that word comes out first. But we meant to have our own lives. We working, you can't come home and still, you know. So, so a lot of young women now don't have that expectation. They rather have the expectation that they will come home and they will work equally with their partners. And if their partners don't come with that idea then that's, that's kind of like an initiation or a possibility for abuse to set in because if they're going to say no and the partner expects it, you know there's the, the starting to that kind of possibility.”

Ashmika (psychologist) also touches on the empowerment of women: “*women are brought up more independently now.*” The ideologies that women from this generation hold transpired from the transformational journey of women’s rights through history (Kumar, 2017). Scholars suggest the term “consciousness-raising” to describe the learning and building of skills that give women more control over their lives (Lamb et al., 2017). The problem arises when men do not support this ideology but rather hold onto patriarchal beliefs. The concept of women being solely responsible for household duties is outdated yet, it still continues to be a social norm. (Gouws, 2016). Instead of being liberated from unpaid household chores, women to go to work but are still expected take care of the household. Ashmika (psychologist) uses a social approach that addresses the way boys are socialised. She accuses women of contributing to the maintenance of patriarchal beliefs: “*this whole system of patriarchy is reinforced by mothers*” – who raise their sons differently from their daughters. The societal expectation of a married woman is further reinforced by in-laws and family members (Moloko-Phiri et al., 2016; Mphaphuli & Smuts, 2020). As a result, the consciously aware women are challenged rather than supported in striving to achieve gender equality. Being surrounded by attitudes and beliefs that encourage gender-based violence through the home environment and in the community, makes it difficult to fight against and leave this violence (Fakunmoju & Rasool, 2018). The prevalence of societal attitudes that maintain traditional gender roles and rationalize male dominance has a negative impact on the women’s willingness to disclose violent experiences (Machisa et al., 2018). Fostering a culture that uses control through silence and shaming of women (Treffry-Goatley et al., 2018). As adults, parents/care givers teach children what

behaviour to accept, tolerate and emulate. Added to this point Tasniem (legal expert) recommends teaching young children about consent and setting boundaries:

“I think this has to be a part of curriculum building from primary school age. It has to be, we constantly telling people how to treat each other, how to respect each other boundaries. Um I don’t know, I don’t know if parents talk about consent with their kids, and not just consent in a sexual way, consent about if you know, if a five year old does not want to hug an aunt, that’s okay. Don’t force the issue, it’s their body allow them the autonomy to say no I don’t want to be touched... You know, it sounds very silly and as though you’re making your kids worry about the world all the time - but you’re playing and anyone says no, stop. The games now no longer fun for everyone. So you have to stop... It has to start from a younger age where we telling kids your body is your body and what happens to it you say what happens to it... Who touches them, how they touch them, who sees their body, how do we play ... They have to understand that there are allowed to speak up when they no longer comfortable. That they are allowed to have boundaries. Even with family members who sadly are the ones who end up, you know, violating kids. But because we tell kids you have to hug that uncle or that aunt. They think they’re not allowed to be in control of their bodies. Um so I think it has to be a societal change from a young age”

“We constantly telling people how to treat each other, how to respect each other boundaries” – refers to Tasniem’s current role at the university in which her department runs a gender sensitivity programme, focused on gender equity and behaviour change. However, she firmly believes that attitude and behaviour change should begin at a much younger age. The focus on the above excerpt is on bodily autonomy: *“they have to understand that there are allowed to speak up when they no longer comfortable. That they are allowed to have boundaries.”* – This is important because many children get groomed into believing that they have no say in what happens to their own bodies. Children need to be provided with information that enables them to protect themselves from potential dangers and disclose violations (Collings et al., 2005). In contrast to the risk avoidance approaches that are only targeted at young women to stand up for themselves, thereby disregarding the power dynamics and contexts that take away agency

(Burkett & Hamilton, 2012), Tasniem (legal expert) does not place a responsibility on a specific gender, rather it is inclusive that everyone has a right to say no and the power to stop violating another person. Consent is learnt both ways – to understand that you have the right to say no and to respect another person's right to say no. *"You're playing and anyone says no, stop. The games now no longer fun for everyone. So you have to stop."* – A representation of respecting boundaries and discontinuing behaviour that is not being enjoyed by all parties. Tasniem (legal expert) also talks about attitude and behaviour change that is required within a victim blaming society. Her perspective is about challenging hegemonic masculinity and holding individuals accountable for their actions:

"So I think it starts with the small things right, so holding people accountable for the smaller offenses because I think and understandably I know why people, are, why rape has become the face of gender violence in this country. I fully understand why. But the catcalling, the allowing little boys to pull the hair of little girls and not calling them out for that. The teasing boys for playing with dolls and calling them gay as though that's like the worst thing in the world. It starts with calling out that behaviour cause if we can call out that behaviour and not ask little girls to oh you know he likes you that's why he pulled your hair. Or asking somehow at that young age, asking victims of different forms of violence, we're saying hey, just accept it, it's just a part of growing up, it's how little boys are, oh the locker talk, it's just how boys talk amongst themselves, girls must get over themselves. That's all stuff asking survivors to accept violence's towards them. That by the time, we get to crimes like rape, is it any surprise that we're like oh but you know you were told when you were younger that your short skirt tease young men. So you shouldn't be wearing it so why were you wearing it? So it's like a gradual progression of your behaviour as the person receiving the violence has to change. The perpetrator is always in the right, it's just a part of how they are in their growth projection. Um and I think that's why victim blaming is so easy, cause we do it at such a, young age with kids, and we have to change the attitude here, before we can stop victim blaming at the levels of rape."

Tasniem (legal expert) believes that to change attitude and societal norms it has to start at childhood. *“The teasing boys for playing with dolls and calling them gay as though that’s like the worst thing in the world”* – demonstrates the denigration of concepts considered as feminine, thereby promoting hostile hegemonic masculinity as a standard way of being. In this manner, heteronormative attitudes are developed creating adverse reactions towards those that do not conform to gender norms. Furthermore, adults need to stop the minimising of problematic and violent behaviour instead correct it from an early age. The way both boys and girls are socialised contributes to gender roles that are performed in adulthood. *“He likes you that’s why he pulled your hair”* – not only excuses the action of the boy but also teaching girls to accept problematic behaviour. This kind of mind-set sanctions the boys’ actions at the expense of the girls. So instead of girls from standing up for themselves, they yield to this concept of prioritising the feelings of others over their own. *“You were told when you were younger that your short skirt tease young men.”* – Once again placing the responsibility on women for the thoughts of men. Boys are not held accountable for their actions, rather it is explained as girls influence the actions of boys. The way girls have been taught and socialized, has an influence on the way they perceive themselves and their gendered roles. This leads to the internalisation of victim-blaming that shifts the focus away from the violence inflicted upon them towards scrutiny of their own behaviour (Stark et al., 2017). The discourses and social structure that normalises gender-based violence needs to be challenged. Language can have significant influence on the way in which people perceive violence. There is a need for the promotion of counter-discourses that condemns the perpetrators of violence rather than the actions of victims. Counter-discourses have the potential to place responsibility directly on the perpetrators (Oparinde & Matsha, 2021c). *“It’s just a part of growing up, it’s how little boys are, oh the locker talk, it’s just how boys talk amongst themselves”* – relates to challenging the perspective of traditional masculine gender roles that endorses sexist attitudes and behaviours. *“It starts with calling out that behaviour”* – recognising that there is something fundamentally wrong with this kind of behaviour that leads to bigger social consequences. There is a correlation between hegemonic models of masculinity and the high rates of sexual and physical violence and homicide within South Africa (Bantjes et al., 2017). So instead of *“a gradual progression of your behaviour as the person receiving the violence has to change”*- intervention is targeted at young boys to be socially conscience and responsible for their own behaviour.

Patricia (psychologist) implemented a programme that she considered as successful in connecting with young boys from the area:

“One day I organized for a group of problematic teenage boys to be brought to prison as a form of an intervention for them, which was organized by or called for by the social worker. So what we then did was we created a platform for these men, for the offenders to tell their stories and to basically tell these young boys what they wished someone had told them at their age. And what transpired there was so powerful. It was so inspiring to see these men really step into their own and become healthy role models and speak up and tell their stories and how healing it was and for them and and how and just and the boys you know to receive that, encouragement and that guidance from all the men who have walked a similar path, you know. So I think there's a lot of potential in working with ex-offenders who are in the and in the process of rehabilitating and reintegrating them back into society to involve them in initiatives where they are provided with a platform to tell their stories, to speak up, become healthy role models and to provide support.”

Patricia (psychologist) has described the kind of intervention required to challenge hegemonic masculinity that teaches boys the consequences of violence. In this context, both the boys and men were able to express their emotions and be vulnerable. Her narrative provides evidence for the effectiveness of addressing gender-based violence with young boys at risk of perpetrating violence.

A patriarchal society

At present, it is evident that patriarchal attitudes have been normalised to create a culture that disrespects women. Thandeka (community health worker) recalls a time she had to provide sexual health awareness at a men's only hostel. She explains how the men spoke to her:

“And then when you try to give them and then explain how, how to use the condom and how to put a condom on and then they'll say OK let me use that one on you. So that's, so those are the kinds of comments we get. If you're

not strong enough, because when you entered the house. You are only two and then, you can find out that there are eight or seven men in one hostel. Uh, yes. Also think about your safety. Also worry and then you receive such comments. What do you do? Sometimes they will like pull you, like you know, they pull you as, as if they are like playing with you and you get sucked in that moment... We have developed an anti - umm a skill, that we use when the person says that let's use the condom together. So OK, but for now, I'm at work. I'll come back later for this. We can use the condoms together. As a way of escaping. Yeah, it's another way of escaping that. From then, we started to use our health promoter - to give an education to that hostel about women who are doing their jobs. We are not like an object of sexual conduct. We are health workers we are here to educate and help them."

This excerpt is an example of how patriarchal ideologies may be entrenched in male behaviour. The power that Thandeka holds as a health professional is undermined due to her gender. She describes a potentially dangerous situation that she must navigate to conduct her work. She does not attempt to challenge or confront the sexually charged remarks, rather she is forced to appease these men for her own safety. *"I'm at work. I'll come back later for this. We can use the condoms together. As a way of escaping."* – She acknowledges the role she must play to avoid further aggression towards her. The context and power dynamics does not allow Thandeka (community health worker) to just say no for her safety. This shows the sexist comments and behaviour that she is forced to tolerate to do her job without harm. This exemplifies the concept of rape culture, in which sexual violence is normalised. *"They pull you as, as if they are like playing with you"* – despite the appearance of pleasantness, of playing, there is an underlying show of dominance. Pulling or touching someone without consent is violating a physical boundary. It is aggressive in nature, a form of threat conveyed in a friendly manner that allows men to get away with this behaviour. Emphasising the male authority over a woman in a vulnerable context. Thandeka (community health worker) has been trying to instigate change through her work, however, her gender continued to be a barrier as the men did not respond to a woman telling them what they should do. This is linked to gender norms that place women in subordinate roles to men. She talks of the measures that she had to go through to educate these men on safe sex practices and using treatment available:

“Because we found like when we when we were back in that hostel many, many, many, many people were infected with HIV. And they're not on treatment. They were only using the traditional medicine only and many were dying... And then we have a meeting with the chief. We educated the chief and then we told the chief to take the message to their tribes to their uh members, in the, on the hostel and give them the feedback and get the responses and then we started seeing changes.”

It was a challenge for a woman to promote health-seeking behaviour, such as using condoms, because sex is understood as a means to prioritise the men's pleasure and sexual desires opposed to health-seeking behaviour which was seen as unmanly (Graaff & Heineken, 2017b). The community health workers were able to get the message across to these men, by enlisting assistance from the chief, who is a man that they not only listened to, but also respected. This demonstrates the gender inequality in which women are not awarded the same respect as men. Similarly, Patricia (psychologist) has a related challenge with working with male the prisoners at the correctional facility, she states:

“Ultimately, I think one of the biggest issues with in dealing with this problem is that we are mostly women in these positions, mostly women in these positions having to address which is what is ultimately a man's problem, you know, and coming from this, this culture of masculinity and patriarchy, it's very, very difficult. To convince men otherwise, being a woman.”

“We are mostly women in these positions” – accounts for the need for men to be involved in gender-based violence, community, and social work. Not only does Patricia (psychologist) do individual psychotherapy with the prisoners but she also conducts group work. She finds that working in groups is very effective and explains:

“Selecting men who I have good rapport with and who have a natural. A natural I want to say. Basically a natural motivation to change and to right the wrongs of their past. So I've been working with a group of men who are

all convicted for sexual offence. And I've been doing leadership skills development with them and educating them about gender based violence, giving them the vocabulary and giving them the understanding of what it entails. You know, like we've covered about the reasons underlying gender based violence, what it is, how it looks in practice, what the bystander effect is, what is victim blaming look like, you know, just to educate them about this, the concept, and to boost their confidence, to make them better leaders, to for them to be able to become guides to the other men. What I've realized is that it's just so much more effective for men to be inspired and educated by other men who come from the similar context. And from a similar background who really understand it for them to hear it from their peers instead of to hear it from a service provider who is a white woman like myself."

Patricia (psychologist) is mindful of the intersecting barriers that prevent building a rapport with her clients. She came up with a strategy to engage with her clients and have a constructive conversation around gender-based violence. *"So much more effective for men to be inspired and educated by other men who come from the similar context"* – there is a concept of men positively responding to other men that they can relate to.

Tasniem (legal expert) talks about the challenges of navigating through a patriarchal society:

"A man who presents as a man and exists as a man, um in a cisgendered hetero male way is, the things he has to fear in the world are significantly diminished... The way a cisgendered female would, a heterosexual female would exist in the world, now there are things added onto her that a cisgendered man is not concerning himself with right? So an example, walking on campus pass a construction site, a cismale is not considered about the cat whistling, the comments coming, the if I don't reply what would happen? A cisfemale walking past has to deal with the catcalls, has to, in that moment decide is worth responding and telling people to keep quiet or will I be physically attacked for it? Which has happened, women have been killed for asking men not to catcall... A gay man walking past who is dressed in women's clothing, whatever that is, would then also run

the risk of are these men going to say something about how I present? Will they get violent with me for how I present? If I am a gay Zulu-man is that upsetting to – potentially to a ciszulu-man who is at the construction site? How will he engage with me? So I think that definitely, there is a different way people exist depending on their gender, and their sexual orientation. Um and it means that violence's they could experience are more or less based on that."

Tasniem (legal expert) uses the concept of safety to reveal how society privileges masculinity and places a subordinate status on the 'feminine'. This means that women are not the only target of violence, but also people that display characteristics that are considered feminine, therefore, inclusive of gender non-conforming men. The expression of feminine qualities requires consideration of safety and how to cautiously respond to masculine aggression – as exemplified in the above excerpt by *'the catcalls'* and substantiated by the manner in which Thandeka (community health worker) responded to the sexually charged remarks at the men's only hostel. *"So I think that definitely, there is a different way people exist depending on their gender, and their sexual orientation"* – refers to the necessary precaution taken by women and the LGBTQIA+ community to remain safe within a patriarchal society. Risk avoidance is a common practice in South Africa but it does not guarantee safety and often impedes on the freedom of expression.

Lack of societal support for victims

The dismal of abuse is another common factor within the South African society. Thandeka (community health worker) states:

"Parents don't believe kids, and the child is telling you Mama. Err, Thabo touch me on my breast. That's the number one warning sign. It is easy to touch a child's breast, you must understand that it might go further. So that is something that you must take note. These are warning signs. The child is warning you and you are, you are thinking she is lying. Thabo will never do that. So we have to watch out for our girls. They are the most vulnerable, and when they speak, sometimes we as parents are saying she's lying. And sometimes she'll be telling the truth."

Thandeka (community health worker) has explained the importance of believing victims, especially if they are children. *“It is easy to touch a child’s breast, you must understand that it might go further”* – places emphasis on taking protective action from the first warning sign. Parents who do not believe that the child is telling the truth are unlikely to intervene and the child susceptible to further abuse (Collings et al., 2005). Inappropriate touching should not be ignored and must be addressed as it is a serious matter. *“You are thinking she is lying. Thabo will never do that”* – reflects a perception that the perpetrator would never commit the offence and it more likely that the little girl is in the wrong. While young girls are taught to fear ‘stranger rape’ when it comes to ‘acquaintance rape’ which is more common, perpetrators are shielded as they are known to the victim’s support system (Stubbs-Richardson et al., 2018). This frame of mind needs to be revolutionised in order to create a society that supports victims of abuse. Attitudes that protect the perpetrators of violence enable and maintain a victim-blaming context. Tasniem (legal expert) reflects on defence of a perpetrator of violence in society:

“We just have to look at our newspapers to see it right? Someone is accused of sexually violating another person. And suddenly we’re rattling of all the good things this guy is known for. Oh but gives to charity, so involved in community, loving father raising great kids. Sure, that can exist alongside a man who raped someone. Um and I think people struggle with that, struggle with, you know we’re very, when it suits us, black and white on things. And so, a rapist has a very specific look, is a very specific demographic, um you know economically we can put them somewhere... Because we’ve created ‘the other’ who is the rapist. And stats and facts and research show us that’s not true. But if we accept a rapist can be anyone, we have to accept that it can be a friend, a family member... We’ve definitely seen it, where, ya, where students entire support system, almost, is like it’s not possible, we know this person... As I say we create boogie men, so that when a friend says oh your friend raped me we’re just like no, he doesn’t fit the stereotype in my mind so it can’t be.”

Tasniem (legal expert) explains that society tends to split the characteristics in a person to be either good or bad, whereas people are complex and have the capacity to do both. The “other” she describes makes it impossible for a prominent, contributing member of society to be considered as a rapist. The stereotypical rapist should not possess any good qualities, he is a

stranger in a dark alley (Rees, 2010). Thereby minimising the frightening reality that a rapist or perpetrator could be in one's own social circle. Patricia (psychologist) touches on the protection of known perpetrators and provides reasoning for the underreporting of gender-based violence in society:

“There’s also this, this culture of acceptance of violence as normal because it’s just so common that it’s, it’s completely normalized in our society. And I think with the culture of violence, obviously, then there’s this culture of silence where you often get this bystander effect where people don’t even report a crime or a rape or anything of domestic violence because, I mean, there are several factors to that... The reasons why I think so many incidents go unreported is for one fear that the rapist could cause further harm to either this family. Because often the rapist is a part of the community or even a part of the family. So, so there’s that fear for many women. And then obviously if it’s in the family, then, you know, sometimes the victim is dependent on the perpetrator for financial support and if not her, maybe her, her mother or you know, so there’s also those, those financial consequences that they could face when they report the rape or the abuse. Then I mean looking at. The like the more of a community orientation they there’s often this big stigma attached to victims who have been raped before. So, so, so it’s terrible. But victims often get humiliated because they’ve been raped. You know, being catcalled in in very in, in ways like that, you know, and being treated and discriminated against because of what she’s experienced.”

Patricia (psychologist) comments on the unwillingness of society to step in and assist: *“this bystander effect where people don’t even report a crime or a rape or anything of domestic violence.”* – This alludes to normalisation of violence in which people choose to ignore gender-based violence as it is regarded as a private matter between couples. Forsaking the victim to fend for themselves rather than get involved. *“Often the rapist is a part of the community or even a part of the family”* – once again, perpetrators are awarded protection because they are known to the community. Ashmika (psychologist) adds to the reasons for the underreporting of gender-based violence:

“Yeah. So, so often. So the lack of reporting is often around the fact that they, they’re either still scared or they don’t have any other options that they have to go back to the person or they don’t want to, you know, that we’ve had a few who don’t want to ruin the life of the person if it’s a student, you know. And they also scared because they see the person all the time. So there’s a lot it’s it comes from a lot of fear in my experience. It comes from more fear that they don’t want to report and that kind of fear around... So if it’s an older person that I’m seeing, the difficulty there would be. Where would they go? What would they do? How do they manage their kids as well? And, and in this kind of sense of shame. That’s another reason why they don’t report, you know, because then it would come out in this embarrassment. And although they didn’t do anything wrong, there’s that level of shame.”

In both narratives, psychologists Patricia and Ashmika describe fear and shame as playing a huge role in the disclosure of abuse. Fear of retaliation for exposing abuse is expressed as *“fear that the rapist could cause further harm”* or *“they also scared because they see the person all the time”* – the perpetrator will still have access to the victim. Shame arises from internalised victim-blaming and the stigma attached to being a victim of abuse. Victims are afraid that they would not be believed, and society will blame them for ‘allowing’ themselves to be violated. Or worse vilified by the public as expressed by Patricia: *“victims often get humiliated because they’ve been raped... being treated and discriminated against because of what she’s experienced”* – substantiating that there can be severe social consequences to the disclosure of abuse. The defence of a perpetrator of violence by society is reiterated in these narratives. *“We’ve had a few who don’t want to ruin the life of the person if it’s a student”* – even as a victim there is an element of protection for the perpetrator. *“Then it would come out in this embarrassment”* – Ashmika acknowledges that there is an element of secrecy in abusive relationships. Disclosure of abuse in a marriage means letting your family and friends know that you have been keeping this secret for some time. The victim of intimate partner violence tends to worry about being perceived as a failure and judged for being in an abusive relationship. Support systems can be unsympathetic towards a victim’s reasoning for remaining in, or choosing to reconcile with a partner in an abusive relationship. Ashmika put forth questions that her clients commonly ask: *“Where would they go? What would they do? How do they manage their kids as well?”* - These questions interlink with the structural failures such as lack of shelters and economic depravity. Similarly, Patricia highlights fear especially in

situations in which victims are dependent on their perpetrator: “sometimes the victim is dependent on the perpetrator for financial support and if not her, maybe her, her mother” – resulting in consequences that not only impacts the victim but also her family. In this way, leaving an abusive relationship is not simple and there are multiple factors that need to be taken into consideration.

Priyanka (journalist) provides an emotive account regarding the lack of social support:

“For me it’s been heart wrenching because receiving somebody’s story and knowing that they went through something that is easily preventable by society fixing it’s self is heart breaking. But also, on a micro level, is this person went through something that is forever going to change their life - that has already changed their life, to the extent that they felt the need to seek out a stranger and tell them their story. And yes it is heart breaking but it also makes me so angry. That our society is failing vulnerable people. To the extent that we have to seek out strangers to validate our experience, to um acknowledge that we went through this awful thing.”

The attention given to social aspects that impact gender-based violence revealed a need for the continuous task of community awareness and the rejection of patriarchal beliefs. Although it is a daunting task to attempt to change the core values of society, the various narratives emphasised its necessity. To make substantial difference the responsibility of change cannot rely solely on interventions targeted at women and girls. Young boys and men need to join the conversation and fight against violence. Community engagement is required to make a safer society. The women in this study have shown agency and provided insights of their various contribution in their attempts to improve safety in South Africa. However, true transformation requires the mobilisation of people to acknowledge injustices and strive for violence free society.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

This research provided insights into the lived experiences of women who encounter gender-based violence in their line of work. The participants in this study consisted of professional women who have first experience of dealing with gender-based violence in South Africa. The narratives explored the ways in which various professions tackle different elements of gender-based violence based on their relevant context. The use of multiple theoretical frameworks aided in producing research that considers the complexity of the South African context through narratives that represented the lived experiences of the participants. It accounts for the institutional and sociocultural aspects that impact the work carried out by these women. The qualitative research design of this study produced an in-depth understanding and significance of gender-based violence work. The researcher conceded that advocacy work is necessary in the current climate of South Africa. The researcher was able to ascertain what motivated these participants in their various roles and consider the various avenues of advocacy work. The participants' multiple and intersectional conceptualisation of gender-based violence reflect their education, training and experiences. Socialisation is recognised as an influencing factor in the construction of gender-based violence as impacts attitudes, beliefs and practices. The many forms of gender-based violence makes it difficult to narrow it down into a simplistic definition and requires multi-dimensional considerations. The golden thread that runs through the various chapters is the patriarchal nature of South African society. This study echoes findings from previous research which indicate that there are negative consequences to the construction and assignment of gender roles for men and women. Socio-cultural norms plays a significant role in sustaining a violent context. The challenges faced by victims in South Africa is an indication of a systemic and structural issue that hinders the effectiveness of the criminal justice system. The survivors of abuse in this study describe coming to terms with their experience in a personal capacity without support from legal resources. The state has placed social responsibility in the hands of facilities that are continuously underfunded and under resourced. The demand for assistance is ever increasing, yet reliance on government facilities has diminished due to a distrust of the system. The lack of accountability for problematic attitudes and behaviour perpetuates the cycle of violence and unjust treatment of victims of violence. Participants have highlighted the poor implementation of policies and the need for further education and training of first responders pertaining to gender-based violence

cases. Moreover, the need to change the culture of violence that has been normalised in society. The participants touched on the various interventions within their line of work and advocated for further community engagement against patriarchal beliefs. Participants expressed the need for more intervention that target young boys and men rather than an increase of risk avoidance techniques for young girls. Furthermore, there is a need for more men to be involved in gender-based violence, community and social work. Future research could target men that work within these spaces, whose narratives could provide an alternative perspective. This study could be expanded to cover more provinces of South Africa. Research into civil services, such as police officers, attorneys, advocates and state resources could also be useful in gaining the internal perspective of the justice system with regards to gender-based violence.

Reflexivity

As a woman living in South Africa my passion for the eradication of gender-based violence is fuelled by the outrage that I feel every time I come across another news headline of an atrocious crime that has been perpetrated against our sisters. I have worked as a volunteer at a registered non-governmental organisation called “The Advice Desk for the Abused” in Durban. During this time, I was exposed to the reality of dealing with abuse within the South African context. It made me aware of the many flaws in our justice system and the various barriers faced by survivors in seeking help. The magnitude of gender-based violence especially in terms of societal norms was an eye opener. The normalcy of violence in South Africa has developed an ideology of risk avoidance – in which people take precautions to minimise potential violence. However, holding onto the concept that there is something that can be done to avoid violence promotes victim-blaming and moves focus away from the cause of violence. Challenging and changing patriarchal mind-sets is a mammoth task; it requires a revolutionary way of thinking that supports victims of violence and holds perpetrators of violence accountable. As a qualitative researcher, I had to be aware of any biases and pre-conceived ideas while conducting this research. Listening to the narratives of these professional women, I had come to the realisation that patriarchal ideologies affects people of all genders. It requires individuals to fit into a predetermined mould that has negative consequences for society. Men that experience violence often do not have an outlet to be vulnerable without fear of being perceived as less of a man and the cycle of violence continues through unhealed trauma. The prevalence of gender-based violence found in different sectors of society demonstrates a widespread acceptance of dominant patriarchal ideologies. I have many beliefs that aligns with the feminist

perspective that advocates for equality and challenges structures of authority. This is reflected in the criticism of the government, attitudes of service providers and the current criminal justice system in South Africa. South African legislation appears to be on the side of the victim, and yet the narratives of the participants indicate that it is rare for a victims of gender-based violence to achieve justice. For me, the hardest part was acceptance that meaningful change will take years and may not happen in my lifetime. However, the work carried out by the participants has motivated me to continue to advocate against gender-based violence. Their determination and passion towards a safer South Africa is truly inspirational.

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Appendices



SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PSYCHOLOGY

Appendix A

Participant Information Sheet

Dear Sir / Madam,

My name is Roxanne Ramlucken and I am a Masters student completing my Masters in Art by coursework and research report at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project, and I am investigating the intergenerational narratives of South African woman working in civil services and community health workers regarding gender-based violence under the supervision of Prof Peace Kiguwa. The aim of this research project is to find out what are the intergenerational constructs of gender-based violence in the narratives of South African women working in civil services and community health?

As part of this project, I would like to invite you to take part in an interview. This activity will involve questions about your understanding of gender-based violence and your role in as a service provider and will take around 90 minutes. With your permission, I would also like to audio record the interview using a digital device. This recording will be stored in a password protected mobile phone and laptop and only the researcher will have access to this recording. It will be deleted after a period of 2 years.

There will be no personal costs to you if you participate in this project, You will not receive any direct benefits from participation but there are no disadvantages or penalties if you do not choose to participate or if you withdraw from the study. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. The interview will be completely confidential and anonymous as I will not be asking for your name or any identifying information, and the information you give to me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. I will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation in my final research report. If you experience any distress or discomfort at any point in this process, we will stop the interview or resume another time.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely,
Roxanne Ramlucken

Researcher: Roxanne Ramlucken 2579498@students.wits.ac.za 0835524692

Supervisor: Peace Kiguwa Peace.Kiguwa@wits.ac.za

Appendix B

Consent Form

Narratives of a cohort of South African women working in fields regarding gender-based violence

Roxanne Ramlucken

I,, agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following:

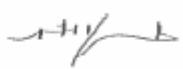
(Please circle the relevant options below).

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in his / her research report	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree that the information I provide may be used in an anonymized format after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers, subject to their own ethics clearance being obtained.	YES	NO

..... (signature)
..... (name of participant)
..... (date)

..... (signature)
Roxanne Ramlucken.....(name of person seeking consent)
..... (date)

Appendix C

	
SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ETHICS COMMITTEE CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)	
<u>CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE:</u>	<u>PROTOCOL NUMBER: MAPSYC-22-10</u>
<u>PROJECT TITLE:</u>	Intergenerational narratives of a cohort of South African women working in civil services and community health workers regarding gender-based violence.
<u>INVESTIGATOR</u>	Ramlucken Roxanne (2579498)
<u>SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR</u>	SHCD/Psychology
<u>DATE CONSIDERED</u>	20 June 2022
<u>DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE</u>	Approved unconditionally
<u>RISK LEVEL</u>	No Risk
<u>EXPIRY DATE</u>	31 December 2024
<u>ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE</u>	11 July 2022
	<u>CHAIRPERSON</u>  (Dr Nkululeko Nkomo)
cc: Prof. Peace Kiguwa (Supervisor)	
<u>DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR</u>	
To be completed in duplicate and ONE COPY returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.	
I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.	
 Signature	Date <u>12 / 07 / 22</u>
PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES	