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Ndlovu, Sikhonzile

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An analysis of coverage of gender-based violence, sourcing patterns and representation of victims in *Sowetan,* January-March 2008

By Sikhonzile Ndlovu

Student number: 0711261V

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, School of Language and Literature Studies, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Media Studies

18 August 2014

DECLARATION

I, Sikhonzile Ndlovu, declare that this research report is my own original work. It is being submitted for the Masters of Arts in Media Studies in the School of Literature and Language Studies (SLLS) in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination at this or any other university.

Sikhonzile Ndlovu

Signature S. Ndlovu Date: 18 August 2014

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family. To my husband Thabani Maphosa, I would not have made it to this point without your love and support; you are my rock! To my children, Likhwa Tsepang and Mbali Naledi, I hope you can draw inspiration from this work.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the most common yet under reported crimes in contemporary South Africa (Gender Links, 2002). Despite its pervasiveness, gender-based violence is one of the least talked about violations of women's rights as most of it takes place within the private domain and is never reported. The home has remained the main site of gender-based violence where females continue to experience abuse at the hands of close male relations or intimate partners. There is research work that concurs that gender-based violence is mostly common at family and community level and mostly affects women (Omarjee, 2006). This form of violence takes many forms ranging from sexual assault, physical and emotional abuse, domestic violence and verbal abuse. Family attitudes and pressures ensure that this remains hidden from the outside world (IPS, 2009). Such abuse is often treated as a private family matter. People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA South Africa) estimates that only one in nine gender-based violence incidences are reported.

The levels of gender-based violence have reached alarming levels with police reporting that, on average, seven women were murdered every day in South Africa between March 2010 and March 2011 (SAPS, 2011). The Victims of Crime Survey reported that 134 rapes occurred per 100 000 women in South Africa during 1997 (Statistics South Africa, 1997). More than half of women living in Gauteng, for example, have experienced some sort of violence at the hands of their intimate partners and about 80% of men disclose having perpetrated such violence (Medical Research Council, 2012). The MRC (2012) further indicates that seven rape cases are reported to the police every hour. However, these alarming statistics are still not reflective of the true extent of the rape epidemic as many rapes go unreported (Jewkes and Abrahams, 2002). This is also true of other gender based violations like murder, emotional abuse and physical violence among many others.

Violence against women continues partly because women do not seem to acknowledge violence perpetrated against them and are unlikely to seek help when it occurs (Rasool, 2002). Likewise, law enforcement officers do not view violence against women as a serious crime. This is especially evident in the way the police, medical officers and the judicial handle the victim post –reporting (Johnson, 2004). The implication is thus that victims of violence remain silent about their plight and this form of violence continues unreported. Victims continue to suffer in silence too as some of them are economically dependent on their abusers. There is a close correlation between income inequality, unemployment and

homicide. Women in such unequal power relations are unable to negotiate even safe sex. There is a possibility that violence in post-apartheid context has been driven by an increasing need among men to assert their dominance in the public sphere (Levenberg, 2009).

Another form of violence that has permeated South African society in the last couple of years is violence against lesbian women. This phenomenon, also known as 'corrective rape', is based on the claim by rapists that they are acting in the lesbian's interest, and teaching her to behave like a woman (Reddy et al, 2007). The term 'corrective rape' is closely linked to society's notions of acceptable behaviour for women and men and definitions of femininity and masculinity. Individuals who do not fall within the prescribed boundaries are therefore considered as deviants whose behaviour warrants some form of correction. Such violence has gone to the extremes even resulting in deaths. Some lesbian women have been raped and then murdered. For example, on the 7th of July 2007, a lesbian couple, Sizakele Sigasa and Salome Massoa were murdered in Johannesburg. There is however a large number of such incidences which go unreported. It is very strange that in a country like South Africa, with its progressive constitution, women still need to be cured of being lesbians since this is made out to be just another way in which women play hard to get (Gqola, 2007).

Cultural interpretations and notions of acceptable behaviour for women and men have played a major role in gender-based violence discourse. These cultural interpretations also include prescriptions of how women should dress to ensure that they are not raped, for example. Dress has been used as a justification of violence against women (Kwenaite et al, 2011)). Cultural vigilantes' have expressed the notion that a woman deserves to be violated for her choice of dress, such as a short skirt, trousers or the traditional wrap known as the 'Kanga'. It emerges that such punitive practices take place predominantly in patriarchal, conservative communities, said to be influenced by cultural values. It is however interesting that such cultural views, are not limited to the villages but are present in contemporary urban cities of South Africa.

The Nwabisa Ngcukana assault incident at the Noord taxi rank in central Johannesburg in February 2008 is but one example of a case where the discourse brought in both cultural and dress dimensions. *Sowetan* quoted women and men arguing that it is 'uncultural' for women to be wearing short clothes in public. In an article 'Mixed reaction to dress attack' *Sowetan*, 19 February 2008, some members of the

public said that while they symphathised with Ngcukana, there is need for women to dress properly. David Zulu asked “what kind of a parent would allow their child to dress like that?”

Interestingly there were women who justified the behaviour of male perpetrators who sexually assaulted Ngcukana at the Noord taxi rank. These women notably invoked culture as a justification for the taxi drivers’ actions stating that miniskirts are against culture, (Mkhwananzi: 2008). While women are mostly victims of gender-based violence, they are also enforcers as seen in the example above. Notably, the article ‘Mixed reactions to dress attack’, quotes a Mrs Ntilane who describes herself as old fashioned, saying, “women should respect the community, which in turn would respect them”.



'Custom allows girls to dress in miniskirts'

Custom and ethnicity allows young women to wear miniskirts, the national house of traditional leaders said yesterday in reaction to a recent attack on a woman wearing a miniskirt at a Johannesburg taxi rank.

From time immemorial young women had been required to wear traditional miniskirts – known as *makgabe* or *mabheshu* – at traditional ceremonies, some of which required that they dance bare-breasted, it said.

However some sections of society felt that women have a right to wear whatever they feel like. In an article ‘Custom allows girls to dress in miniskirts’, the national house of traditional leaders argued that custom and ethnicity allows young women to wear miniskirts (Sowetan, 28 February 2008). The articles refers to revealing traditional dress such as *makgabe* or *mabheshu* worn to traditional ceremonies. Some of this traditional attire required that girls dance bare-breasted, but the women were never at risk of being sexually violated.

Likewise, news generally draws on traditional notions of appropriate gender roles in the representation of violence against women (Meyers, 1997). These notions are rooted in patriarchy, which has institutionalized women’s inequality within socio political economic and cultural structures. For example there have been debates around women’s dressing especially in public spaces. Controversy over women’s choice of clothing is not peculiar to South Africa. From the late 1960s news reports record widespread incidents of women being jeered at, physically assaulted and stripped of their clothes in public (Wipper, 1972). In modern day Africa, the (black) wearer of a miniskirt is constructed as embracing a form of identity regarded as ‘unAfrican’ and thus positioning herself actively in opposition to traditional African cultural values (Louise, 2008).

The Noord taxi rank 'miniskirt' incident, as it came to be known, exposed the sad realities of gender-based violence in contemporary South Africa. A 25 year old woman was sexually harassed for wearing a miniskirt. This incident goes to show that women still do not enjoy the freedom that post-apartheid South Africa is striving to give to its citizens. The Ngcukana incident is just but a symptom of a larger problem of patriarchal values and attitudes that have refused to die. This incident, described by Nyar (2008) as degrading and shocking, is simply part of the fabric of South African life. Nyar notes that it is almost certain that such cases briefly stir the collective furies of the nation, public outcry as well as political reactions. However, this interest dies down with time and life goes back to normal without any concrete solutions to the problem. Magadla (2008; in Institute for Security Studies (2008) found on http://www.issafrica.org/topics/conflict-prevention-and-analysis/21-apr-2008-iss-today-south-african-women-need-to-claim-their-civil-liberties, accessed on 16 January 2014) calls for more concerted effort from stakeholders arguing that

> "although the government has publicly condemned these acts, it is clear more focused attention on this matter is required. Rhetorical responses with regard to women`s rights do not begin to deal with the necessary social change that is urgently required in this country. It has become self-evident that it is much easier to attend to legal frameworks than it is to change mind-sets."

Magadla further urges government to transform the state protection structures so that they have the capacity and the necessary predisposition to deal with an ever-increasing crisis of gender-based violence.

Ngcukana's humiliation has thus been described as an 'exposure' of the realities of gender-based violence. This incident was a defining moment in the fight for gender equality in South Africa. The sad reality is that we know incidents such as this one are simply part of the fabric of South African life (Annsilla, 2008). Daily, thousands of women are shamed, yet these cruelties and injustices rarely make headlines in the media. This incident received widespread media attention as well as high level political attention. Yet hundreds of cases go unattended to in many parts of the country. This incident serves to show that if victims/survivors do not take it upon themselves to fight these social injustices, their cases are likely to go unnoticed. It is strong women like Ngcukana and 'Khwezi', (Jacob Zuma' rape accuser) who take bold decisions to fight violence that can contribute to its reduction.

In recent years, South Africa has seen a surge in the murder of young girls at the hands of adult males. Some of the victims had been sexually assaulted before being killed. These are just but symptoms of a larger problem of crime prevalent in South Africa. The violence that takes place at family or community level is a microcosm of the violence bedeviling society at large. South Africa's crime record has been under spotlight in recent years especially as the country prepared to host the FIFA 2010 World Cup.

These acts of violence against women and prescriptions instill fear and insecurity in the lives of women and other minority groups. In South Africa, being female is identified as one of the 'main risk factors' in relation to violence in society (Perry and Jaggernath, 2012). This raises fundamental questions around the meaning of women's empowerment in South Africa when they are subjected to constant scrutiny.

> "Truly empowered women do not live with the haunting fear of rape, sexual harassment, smash and grabs and other violent intrusions into their spaces, bodies and psyches" (Gqola, 2007 in African Identities, 5.1, 2007: 116).

Society at large constantly questions women's behaviour even when they have been violated such that women always have to explain their behaviour and actions.

This scrutiny is also reflected in the way that media have also questioned the morals of victims of gender-based violence especially rape (Carter and Weaver, 2003). There have been insinuations that gender-based violence crime sometimes occurs as a result of the victim's behaviour, 'calling it upon herself.' For example, in Durban's Umlazi T-section residents once instituted a ban on women wearing trousers and even went on to attack women who defied this order. This constant surveillance has a bearing on women's ability to participate in life fully.

Women have emerged as a group that has been put under male surveillance just to ensure that they do not render the entire 'culture' vulnerable to corruption. Gender-based violence therefore becomes a violent and forceful way of 'upholding culture.' Scott (1990) describes surveillance as playing a key role in power relations between dominant and subordinate groups such as men and women respectively. News generally follows such constructions of appropriate behaviour for women in society with the miniskirt, especially, viewed as a sexually charged symbol (Louise, 2008). A woman wearing revealing clothing is therefore seen to be putting across a sexual message.

Media in South Africa have also emphasized the need for women to be extra vigilant when moving around at night. For example they have to avoid traveling alone at night and should be extra careful at traffic intersections. This in essence is saying that women should take responsibility for the fact that they may be attacked at any time (Gqola, 1997). Likewise women who use public transport are warned not to dress or behave in ways that may attract violent attention. This still emphasises the message that women should be careful how they behave, dress and the places they frequent during certain hours of the day.

The issue of women's clothing also arose in two other incidents subsequent to the Zuma trial, where men have violated the bodies of women who refuse to subscribe to the prescribed dressing codes. In July 2007, 25 year old Zandile Mpanza was attacked by four men in Durban as a result of her non-compliance with a ban which stipulates that women are not allowed to wear trousers in Umlazi's T-section. She was stripped naked and forced to walk through the streets. Her assailants destroyed her home and belongings and she was forced to move out of the township (Mkhwananzi, 2008).

Questions of whether there is accurate information on the prevalence of gender-based violence in particular is also worthy of investigation. Previous research such as the Medical Research Council's 2005 sexual violence study revealed that only one out of nine rape survivors report the attack to the police. Child Protection Services estimate that more than 40 children are raped every day in South Africa and that one in three girls and one in five boys will suffer sexual exploitation in one form or another.

In 2001, South Africa woke up to the sad realities of rape when an 18-month-old baby Tshepang was raped. Typically, the less sympathetic media tendencies were evident in this case when baby Tshepang was referred to as a 'broken doll (Media Monitoring Project of South Africa, 2002). This incident shows that rape has nothing to do with dressing. How else does one explain the rape of a baby in diapers?

The way that media represents gender-based violence has a significant role to play in curbing this social ill. There have been questions on whether the media have the power to directly influence audiences' perceptions of the seriousness of human violence (Carter and Weaver, 2003). As potential agents for social change, media have the power to raise the public's awareness on the alarming levels of gender-based violence in South Africa and also formulate opinions around the extent of the problem and its

implications on society's well-being. As such media can play a crucial role by bringing out these stories, especially those hidden in homes, for discussion in public forums.

One of media's roles is to objectively inform citizens about what is happening in their environment (Ronning et al, 2002). Because of its wide reach, media can potentially sensitise the public and contribute to formulating public opinion on the extent of the problem. In the case of gender-based violence, media can act as a catalyst for change by bringing it out of the private realm to the public domain for discussion.

Likewise, negative and stereotypical images of women in media and the way media report or do not report on gender-based violence (as a lesser crime or violation) contributes significantly to the acceptance of gender-based violence as a norm (IPS, 2009). This also applies to the way media portrays victims of gender-based violence. Media have changed from being mere institutions for the publication of news into leaders of public opinion shaping discourse (Habermas, 1964).

Habermas (1964) contends that today newspapers, magazines, radio and television are the media of the public sphere. They are able to bring societal concerns to that realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body and opinion (Ibid, 1964).

However the notion of the public sphere is highly problematic as it is a gendered space, in which men are uniquely equipped to participate in, while women remain confined to domestic life (Landes, 1988 in Thompson, 1995). This is contrary to Habermas' initial conceptualisation of this sphere which was of an open forum where everyone was welcome regardless of sex, race and class to come together and discuss issues of common concern and air their opinions.

Gqola (2007, in African Identities, 5.1: 115: 2007) notes that

> "the discourses of gender in the contemporary South African public sphere are very conservative in the main: they speak of 'women's empowerment' in ways that are most transformative, and as a consequence, they exist very comfortably alongside overwhelming evidence that South Africa women are not empowered: the rape and other gender-based

violence statistics, the rampant sexual harassment at work and public spaces, the siege on black lesbians and raging homophobia, the very public and relentless circulation of misogynist imagery, metaphors and language."

Media have the power to influence opinion and perceptions about life generally. The media is one of the most important socializing factors in most people's lives. Due to its agenda setting role and wide reach, the media shapes the discourse in modern day society. The way media frames issues, has a cognitive influence on the public's thinking. Audiences not learn only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position in the publication or news bulletin, (McCombs and Shaw, 1972).

While there are various instruments that have been put in place to fight gender-based violence, it still remains one of the most serious forms of violence globally. The World Health Organisation, (WHO) estimates that one in every three women, is abused in her lifetime. Various conventions and legislation have been put in place to try and curb the violence but to no avail. As the fourth arm of a democracy the media has a mandate to condemn this gross violation of human rights and be on the forefront in advocating for behavioural change.

In August 2008, the SADC heads of state signed the historic SADC Protocol on Gender and Development which has set 28 targets for gender equality by 2015. The Protocol seeks to halve the levels of gender-based violence by 2015. This puts the spotlight on gender-based violence statistics in South Africa. How is gender-based violence measured and by who? How reliable is the information at hand?

In 2007, the Sexual Offenses Bill which had been on the cards since 1996 was passed into law in South Africa. The Criminal Law (Sexual offenses and Related Matters) Amendment Act, no 32 of 2007, came into effect in December 2007. The main objective of the Act is to intensify the country's efforts to fight sexual crimes especially sexual crimes committed against vulnerable groups such as women and children and mentally disabled people. This Act recognises statutory rape as a criminal offense regardless of whether there is consent or not.

It is hoped that this law will help in the fight against gender-based violence as it provides for different stakeholders such as prosecutors and the South African Police Service (SAPS) to work together to fight sexual violence (Department of Justice, South Africa. 2007).

The fact that gender-based violence continues in South Africa raises fundamental questions about society's commitment to ending it. As the country edges closer to the SADC Gender protocol target of reducing levels of gender-based violence by 2015, there is need to take a holistic look at media's handling of the issue and analysis the current media discourse. Gender-based violence threatens the social and moral fibre with children as young as 18 months old being raped. Such incidences call for society at large to go beyond cultural justifications and tackle the problem of gender-based violence at the structural level.

Research sample and methodology

A content analysis of *Sowetan*'s daily media output for the months of January to March 2008 was the basis for this study on sourcing and representation of victims of gender-based violence in Sowetan. The content analysis made use of both quantitative and qualitative tools. 65 issues of the paper were monitored for the study. All the pages were monitored except supplements and advertorials.

Sowetan has been chosen for this study because of its wide geographical circulation covering all the nine provinces of South Africa. Apart from being based in Gauteng, the paper has a readership of 1,5 million people across the country. *Sowetan's* target readers are English speaking South African township residents thereby making it easily accessible to ordinary people. The size of the paper, tabloid size and not a broadsheet also makes it easy to read even in public places where people are likely to share it with others.

Sowetan also gave extensive coverage to the miniskirt story at the Noord Taxi rank in central Johannesburg which will be used as a case study in this research.

Aim

This study seeks to explore and analyse the gendered dimension of reporting on gender-based violence in *Sowetan*. Because the media informs our understanding of our everyday circumstances, it has a critical role to play in processes of transformation.

The research aims to answer the question of who speaks on gender-based violence and what they are saying as well as critique the representation of victims and perpetrators to a lesser extent. Allowing victims to speak about their experiences in media ensures that the readers or viewers get first-hand information from them unlike when their stories are told by other people. If victims of gender-based violence are not the majority of sources in gender-based violence stories in *Sowetan*, the study will then establish who the sources are by analyzing the paper's sourcing pattern. A further analysis of language used in gender-based violence stories also sheds light on media's representation of victims and perpetrators.

Sourcing in media would normally shed light on whose view news is normally told from. Research on sourcing in media has shown that different social groups do not access media the same way. Media access inevitably raises fundamental questions about the nature of citizen participation (Cottle, 2003). Although ordinary people may use the media, they neither influence media content nor feature as many actors. Elite groups on the other hand have access and influence over mass media in particular (van Djik, 1987). This applies to voice and opinion in the news media. Manning (2001) raises the fundamental question of whether all news sources enjoy the same degree of access and the same ability to communicate their perspectives or encode their preferred agendas. This points to the possibility that the less powerful are significantly disadvantaged in the scramble to secure access to the news media.

The space and placing of gender-based violence stories in the paper will shed light on this. This study hopes to gain an insight into the paper's attitude towards this aspect of violence by analyzing the proportion of stories on gender-based violence compared to general stories. Although the levels of gender-based violence in South Africa are appalling, the cruelties and injustices that women face on a daily basis rarely make headlines in the media (Nyar, 2008). The press is known to under-report and underplays the manifestations of gender-based violence.

Rationale

This period, January-March 2008, has been chosen because of a prominent gender-based violence incident that happened at a central Johannesburg taxi rank, Noord. In February 2008, *Sowetan* gave extensive coverage to the story of a woman who was stripped and sexually harassed for wearing a mini skirt at the taxi rank. Using this as a case study, this study will analyse coverage of gender-based violence before the 'miniskirt incident' as this story came to be known, during the month of the incident and the month after making serious observations as to whether there were any marked differences both in terms of prominence of the stories, sourcing and the representation of victims.

This incident generated a lot of interest as women's rights groups and media people, as well as celebrities went on a massive campaign to denounce gender-based violence. *Sowetan*, February 22, 2008, reported on a *Marie Claire* magazine photo of naked poet Ntsiki Mazwai. Mazwai posed naked in the issue as part of a campaign to raise awareness about the high prevalence of rape in South Africa.

Hypothesis

Sowetan often blames victims of gender-based violence for the violations against them and rarely gives them the opportunity to speak about their experiences.

Research questions

1. How much coverage does *Sowetan* give to gender-based violence?
2. How does *Sowetan* represent victims and perpetrators of gender-based violence?
3. Who are the main sources in gender-based violence stories?

Defining gender-based violence

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees defines gender-based violence as a term that is used to distinguish violence that targets individuals or group of individuals on the basis of their gender. This violence is often a reflection of unequal power relations between women and men in society.

Gender-based violence includes any act or threat by men or male dominated institutions that inflict physical, sexual or psychological harm on a woman or girl because of their gender. This includes domestic violence, sexual abuse (rape), sexual slavery, and female genital mutilation among others (Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against women, 2000). This definition and its illustrations clearly equate gender to women as it totally excludes men from the picture. This may be because it originates from an instrument that is fighting for the cause of women. Men also encounter gender-based violence at the hands of other men and women as well. The above definition also excludes the notion of economic violence as another form of gender-based violence and a driver of gender-based violence in intimate-partner relationships.

The environments in which people become most vulnerable to gender-based violence involve situations in which being gendered as a 'woman' or as 'a man' is extremely significant. As such these relations between men and women become potential sites for this violence. Gender-based violence occurs in both the public and private spheres. It has however been noted that most women suffer at the hands of men they know, for example intimate partners like husband, boyfriend or a relative. Intimate partner violence is one of the most common forms of violence against women and includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and controlling behaviour by an intimate partner (World Health Organisation, 2012) Intimate partner abuse is often characterized by long term patterns of abusive behaviour. This violence, often witnessed by children, has a bearing on how these children relate with their intimate partners later in life.

There is overwhelming evidence that men are the main agents of violence in the modern world: and in most societies violence is culturally masculinized (Connel, 1997). These masculinities are embodied in institutions, culture and in personal life. These, like culture are dynamic and constantly changing. This therefore gives hope that the negative relations may change with time as they are not entirely fixed.

Marriage has been cited as one institution that houses gender-based violence. The analysis of how gender-based violence thrives within marriage can be traced to the roles and rules that have been set for women and men outlining how they should behave in relationships with one another (Hargrives *et al*, 2006). These rules have therefore 'normalised' the abuse that occurs within the home. This type of violence is present in many South African communities and it often goes unreported. Society's definitions of acceptable behaviour for the two sexes not only shape response to gender-based violence

but also the nature of assistance sought by survivors. Women in abusive relationships have been found to stay on in these relationships because there are no adequate support structures within their communities. For example in most Bantu cultures, a woman who walks out of marriage and goes back to her parents' home is seen as a disgrace to her family and will not be supported by her family. This is partly one of the reasons why most women in abusive relationships and marriages would rather stay in the relationship. In other instances, feelings of commitment are greater among women who have poorer-quality economic alternatives (Rusbult and Martz, 1995), hence their stay in abusive relationships.

The environments in which people become most vulnerable to gender-based violence involve situations in which being 'gendered as a woman or as a man is extremely important. Some men will abuse women that they relate with as an attempt to fit into society's definition/notions of being a man whilst some women will often blame themselves for the violence encountered based on their notions of what society expects of them as women.

Equating gender to women is a common mistake among many people. Gender is a social construct of the relationships between men and women (Ang and Hermes, 1991). Gender, unlike sex is not constant, as it is defined by social dynamics, and evolves over time. Men play an important part in gender relations because their behaviour, like that of women is guided by societal expectations. Ang and Therems (1991) also note that a wide array of social practices and discourses, among which is media consumption, produce gender. However women are more often victims of gender-based violence than men are. This is partly because of their subordinate status in society (Declaration on the Elimination of violence against women, UN, 1993).

Gender-based violence cannot be spoken about in isolation without linking it to traditional African cultures, particularly because of its relationship with female subordination in general. Subordination is evident in most aspects of men and women's private and public lives with most of this inequality taken as customary. Gender-based violence is often an extension of men's power in society. Women are socially subordinate-they simply do not have any say in matters that affect them. For example most women are seen as an extension of the man's property and not as equal partners. This is exacerbated by the fact that some young girls, who are not yet financially independent, are married off to older men thereby compounding their silence on gender-based violence. They are dependent on these men and do

not have the social and economic resources to control their lives. Even their economic independence is stifled in this regard. This not only affects rural women but also enlightened women who often find themselves being instructed on how to use their economic resources by men in their lives. This dominance is manifested and institutionalized through patriarchy.

Omarjee (2006) concurs with the framing of the gender-based violence discourse within patriarchy. Patriarchy has resulted with men in a dominant position, perpetuating gender inequality in society with women assuming an inferior status. Structural violence characterises many patriarchal societies and is experienced by women more sharply than men because they are relegated to secondary social status by virtue of their biological make up (Boulding, 1981). An essential feature of a patriarchal family structure common in most societies is the infliction of deprivation on women. As such, Omarjee (2006) views violence as the exertion of dominance over the subordinate subject. A father can exercise his power and dominance over his family through the mere suggestion of violence.

From a sociological perspective, gender-based violence is shaped by the social and historical contexts within which societies exist (Salo, 2005). This relates to the gendered dimension of this violence which partly stems from the cultural norms and expectations about gender relations. Women have sometimes become victims as a result of refusing to conform to these societal expectations of how they should behave as women.

Gender-based violence has been felt not by women only but also by other sexual or gender minorities such as gay men and lesbian women., In South Africa there have been a number of incidences of women being raped and even murdered for being lesbian. This growing phenomenon is commonly referred to as ‘corrective rape’. Society views these women and men who have refused to conform as deviants. As such they have suffered gender-based violence because they have chosen to be different.

The oppression of women and their subordinate position in society has given rise to feminism which is the struggle for the equality of women against the multiple forms in which their identities as women are constructed and understood (Hassim, 2006). With the emergence of the feminist movement, women have over time started expressing a desire to play a role in determining the direction of development. This in essence has seen women shift from being victims of gender-based violence to taking control of their circumstances and actively speaking out on gender-based violence. The feminist approach

challenges the conventional gender roles and gendered hierarchies which have been breeding fields for gender-based violence (ibid, 2006).

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter One: Introduction

This introductory chapter gives context to the research. It starts by outlining the South African context in relation to gender-based violence. The chapter puts forward a case of why gender-based violence is an area of concern worth investigating. This section draws on two case studies, the 2008 Nwabisa Ngcukana sexual assault at the Noord taxi rank as well as the 2006 Jacob Zuma rape trial. This is followed by definition of key terms such as gender and gender-based violence before going on to state the purpose of the research and what its contribution to the media and gender discourse. It therefore outlines the key research questions that the study seeks to answer.

Chapter two: Literature Review

This chapter explores the various literature and theory on gender-based violence and gender representations in the media. This study borrows heavily from feminist theory which centres the gender discourse within the unequal power relations between women and men. Gender-based violence is therefore viewed as an attempt by men to maintain the status quo and keep women as subordinates.

Whilst men also experience gender-based violence, it is argued that women are the majority of victims because of their subordinate role in society. This continued attempt by men to exercise their power is traced back to the apartheid days of the township 'Jack rollers' who sought to exercise their masculinity after experiencing emasculation at the hands of apartheid.

This chapter also gives context to gender-based violence in South Africa by exploring existing literature specific to South Africa. Since media is a product of this society, is it a mirror reflection of this society. The question of media effects is discussed in this context.

Chapter three: theoretical framework

This chapter explores feminist interpretations of gender-based violence. They situate it within the unequal power relations between women and men with women, especially, being relegated to a subordinate role. This structuralist approach argues that dealing with structural causes of gender-based violence will help in finding solutions to the problems rather than blaming victims for the violence.

The chapter then moves on to explore the sociology of news production. News is a construction of reality by women and men working in the news media. They determine what goes onto the news bulletins and the angling thereof. Linked to this is the question of news access and how the powerful are able to gain access into the news media either as sources or subjects.

Chapter four: Methodology

This chapter discusses the various techniques used to collect and analyse data. The main method of data gathering was content analysis, making use of both quantitative and qualitative analysis tools.

The quantitative aspect involved analyzing and quantifying certain features of coverage of gender-based violence. These were closed aligned with the research questions which sought to analyse who the sources are in gender-based violence stories. The data collected was disaggregated by sex so as to explore whether women and men speak equally on gender-based violence.

Data on extent of coverage of gender-based violence was also collected so as to establish the prominence media gives to gender-based violence in light of the endemic levels prevailing. The stories were then categorized according to the type of violence being reported on. This was to obtain valuable data on which categories are most reported on.

Case study technique

The Nwabisa Ngcukana miniskirt story has been used as a case study in this research. It epitomizes an incident that opened up public forums for debate such as media and engagements within civil society. The representation of Nwabisa who suffered at the hands of taxi drivers as well as the numerous voices

relating to the incident is juxtaposed with coverage of gender-based violence prior and after the incident.

Qualitative research methods

Qualitative research methods allowed the researcher to go beyond numbers and look at the qualitative aspects of coverage such as language used, images, placement of stories in the paper as well as the headlines. This technique allows the researcher to further elaborate on the quantitative data.

Chapter five: Research findings

Quantitative findings

The quantitative findings of the research will be detailed in this chapter. The starting point is quantifying the amount of coverage given to gender-based violence stories in general and then to the Nwabisa Ngcukana incident. This section of the report will be divided into three sections detailing coverage before the miniskirt incident, (January – February 17 2008), the miniskirt stories, with a sub category of stories related to abuse of women in public space like taxi ranks, and finally coverage of gender-based violence stories from the 18th of February 2008. These stories have been analysed separately so at to observe any changes in patterns of coverage after the incident.

The different types of violence are also grouped and quantified so as to gain better understanding of the types of gender-based violence that *Sowetan* mostly reports on.

This chapter also gender disaggregates sources in all gender-based violence stories to give a picture of how much space women and men are given to speak. The section also presents findings on the different types of sources disaggregated by sex. This will help establish whether victims and survivors of gender-based violence are given an opportunity to speak on their experiences.

Qualitative data analysis

In this section, the report presents the non-quantitative findings of the study. This includes findings on the portrayal of victims and survivors of gender-based violence. This section will give examples of stories that place blame on the victims for the abuse they have encountered. This includes an analysis of discourse around gender-based violence and the language used therein. This will include giving various examples of headlines used in the stories.

Miniskirt case study

This section juxtaposed the 'miniskirt' story with other similar incidents during the period under review. Sourcing trends were also subjected to scrutiny. These will be discussed under this section. The images used, language and positioning of stories will also be discussed.

Chapter six: Analysis of findings

The chapter further expands on the findings presented in chapter five. Here they are analysed and interpreted in a more detailed way. The researcher tries to analyse what the results mean and their implications on the fight for gender equality. These findings also help the researcher to make linkages between media' coverage of gender-based violence and the way society handles this problem. The broader question of what the role of media is in this discourse is also explored.

Chapter seven: Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter sums up what the study has produced, the shortcomings and recommendations on what further needs to be done to improve media's coverage of gender-based violence. It rounds up what has been found.

This chapter also gives an insight into what media's greatest shortcomings are in terms of the way gender-based violence is covered.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter looks at literature that exists on gender-based violence in the media as well as on sourcing patterns and representation of victims of gender-based violence. Sourcing and representation of victims in gender-based violence stories in Sowetan are the main areas of focus for this study. Before one can discuss literature on representation and sourcing, it will be important to define the key terms that will be used in this study. This chapter will therefore start by defining 'gender' and then discussing gender-based violence in the South African context before going on to explore how gender and especially gender-based violence are often portrayed in the media.

Feminist theories are explored especially those that seek to explain the history and causes of gender-based violence in South Africa. Feminists discuss gender-based violence in the context of the unequal power relations between women and men in society. In societies characterized by male domination, gender is an expression of political power to ensure the subordination of women (Agenda: 1998). Violence against women is therefore a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between women and men (Declaration for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, 1993).

This dominance is also evident in the news media where women's voices are underrepresented and even gender-based violence stories are told from a male perspective (Gender Links, 2010).

It has been noted however, that news downplays the extent of gender-based violence through underreporting and distorting what is reported through the omission of significant details (Lement, 1989). This is especially true for rape stories which have been seen to have fewer details than stories about murder or assault (Heath et al, 1981). Some media reports give the impression that rape only occurs in dangerous parts of town and not at home (Schwengels and Lement, 1986). This misleads people by portraying a reality that is different from what happens in real life where sexual assault occurs everywhere, including in the home.

The chapter is divided into sections as follows:

- Gender

- Gender-based violence in South Africa
- Feminist theory
- Reporting on gender-based violence
- Sourcing in media

While this chapter is not exhaustive gives an overview of other research that exists on gender-based violence as well as observations by media researchers, scholars and researchers in the field of gender-based violence. Gender-based violence is first discussed in general in this chapter so as to ensure that the reader fully understands what is meant by gender-based violence before moving on to the discussion on sourcing and representation of victims as well as exploring feminist theory on this type of violence.

Literature on sourcing in the media will include discussions of media access and the power play between powerful individuals in society and the articulation of public interests. This research will also look at feminist literature that exists globally on gender-based violence whilst at the same time drawing parallels with literature that is specific to South Africa. Feminists such as Zubeida Dangor and Nadira Omarjee have written extensively on gender-based violence in South Africa. There have also been other gender activists and organisations such as Medical Research Council (MRC) and Gender Links that have carried out extensive studies on gender-based violence and on gender and the media in South Africa.

Gender

Gender refers to "a social construct regarding culture-bound conventions, roles, and behaviours for, as well as relations between and among, women and men, boys and girls" (Krieger, 2003 in International Journal of Epidemiology. 2003;32(4):653) It is not rooted in biology, but rather in society's views of what it means to be male and to be female. Gender is a social symbolic creation (Wood, 1994) and is subject to change over time. The meaning of gender grows out of society's values, beliefs and preferred ways of organizing collective life. The interpretation and meaning of gender is therefore not constant and can be changed depending on the cultural values of a people at a given time. Thus, the interpretation of gender differs across communities based on world view and perspective.

Whilst several definitions have been given for gender, most of them have sought to highlight the relationship between sex and gender. Although sex is more rooted on biological facts of being male and female, it has been transformed by societal arrangements into socially significant 'gender' (Feree, 1999). Not only can gender relations influence the expression of biological traits, but also sex-associated biological characteristics can contribute to amplify gender difference (Krieger, 2003 in International Journal of Epidemiology. 2003;32(4):652). Hermes and Ang (1991) also note that gender is definitely not a natural consequence of sexual difference but a social construct as highlighted by Wood (1994). Social constructions have thus led to unequal power relations between different social groups.

In most societies, patriarchy has served to define women and men's place in society. This concept, which seeks to maintain men's dominion over women, has extended to the domination of women's bodies by men.Patriarchy is one institution that ensures that men dominate through religion, the state, family, the school among other institutions thereby sustaining the systemic causes of gender-based violence, (Omarjee, 2006). Gender-based violence is further perpetuated by the normalization of some cultural practices that allow its manifestation. It is subtly entrenched in cultural and societal attitudes, norms thereby constructing and reconstructing identity for women and men over time.

These constructions take crude forms such as rape, domestic violence or even gang rape. Structural forms include practices such as polygamy, lobola, female genital mutilation, (FGM) and male circumcision. They have been accepted as a normal part of life in most patriarchal African societies including South Africa. The combination of traditional/customary patriarchy with the imposed colonial forms of patriarchy finds itself expressed in a number of gender discriminatory state practices and services. Gender-based violence (or the fear of) becomes one of the key ideological and physical mechanisms by which patriarchy maintains its existence thereby relegating women to socially constructed subordinate status and maintaining men's social dominance. As gender-based violence is a symptom of the broader social power relations and sexual violence, for example, rape is not about sex but power (Taylor and Francis, 2012).

Feminist inspired scholarship has shown gender as not being naturally given but as being derived from the society in which individuals live (Perry and Jaggernath, 2012). Through processes of socialization, individuals come to understand their position and role in society. The process of socialization uses biological difference as the starting point.

Socialisation therefore plays a huge role in creating identities and defining acceptable behaviour and practices for women and men respectively. These definitions of appropriate behaviour from women and men have contributed to the subordination of women. However, since gender is not fixed it is possible to change gender norms and contribute significantly to the well-being of women. Modern changes, especially, have forced both women and men to deviate from gendered stereotypes and carve new identities (Brittan, 1989).

Theoretical conceptualisations of gender have different perspectives on the ability to change gender norms and masculinity (Brittan, 1989). The socialisation model of gender identity views masculine and feminine identification as products of gendered socialisation which cannot be easily reversed (Pulerwits et al, 2000). Whilst socialisation plays a key role in shaping behaviour, emphasizing the socialization process is tantamount to viewing the human body as a passive entity that is only shaped by society and lacking agency. However, both the developmental masculine crisis and the social construction models clearly highlight reasons why gender is not immutable and fixed although there are many individual factors that constrain efforts to change (Chege, 2005).

This is to say that biology has no effect on how people turn out. One of the supporting arguments has been that sex/gender distinction ignores the fact that femininity acted out by a female body differs from a femininity acted out by a male body (Gatens, 1995). Therefore biology still has an impact on how women and men behave even as society seeks to define and prescribe their roles. Whilst sex is constant, gender is considered fluid as a person can change their gender identity but not their sex (Morine, 2009).

The concept of gender therefore provides a rubric for looking at historical, cultural and situational variability in definitions of womanhood and manhood, in meanings of masculinity and femininity, in relationships between men and women (Ferre et al, 1999). This has been one of the most comprehensive definitions of gender highlighting that gender is about society's understanding and expectation of acceptable behaviour for women and men.

The cultural values of a society are usually manifest in media's handling of gender relations and discourse. This is because media reflect cultural values and ideals about gender. They portray women, men and relationships between the sexes in ways that mirror widely shared understandings and ideals.

This extends to sexual relationships and interactions in society. South African society especially has found it difficult to accept people outside accepted sexual norms such as the Lesbians, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Intersexed (LGBTI) community. This refusal to accept any relationships that are outside accepted definitions have given rise to homophobic attacks both in communities and in media.

Modern feminist science is also based on the view that many differences between the sexes are based on socially constructed gender identities rather than on biological sex differences. Feminists maintain that gender is about power relations in society with men assuming the dominant role and women assuming the subordinate status. This emanates from feminist criticism that has questioned the gender neutrality of traditional science, arguing that there exists gender bias in the ways in which scientists conduct and discuss their work (Keller and Longino, 1996).

The historically specific outcomes of the actions and conflicts among dominant and subordinate groups organize and permeate all the institutions of contemporary society (Ferre, 1999). Thus, in post-apartheid, democratic South Africa, gender-based violence has become a socially endorsed punitive project for maintaining patriarchal order. Contemporary sexual violence in South Africa is fuelled by justificatory narratives that are rooted in apartheid practices that legitimated violence by the dominant group against the disempowered, not only in overtly political arenas, but in social, informal and domestic spaces (Moffet, 2006).

Gender-based violence in South Africa

Gender-based violence is one of the problems that post-apartheid South Africa has to grapple with. Official records estimate that within South Africa, gender-based violence exists in every community, in millions of households, in every form of institution, within all public spaces and wherever people interact. In South Africa, every six hours a woman is killed by her intimate partner (Medical Research Council, 2004).

This problem has also contributed significantly to high rates of HIV and AIDS infections. Fourie (2000) describes HIV and AIDS as a 'genderised variable.' Women in abusive relationships are less likely able to negotiate safe sex or condom use (Pulerwitz *et al*, 2000). Gender-based violence has implications for sexual and reproductive health and sexual behaviour (Chege, 2005). Women have become more

vulnerable due to biological and social factors regarding the transmission of the virus. For example in instances where young women have been forced into marriage, they are unlikely to be in a position to negotiate safe sex, The violent nature of rape often results in cuts and bruises which allow easy access for the HI virus.

This problem is not peculiar to South Africa as gender-based violence is a global problem. Globally, every six out of every ten women experience physical and/or sexual abuse in their life time with these being the major cause of death and disability in the 16-44 years age group, (United Nations Women, 2006). In South Africa, it has been found that women who have been beaten by their partners are 48% more likely to be infected with HIV and AIDS than those who were not (United Nations Population Fund: 2002).

Sexual assault remains the most common type of violence against women (United Nations, 2009, World Health Organisation, 2012). South Africa is reported to have the worst rape statistics in the world when looking at reported cases (Statistics South Africa, 2000 in Mgoqi, 2006). Rape usually takes different forms, ranging from intimate partner rape, stranger rape and gang rape which have been traced back to the days of the 'Jack Rollers' of the 1980s. This concept of 'Jack rolling' was an attempt by black township youths to assert themselves after feeling emasculated by apartheid (Mokwena, 1991, Vogelman and Lewis, 1993). Historically disenfranchised and profoundly disadvantaged by the exploitative migrant labour system that defined the colonial and apartheid economies-the family domain became the primary sphere in which black African men could (coercively if necessary) re-assert their sense of masculinity (Campbell, 1992).

The youth who do this are said to be unemployed and frustrated young men who have found out that they are HIV positive and therefore go out of their way to infect others (Shell, 2000). In such cases gender-based violence serves to perpetuate male power and control. This behaviour has nothing to do with how women interact with these men.

Studies by civil society organisation People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA, 2005) suggest that many South African women experience rape at the hands of their intimate partners. However, most of these cases go unreported. What makes women more vulnerable to gender-based violence, especially sexual assault in intimate relationships, is the unequal power relations within most marriages. Women are socially subordinate and simply do not have a say in sexual relationships. Child marriage has also

contributed to violence in intimate sexual relationships as young girls are materially and socially depended on men and do not have the resources to claim control over their own sexuality.

While it is obvious that gender-based violence has reached endemic levels in South Africa, there are no clear indicators to measure its prevalence. Most of the data that is available is mainly based on police reports. This however, cannot be taken to be accurate considering that there are a number of cases that go unreported. The 'One in Nine Campaign' estimates that 'only one out of nine' rape cases especially are reported on. The 'One in Nine Campaign' was established in February 2006 at the start of the rape trial of Jacob Zuma, to ensure the expression of solidarity with the woman in that trial as well as other women who speak out about rape and sexual violence. The name 'One in Nine' was prompted by the Medical Research Council (MRC) 2005 sexual violence study which indicated that only one out of every nine rape survivors report the attack to the police.

South African civic organisations working in the field of women's rights are still trying to come to terms with this sad reality. The absence of clear indicators makes it difficult to design appropriate interventions. As such organisations such as the Medical Research Council (MRC) and Gender Links have worked towards developing gender based violence indicators. This has contributed significantly to the understanding of the extent of the problem and also to determine the sort of interventions that will effectively address the problem. Even the SADC protocol target of halving current levels of gender-based violence by 2015 can only make sense if there is a baseline against which to measure progress.

Weak criminal justice systems have been cited as contributory factors to the spread of gender-based violence. The culture of impunity that arises as a result of the mechanisms of justice not taking action against perpetrators of violence perpetuates the cycles of that violence. The violence therefore becomes part of a community's way of life. The low number of prosecutions, due to lack of sufficient evidence in some instances, leads many women to lose confidence in the justice system. The Zuma rape trial is one such case, where the judge ruled that there was insufficient evidence to prosecute. This verdict completely changed the accuser, Khwezi's life, as she had to flee the country in fear of being victimized by Zuma's supporters.

During apartheid, the state played a significant role in exacerbating violence in general and gender-based violence in particular. This system, which was a deliberate attempt to subordinate and oppress

the majority of South Africans, undermined their identity and self-definition. Harper (2003) traces the culture of violence back to the apartheid days whereby both the oppressor and the oppressed used violence to maintain their status or as opposition on the part of the oppressed. For black youth, the legacy of apartheid has resulted in familial instability, limited access to educational and employment opportunities and the denial of their political rights (Vogelman & Lewis, 1993). Solving this problem therefore requires a paradigm shift in the discourse about gender equality, power, sexuality, the place of women and men in a democracy.

The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development also situates the fight against gender-based violence within the larger mandates of Southern African states. This policy document was signed by the Heads of State in August 2008 firmly putting governments on the spotlight. The provisions of the protocol can only be as useful and effective only when governments are held accountable. This starts by publicising the protocol by media and other stakeholders. This is within the media's mandate as the fourth arm of a democracy. They have to hold the state accountable in this regard. This can be done by initiating dialogue on government's commitments and its progress towards ratifying the protocol in country. The media itself has to adhere to the media provisions outlined as part of the 28 targets.

Reporting on gender-based violence

The important role that media play in any given society cannot be underestimated. Besides necessitating the flow of information and ideas among citizens, media also have a watchdog role to play as the fourth arm of a democracy. This role gives media the license to watch over the judiciary, legislature and parliament.

Media are the channels through which information is shared or disseminated. Most citizens will rely on media to help them make informed decisions as they go about their daily lives. What media produces is rarely subjected to critical analysis except in societies with high levels of media literacy (Gender Links, 2006). This however does not mean that media have to duck their responsibility of making factual information available. Media should provide full access to information and knowledge for citizens to make sense of their situation (Ronning *et al*, 2002).

Carter and Weaver (2003) however bring out the 'media influence' debate to seek an understanding of media's reporting of gender-based violence. They ask whether media have the power to directly influence audience's perceptions of the seriousness of human violence. Audiences do not by and large mimic the behaviour of those they see or read about in the media (Potter, 1999). However, in choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping reality (MacCombs and Shaw, 1972). Whilst media may not totally influence opinion and behaviour; there are certainly fundamental and intricate connections between representation and human attitudes (Carter and Weaver, 2003).

The above observation therefore makes it important that the representation of gender-based violence by media does not negatively influence society especially in the way that victims of violence are perceived. Media have helped question the dignity of victims in the way that they portray them. For example in 2006 *Sowetan* had screaming headlines such as '*BURN THE BITCH'* when referring to a woman who had taken South Africa's then Deputy President Jacob Zuma to court on rape charges. Such reports reinforce harmful cultural stereotypes and myths (Meyers, 1997).

Gender-based violence requires a high level of sensitivity on the part of journalists so as to safeguard the interests of the violated. The confidentiality and safety of survivors of gender-based violence must be media's top priority. This is achieved by not publishing or broadcasting the names or any identifying information about the survivors. Pseudonyms are the most convenient way of identifying victims. This is because of the risk of further violence after reporting and social stigma around gender-based violence. If not carefully handled, interviews can also traumatize victims.

The predominant problems with news about violent crime against women lie not with individual journalists but with social structures and values that deny that male violence against women is a serious, systematic problem rooted in misogyny and patriarchy (Meyers, 1997). News on gender- based violence is often void of analysis and as such the root causes of the problem are not discussed. Media often do not link gender-based violence to the unequal power relations between women and men in society. The lack of critical analysis almost always manifests itself in media reports. Instead the reports point to the structural gaps that exist in society.

For example the less powerful are significantly disadvantaged in the scramble to secure access to the news media (Manning, 2001). This is also clear in the way that media source for comment in their stories. Men are the dominant voice and will also speak for women even on issues that affect them. Even these men are divided on class grounds with the socially powerful getting more access than ordinary non-influential men.

Feminist approaches and criticism of news have emphasized the absence or under-representation and misrepresentation of women (Dahlegren and Sparks, 1991). They note that the few times women are included in news items, they mainly appear in human interest stories, in a domestic setting or to give emotional eye witness accounts. This representation of women extends to the entertainment industry where films are watched from a 'male gaze' (Mulvey, 1975). Mulvey argues that women are objectified and used as objects of sexual stimulation. This is also true for South African soapies which are highly gendered as feminine and female. Soapies such as *Isidingo*, *Generations*, *7de Laan* and *Egoli* are but examples of how media construct and negotiate gender identities (Institute for Women's and Gender studies, 2007). Whilst *Generations* makes an attempt to portray women in powerful professional roles, they still have to be subordinate to men and their morals are often questionable. This includes characters like Dineo, Khethiwe Buthelezi and Mawande Memela.

Media often find themselves key players in political and economic power struggles where both commercial interests and cultural identities seemingly compete for media space and strategically mobilize forms of communicative power (Cottle, 2003). Apart from mirroring shared values, media suggest how people should behave as women and men. Media is one of the instruments through which gender definitions, identities and positioning are reinforced (Ang and Hermes, 1991).

Media put their audiences at a disadvantage as they selectively decide how to represent issues and events. Because media pervade our lives, the ways they misrepresent gender may distort how we see ourselves and what we perceive as normal and desirable for men and women (Wood, 1994). In general, media continue to present both women and men in stereotyped ways that limit perceptions of human possibilities (Wood, 1994). For example, children's television typically shows males as figures engaged in exciting activities, in control of their circumstances and exhibiting male attributes such as being aggressive. These representations of gender and the two sexes in particular, influence how people read or perceive gender. Stereotyping is one of the numerous ways in which consensus or agreements about

a certain group are expressed (Dyer, 1993).

One cannot talk about representation without mentioning the important role that language plays (Hall, 1997). Language is used in representation to say something meaningful about the world. Language is the greatest tool by which stereotypes, for example, are communicated. Language is the dominant way in which stereotypes are defined, communicated and assessed although stereotypes can take different forms (Maas and Arcuri, 1992). Media have the liberty to use language to portray certain events and people. Signs are organised into languages and it is through the existence of common languages that people are able to translate thoughts into words.

Media likewise create signs and meanings which help them represent thoughts around gender and the systems that govern relationships between women and men. These stereotypes are closely related to the use of language in reference to certain people and events. Wood (2004) also notes that another distortion in the representation of women and men is the distortion of older people which renders them nonexistent in media thereby giving the impression that they are a small sickly and unimportant part of our population. Equally interesting is the way that women and men are represented in stereotypical terms. Men are typically represented as uninterested in and incompetent at homemaking, cooking and child care (Horovitz, 1989). These mediated myths of relationships contribute to socializing people into unrealistic views of what a normal relationship is (Shapiri and Kroeger, 1991).

In South Africa the extent of the problem is appalling but the media has not played its part in informing people about the severity of the problem and advocating for change. The horrific violence, cruelties and injustices that women face on a daily basis rarely make media headlines with the press underreporting ignoring or underplaying gender-based violence in all its manifestations (Nyar, 2008). The Nwabisa Ngcukana incident which has been chosen as a case study for this research is one example of a story that just refused to die after making news headlines in South Africa early 2008. This incident is but a snapshot of what women go through in public spaces in South Africa. The majority of these incidences go about unreported in media. The majority of harassment of women at taxi ranks in South Africa has brought to the public's attention persistent male chauvinism that is a factor that has contributed to the high level of gender-based violence in South Africa (Magadla, 2008).

Media can play an effective role as agents for social transformation as they reach a wide audience and can easily influence opinion. Creedon (1978) speaks of the media's ability to shape public opinion and shape and mould the behaviour of audiences. This however does not mean that media can be effective change agents on their own. Mass media can be an effective catalyst for change when combined with community activism and government intervention. In essence media have a critical role to play in processes of transformation (Gender Links, 2001).

The mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace. It is their function to amuse, entertain, inform and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs and codes of behaviour that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society, (Herman and Chomsky, 1989, 2002). It is thus this expectation, that media products will influence a society's world view and perspective.

The media in Southern Africa has portrayed women as victims of violence or objects of beauty- not as human beings with hopes and visions, dreams and aspirations (Morna, 2001). This portrayal of women by media has rendered them helpless victims in the face of gender-based violence. Most of the coverage has denied survivors of violence agency and often portrays them as victims who cannot rise above the abuse and find new meaning and relevance.

There is no sensitivity in newsrooms concerning gender-based violence. This is often seen in the language and tone of stories which show total disregard for the feelings of the affected people. Judging language is used most of the time when talking about victims of gender-based violence. These are narrative representations which seek to punish victims (Dyer, 1979).

This shows that coverage of gender-based violence cannot be divorced from news coverage about women in general. According to feminist scholars, that coverage is a product of a male perspective that perpetuates stereotypes and myths about women while trivializing and ridiculing their needs and concerns (Saunders and Rock, 1978). Most of the coverage does not capture the constant battles that women are locked into, thereby denying them agency (Nyar, 2008). There are however women who have enforced these male perspectives. These women are a product of a society that has over time taught women what is expected of them.

It would therefore appear that media are not immune to socio-cultural influences around which they exist. This is evident in the way that male and female journalists report on gender-based violence. Most male journalists treat gender-based violence stories with scorn, detachment and insensitivity (Carter, Branston and Allan, 1998). The reporting often excludes all compassion and humanity, which is different from the way female journalists report.

Sourcing in media

Sourcing in news has also been a subject of contention for a while with observations that news is told from the point of view of men, with women rarely being sourced for comment. This links with gate keeping that occurs in news media (Hudson, 1989). Journalists decide whose voices and what messages go into the media. Sourcing in media is closely related to power (Cottle, 2003). This means that the powerless struggle to get access into the media. The absence or presence of citizen voices and how these voices are treated depends overwhelmingly on the journalist's preferences. Only those whose interests promote an opinion and a viewpoint of groups with corresponding views are more likely to be admitted through the news gates.

Most media reports only use comments from the police in their reports without seeking comment from the victims of crime thereby giving on sided stories told from the perspective of official sources. This often leads to one sided stories which rely heavily on official sources thereby denying victims the opportunity to speak about their experiences. The reporter attributes to the fact that victims frequently want to remain in the background.

Voices of victims of gender-based violence, especially women, are not loud enough in media. Men have assumed the role of speaking for women. Norris (1997) points out that most media representations reveal the power dynamics existing in society by silencing the voices of women. Voice in media normally denotes power and authority hence the dominance of the male voice in news content. What it is to speak in the name of women. Is it is not a precise repetition of the oppressive gesture of representation, by means of which man has reduced the woman to the status of a silent and subordinate object, to something inherently spoken for- to appropriate and to silence (Felman, 1993). While women are the primary victims of gender-based violence, they are not widely sourced for comment on this issue. This

mode of character construction is linked to the 'dumb blonde stereotype' where women are only dominant physically and yet do not have a voice in most media genres (Dyer, 1997).

Not only do women speak less frequently but they tend to speak as passive reactors and witnesses to public events rather than as people involved in those events (Holland, 1987). News is overwhelmingly seen through men hence the argument that news discourse constitutes a masculine narrative (Hartley in Carter, Branston and Allan, 1998). The above observations have found credence in literature focusing on the sociology of news production. There are certain factors at play which have contributed tremendously to the production of news. Journalists' perceptions about gender-based violence are easily influenced by cultural norms around them. There appears to be a network of influences ranging from communication workers' personal attitudes and role conceptions, routines of media work, media organisational structure and culture, the relationship between media and other social institutions and cultural and ideological forces (Creedon, 1994). Media do not operate in a vacuum where there is no outside influence impacting on their products. Media images are a product or tools of patriarchal oppression of women and their bodies (ibid, 1994).

Manning (2001) gives a different dimension to the news sources debate by arguing that, organisations and social groups seeking to secure access to the mainstream news media arena are much more likely to be successful if they understand the rhythms of news organisations and the values that guide news selection. This argument implies that citizens have to try to fit within the news values of news organisations if they want to gain access. This clearly gives news media a leeway to renege on their duty to ensure citizen participation in news production. This often results in what Manning, (2001) terms 'tailoring the content of the messages' or 'compromise' when one give messages to news media. He ends his arguments by noting that news can never be objective given organisational pressures, selection processes and source strategies which contribute to news production.

Though this may be the case, reporters and editors have to learn to avoid the infliction of further injury on individuals as well as the perpetuation of myths and stereotypes (Meyers, 1997). This could be done by excluding information with little journalistic value that is personally demeaning and painful to victims of abuse. For example in reporting on the Jacob Zuma rape trial, *Sowetan* went to great lengths to prove that the victim, Khwezi, had a dubious past. This in itself represents the victim as someone who was responsible for her victimization.

Women have made a difference, not in how they cover events or people, but in what they often chose to cover, especially in terms of issues historically underplayed by the media (Norris, 1997) Most media houses have tended to give more attention to 'money spinning' stories which are termed hard news while soft news are not given as much attention. Male journalists tend to shun human interest stories and assume that women are better and more interested in human interest stories (Carter, 198l). This has led to a higher number of women than men covering gender-based violence stories. Norris (1997) questions whether women journalists have different styles of journalism and news agendas or whether professional norms and values have ensured that they are similar to men in their style, while Carter (2003) argues that women would favour a more humane and involved approach to the news. This comes from the belief that women journalists are more likely to report sensitively about gender-based violence than men would.

A major critique of journalism and reporting on gender-based violence is that it is event driven and single sourced. Reports of gender-based violence are reported as single events with no analysis into the root causes of this kind of violence (Moolman, 2006). Media have not taken a holistic approach to gender-based violence but they treat cases as totally isolated events with no common explanations. Moolman also underscores the need for media to articulate issues around gender-based violence in a manner that captures the complexity of the problem, for example policy and legislation to end gender-based violence, the many forms of gender-based violence and public awareness and education about this aspect of violence. In line with this observation, Media Monitoring Project (MMP) South Africa (2002) noted that there is often little explanation in gender-based violence stories. There is a tendency by media to focus on the dramatic elements of such stories.

During a 2005 16 Days of Activism on Gender Violence campaign held in South Africa, organisers developed a strategy to provide media with packaged content that provided a more analytical perspective of gender-based violence (Moolman, 2006). This was the first step on the part of civil society to partner with media to improve the coverage of gender-based violence. Editors, journalists, media practitioners and gender activists came together to discuss media's reporting around gender-based violence and it was agreed that serious attitude changes had to take place before holistic representation of gender-based violence in media could be achieved.

The family is one of the sites for gender violence, that is where it mostly occurs thereby becoming a fertile breeding ground for more gender violations as children watch the violence manifesting itself. As children are growing up, their socialization begins in the family setting where they are prepared for life and their perceptions of what is feminine and masculine are shaped here. This is where boys get an idea of how their later partners should behave. Failure by women to fit into the traditional stereotype sometimes fuels gender-based violence.

The secrecy surrounding marital rape has also contributed to the problem of gender-based violence. Topics such as marital rape are rarely discussed in public hence the argument at the 1997 SADC Gender Strategy workshop that it is in the privatization of domestic violence that patriarchy is consolidated. Marital rape was recognized as a criminal offense in 1993 in South Africa by the Prevention of Family Violence Act as is now a prosecutable offense. Because marital rape is likely to occur in the home, proof of rape by a husband is difficult to obtain (Human Rights Watch, 1995).

Media have contributed to the violent nature of our society. It has been noted that, there are certainly fundamental and intricate connections between representations and human attitudes (Carter and Weaver, 2003). Most media especially broadcast media, show violent films where in some cases violent people emerge as heroes. It is from such films that roles models are created and the desire to emulate their behaviour builds in children. Carter and Weaver (2003) also pose the question of whether some forms of violent media content directly or indirectly cause actual violent behaviour to occur. Creedon (1978) however, believes in the 'all powerful media effects' which she links to the 'magic bullet' theory of mass communication. This theory assumes that media have powerful effects that include a direct impact on behaviour.

The South African constitution has been described as progressive, yet its citizens have continued to flout its provisions as far as basic human rights are concerned. Patriarchy has remained entrenched in the very fabric of society. The Sexual Offenses Bill which had been on the cards since 1996 was finally passed into law in May 2007. This has been a positive development but it is yet to be seen whether media refer to the law in their reporting on gender-based violence. The Domestic Violence Act of 1998 is also another statutory instrument put in place to deal with gender-based violence. Media have a role to publicize these instruments.

According to the UN Secretary General's 2006 report, 89 countries have some legislation on domestic violence and a growing number of countries have instituted National Action Plans. South Africa is one of the countries that have development a 365 National Action Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children. This action plan that was drafted by government, civil society, legislators and statutory bodies was launched by then Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka in March 2007. The Action Plan is popularly referred to as the Kopanong Declaration.

This study contributes to existing literature by giving comprehensive detail on sourcing patterns in gender-based violence stories and the latest observed trends in the representation of victims of this violence in *Sowetan.*

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Feminist interpretations of gender-based violence

Feminist theory frames gender-based violence within the larger social inequalities between women and men. This suggests that gender-based violence is mostly heterosexual occurring mostly in relationships between women and men. Coleman (1990) notes that most research conducted around domestic violence observe that is a significant problem that is almost always perpetrated by men over women. Feminism therefore becomes a radical way of addressing these imbalances by highlighting women's rights and putting a spotlight on the power dynamics at play.

Feminism emphasises that gender is important in understanding and defining how society is organised. This is important in understanding that men and women behave the way they do as a result society's definition of the relationship between the two sexes. How different sexes, and ultimately genders, relate to one another in society is also important in how society is organised (Rape Crisis, 2014).

As sexual violence, in particular, is a result of gender role inequality found in patriarchal cultures which oppress women and empower men (Chesler, 1997), it can therefore be argued that gendered notions of power and powerlessness play a large role in the meaning and making of rape in South Africa (Rohland, 2009). In their interpretation of rape in South Africa, feminists argue that gender inequality is at the root of rape (Brownmiller, 1975; Chesler, 1997; Gavey, 2005; Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002; Moffett, 2006; Posel, 2005; Ward, 1995). Patriarchy has played a key role in maintaining the unequal gender relations through relegating women to subordinate status and maintaining men's superior status. Men have continued to assert their power and women viewed as extensions of men's property. Rape is thus used to assert men's power and authority and maintaining the status quo. Rape has contributed to the sexual exploitation of women (Brownmiller, 1975) and their inability to negotiate safe sex, such as condom use. Rape is a gender inequality concern that cuts across race and class, and is not exclusive to black poverty stricken men.

South African feminists have also raised concerns over rape discourse in contemporary South Africa. This is particularly so for homophobic violence. Media reports have shown a rise in attacks against lesbian women in townships across South Africa (Phamodi, 2011). This type of sexual violence, which is crudely

referred to as 'corrective' or 'curative' rape, raises fundamental questions around how society understands and interprets sexual and gender-based violence, homophobia and the linkages to gender inequality.

Feminists have also analysed how the social environment, particularly the relation of power and the ability to bring consequences, impacts how the potentially abusive person behaves (Zemsky, 1990, and Gilbert et al, 1990). Radical feminists, on the other hand, believe that it is only women and women alone who will exorcise society of the gender inequalities that exist. This kind of feminism has given birth to activist organisations and strengthened the women's movement. This type of activism still has the danger of exacerbating marginalisation due to failure to recognize that the struggle for gender equality is one that calls for collective effort and collaboration working with men as partners.

Gender-based violence, especially domestic violence is often situated within a complex set of roles for women and men which not only describe how they behave but also provide an understanding of the role these norms play in creating situations that allow for the emergence of abuse (Hargreaves etal, 2006). This ties in with the role that culture often plays in perpetuating gender-based violence. For example women have assumed a subordinate role in society, which places them at risk of being abused or exploited by the more powerful in society.

Whilst feminist theory is important as a starting point in giving sociological explanations for gender-based violence, it leaves many questions pertaining to violence in same sex relationships unanswered. Whilst the body of research on abuse in same sex relationships is limited, scholarly have effectively confronted the explanations given for same sex violence that seek to argue that since men are inherently violent, there is bound to be violence in gay relationships (Coleman, 1990). In lesbian relationships, violence will be perpetrated by the 'man' in the relationship on the 'femme' or woman (Kelly and Warshafsky, 1987).

Feminist theory has been seen to exclude violence that happens in same sex relationships, especially among gays and lesbians. However, feminist theory has been seen as insufficient in explaining some types of violence such as same sex male battering. This makes domestic violence not a gender issue, but rather a psychological problem (Island and Letellier, 1991). By integrating psychological principles and

sociological concepts, this theory explores the many dimensions of power and explains the phenomenon of domestic violence as it occurs in many relationship configurations.

Feminism discusses gender-based violence in the context of men asserting their power over women and mostly guided by society's definitions of masculinity and femininity. Such notions of appropriate behaviour by women especially have been held in contempt by most South African feminist writers who feel that there is need to change the country's public and private gender-talk (Gqola, 2007). Gqola argues that the failure to dismantle the culture and history of militarism in post-apartheid South Africa and the continued lack of discourse on the continued presence of violence, has led to the 'messy state'. She says,

> it is this silence around the connections between accepting the ever-presence of violence as a given, on the one hand, and the absence of discussions around how it affects us as a society, on the other hand which continues to trouble (Gqola (2007, in African Identities, 5.1: 114).

During Jacob Zuma's rape trial in 2008, cultural justifications for the 'rape' did not go uncontested as feminist activists drew attention to the fact that culture is not static and as such the so called 'Zulu' culture is dynamic (Mkhwananzi, 2006). For example Zuma argued that it was against his Zulu culture to leave a sexually aroused woman without fulfilling her sexual needs. Zuma's actions were therefore seen by many as a mockery to the gender and sexual rights of women that are enshrined in the country's constitution.

Liberal feminism puts some responsibility on the state to address gender-based violence. In South Africa national gender machinery include the Commission for Gender Equality and the Ministry of Women, Children and People Living with Disability. Prior to the formation of this ministry, the Office for the Status of Women was responsible for attending 'women's issues.' Many researchers and activists in South Africa have questioned the decision by government to replace the OSW with the new Ministry. There have also been questions on the state's sincerity and commitment to ending gender-based violence. While there has been progress in terms of the representation of women and access to political positions, there is also stagnation in political will and policy implementation (Gouws 2005b, Hassim, 2005: Meintjes, 2005; Holland Mutter, 2008 in Mvimbi, 2009).

Sociology of news production

This research is based on the premise that news is a construction of reality in newsrooms by players in the media industry. Media personnel make decisions and assumptions on what audiences want from the news media. These media individuals are products and what they ultimately put out to audiences is determined by their interpretation of the societies they serve as well as socio-economics. This finds credence in the political economy and sociology of news production theories. While these theories have been put forward,

> "media are still expected to give a truthful, comprehensive and insightful account of events…in a context that gives them meaning" (Ronning, 2002, 17).

The media has a role in giving voice to all citizens and the articulation of public opinion (Cottle, 2003). All this highlights the power play between news and their sources.

Social scientists such as Cohen, Gieber, and Fishman define news as the social construction of reality by media people (Schudson, 1989). Tuchman (1976) argues that the sociology of news production theory alerts audiences to the fact that news, like all public documents is a constructed reality. News is a representation of reality as seen by journalists and influenced by other socio- economic and cultural factors (Moon, 2001:34). As such violence in news is rather the product of a complex manufacturing machine, (Dines and Humez, 2003). Before one can delve into a discussion of representation, it is important to understand what representation is. Hall (1997: 15) interprets representation as 'the production of meaning through language.' Representation also has to do with how others see members of a group and their place (Dyer, 1993).

News is manufactured by journalists (Molotch and Lester, 1974, Young, 1973)) and newspapers reflect not a world 'out there' but the practices of those who have the power to determine the experiences of others. However it has to be noted that journalists do not fake the news but they construct the news (Schudson, 1997). Journalism is therefore a selective account of reality defined by news values. Journalism is a production line which is not there to tell us the things we might want to know, but sustain a vast cognitive industry of which we are consumers (Minogue, 1997). Media companies work

within a set of rules and standards. This explains why some events and topics are hardly reported on in some newspapers and news bulletins.

The concept of gate keeping ensures that only those issues chosen by the gatekeeper will be published or broadcast. A gatekeeper needs some criteria for selecting which items of information to let through the 'gate' and which to hold back (Schudson as cited in Berkonitz, 1989). A gatekeeper is usually guided by policy issues in his newsroom. While policy is not written down in most media houses, it is evident in the manner that news events are angled. Policy is the consistent orientation shown by a paper, not only in its editorial but in its news columns and headlines concerning selected issues and events (Schudson, 1989).

A common gate keeping pattern occurs when powerful officials or established interests promote an issue and a viewpoint and groups in society with corresponding views are more likely to be admitted through the news gates.

Organisational structures in media organisations have also been seen as having an impact on media content. There are key positions in media houses which influence content and women rarely occupy these positions (Ormajee, 2001). A study conducted by the South African National Editors Forum (SANEF) in 2006 revealed that women constitute only 18% of journalists in South African newsrooms. According to the study, most newsrooms still remain 'boys clubs.'

The way women and other 'minority groups are treated by society is closely related to their representation' (Dyer, 1993). This highlights the fact that representation has a strong influence on socio-cultural relations. This therefore links representation to cultural forms. According to Dyer, this embeddedness in cultural forms makes representation a complex phenomenon. For example, representations which present women as readily 'available' for the sexual advances of men testify to the power mechanisms of patriarchy which pervade our culture (Taylor and Willis, 1999). Similar arguments have been mounted about other social groups which hold less power than others in society. For example old people and disabled people have all been represented in pejorative ways (Taylor and Willis, 1999).

Representation is based on consensus among social groups and there are various systems that are employed (Dyer, 1993). Stereotypes are one of the most common ways of representation by the centre

where there is the 'othering' of certain groups of people. This however is only valid if one assumes that this means representations of others by the centre. Stereotyping is taken to express a general agreement about a social group, an observation that renders all perceptions stereotypical (Lipman, 1956). There is a system of representation by which all sorts of objects, people and events are correlated with a set of concepts or mental representations which we carry around in our heads (Hall, 1997). For example the 'dumb blonde' stereotype makes one view all blond people as dumb because of the way they have been represented.

Language is another system involved in the overall process of constructing meaning (Hall, 1997). The existence of language enables people to translate their thoughts into words. Language is also anchored on shared systems and conceptual maps involved in the creation of meaning. Language makes use of signs which are organised to give meaning. The important part played by semiotics in representation is also noted by Deacon et al (1999) where an observation is made that signification is an important aspect of representation.

The various theories around news production and the way reality is represented are discussed in more detail in the following section. How the gendered structure of production affects the encoding process depends on the particular coupling of 'organisational identities of communicators and organisational routines (Van zoonen, 1994). He further argues that to expect that an increase in women communicators will influence media content in a desired feminist fashion is theoretically and strategically unsound.

Most people who criticize journalistic output usually over-estimate the extent to which journalists are free agents ignoring the limitations that exist in the newsrooms (McNair, 2002). McNair notes that journalism is the result of a production process centred on the newsroom and that the newsroom is the starting point for the individual journalist's activity defining its routines and limitations. Media houses are guided by in-house codes of practice and policies which journalists have to adhere to. As a journalist starts work in a newsroom they have to acquaint themselves with the news values of the organisation and conform to the editorial policy. A journalist is socialized into the norms of their job as a mechanism to promote conformity. This sometimes forces journalists to practice self-censorship in a bid to conform to expectations in the newsrooms.

The above observations clearly show that the journalist does not wield much power as far as selection of newsworthy events is concerned. Structural issues in newsrooms usually determine who has the final say of what will make it into the news. In most cases, the editor decides what is newsworthy and what is not. Journalists' efforts on the job are constrained by organisational and occupational routines (Schudson, 1989). While the editor may seem to be in control of the editorial process, there are economic forces at play that one has to contend with as they execute their duties. Theories around the political economy of news production have revealed that ownership plays a major role in the news values of an organisation. The political economy argument relates the outcome of the news process to the economic structure of the news organisation. This renders the editor powerless as they try to pander to the interests of owners.

There is a danger of envisaging the journalistic practice as a production process thereby underestimating the extent to which particular journalists make a difference because of their editorial experience and their journalistic flair (Manning , 2001). This counters the argument that journalists do not have room for creativity as they have to adhere to editorial policy in their newsrooms. Replacing the reflection theory of the media with the theory that news is constructed is an elementary move (Minogue, 1997).

News access

Who secures media access and why and how inevitably raises fundamental questions about the nature of media participation, processes and forms of mediated citizenship (Cottle, 2003). Media consciously decide whose views and voice should be heard in their coverage or reports. Access and voice in media in closely related to power dynamics in society some of which may be political and some economic. Most media source involvement arguments raise fundamental concerns about who is delegated to speak or pronounce on social affairs and wider conflicts, of how exactly this communicative entitlement is conducted, and by whom it has been authorized (ibid, 2003). In most instances, institutional sources like the government are able to access the news more frequently and more efficiently than other groups and the public at large (Campbell, 2004).

There is possibility of the powerful political elites applying informal or formal pressures to promote or restrict the circulation of information through news media (Manning, 2001). This often leaves the politically weak at the mercy of the media.

Clearly the organisation of news is not geared up to the needs of the socially powerless and this is seen in organisational dependence upon official sources (Cottle, 2003). Even then, official comment is rarely subjected to critical analysis and is taken as fact (*ibid*, 2003). In most instances ordinary people's voices are missing in media because they are not regarded as powerful enough to make it into the news. Journalists engage in the 'strategic ritual' of seeking out authoritative voices that they deem to be knowledgeable and socially accredited to pronounce on newsworthy events (Tuchman, 1982)

Women face the brunt of the unfair gender relations and stereotypes that are perpetrated by the media. Men are typically portrayed as active, adventurous, powerful, sexually aggressive and largely uninvolved in human relationships (Wood, 1994). On the other hand women are presented as sex subjects, passive, dumb, among other things. Wood also notes that the qualities that men are urged to exemplify are identical to those linked to abuse of women. Either way, women are defined by their bodies and how men treat them. Media have denied women agency in representations where they are mostly victims of men.

While it is important that media accommodates all the constituent voices in a society, there are some cases where people may not want anything to do with the media. Victims of crime or disaster may decline to give comment in media (Campbell, 2004). People do this for various reasons, including security concerns. However, there are people that seek access to the media to build and maintain their reputations (Campbell, 2004). The effects of sourcing will be discussed in more depth in the following section.

CHAPTER FOUR -METHODOLOGY

Data source

Data for this study was obtained from the Johannesburg based *Sowetan* newspaper. The paper was chosen primarily because it is one of the most popular dailies in the province and also has a wide geographical reach, reaching all nine provinces of South Africa. While the *Daily Sun* is clearly the most popular, it was not chosen mainly because of its tabloid approach to news reporting mainly focusing on human interest stories with a sensational twist. While *Sowetan* is tabloid in size, it balances hard news and human-interest stories thereby appealing to different sections of society.

Sowetan was South Africa's first black newspaper to reach the black market when it was launched in 1981. Going by the tag 'THE SOUL TRUTH', it continues to be one of South Africa's most read daily newspapers with a readership of 1.6 million and circulation of 124 000 nationally. *Sowetan* falls under the Avusa Communications stable (formerly Johncom Communications) publishers of titles such as the *Sunday Times*, which is the country's most popular weekly with a readership of 3,5 million. Avusa also publishes the *Daily Times* and *Business Day* in addition to a string of community papers such as the *Daily Dispatch* and *Algoa Sun*.

Observations made before the commencement of the study, showed that *Sowetan* also reports on gender-based violence although the degree of coverage was not measured. For example *Sowetan,* 11 October 2007, reported on what it called 'sugar cane' killings in Umzinto where a lot of young women were raped, killed and their bodies dumped in sugar cane fields. There were a series of follow up reports based on this incident.

Sowetan is also one of the papers that extensively covered the 2006 trial of then South African Deputy President Jacob Zuma (now President) on charges of rape. Zuma was accused of raping a 31 year old woman who also happened to be a family friend. Media activists criticized the paper for openly supporting the accused and questioning the authenticity of the accusations. There were a number of screaming headlines observed during the period. For example on the 8th of March 2006, the paper led with the story, '*BURN THE BITCH*' in bold letters and on the 4th of April it carried another story with the headline, '*She was ready for sex'* even before the verdict of the case was given. The pattern was the

same throughout the duration of the trial where the accused, Jacob Zuma, was portrayed as a victim of political machinations against him.

The fact that its coverage was seen as judging the woman even before the court gave its verdict makes it an interesting newspaper to study. Whilst this study is not primarily concerned with whether *Sowetan* has improved its coverage of GBV since then, observations to that effect will still be made in the conclusion to this study.

The study analysed all news items except for supplements and advertorial as these are less likely to provide data on gender-based violence. Adverts especially would not give any data on sourcing which is of significant interest to the study.

Research period

Data collection took place between January and March 2008. The researcher gathered the newspapers and later analysed the content for manifest features and variables relating to coverage of gender-based violence. However the research made note of key developments relating to gender-based violence even outside the research period. These include the Jacob Zuma rape trial that happened in 2006 and the Gender Links and Medical Research Council, Violence Against Women (VAW) studies that commenced in 2011. The Zuma rape trial received extensive media coverage (Skeen, 2007)

The study used purposive sampling to determine the period of the study. In this case the months within which the Nwabisa Ngcukana miniskirt incident happened were deemed to be a close fit to what this study is looking out for. For example the period January to March 2008 may not give the same findings as a sample of one year for example January- December. However in this study, the fact that there is a case of gender-based violence that occurs within the chosen period makes it a worthwhile method of study. For purposes of a study such as this one where resources are limited non probability sampling makes the sample easier to handle and significantly cuts costs. It is also a fact that with probability sampling the researcher risks picking up a population or period where newspapers have no stories on gender-based violence. This would not give conclusive results on how gender-based violence is covered. It therefore works to the advantage of this study to deliberately choose a period and a newspaper where it is highly likely that gender-based violence will be a topic under discussion.

Sample

Purposive sampling was used to come up with the period January- March 2008 as the period of study. Purposive sampling is a method whereby one 'samples with purpose in mind.' Purposive sampling in this case was used because there were certain features of content that the study was looking out for. In purposive sampling, the selection of the sample is based on the judgment of the researcher as to which subjects best fit the criteria of the study.

This study made use of newspapers published between the 1st of January and the 31st of March 2008. Newspapers from Monday to Friday were analysed. In total 74 editions of the newspaper were studied with a total 5960 news items. Weekend papers were however excluded as they have a slightly different approach to news. The *Sunday World* which is *Sowetan*'s Sunday paper is a tabloid and is mostly concerned with gossip especially celebrity news. The paper is more likely to write on scandals associated with public figures than on hard news. Gender-based violence would likely be covered if it is associated with public figures.

The period under review is very important in that there were significant incidences of gender-based violence which sparked a lot of public debate and discussion. Media also became involved in this discourse. A case in point is the incident dubbed 'the mini skirt incident' in which Nwabisa Ngcukana was sexually harassed and assaulted at one of Johannesburg taxi ranks for wearing a miniskirt. This incident, which happened in February 2008 therefore made available an opportunity for this study to observe patterns of coverage of gender-based violence prior to the incident (January) during (February) and post the incident in March 2008. After this incident it was observed that media started opening up to other violations especially those taking place in public spaces. This study therefore tried to establish whether coverage of gender-based violence increased after the incident or no significant changes were noted. The study makes comparisons between January and March especially to see if the mini skirt incident made a different in media's coverage of GBV.

This period is also significant in that it is just after the 16 Days of No violence against Women and Children campaign. This campaign which runs every year from the 25th of November to the 10th of December is marked by both government and civil society in South Africa. The main objective of the campaign is to raise awareness in society on the alarming levels of gender-based violence as well as to

engage all stakeholders in charting a way forward especially in addressing the problem. South Africa is one of the countries in the region that have actively participated in this campaign which is observed by the international community at large.

Limitations

Whilst it would have been good to look at a longer period before the incident and after the incident it was not possible to obtain copies of newspapers from November up to December 2007. Enquiries with *Sowetan* revealed that old newspapers are sent for recycling at six month intervals. The research therefore had to settle for the period starting January 2008 which is one month before the miniskirt incident.

Data collection methods

The methodology chosen for the study sought to answer the broad research questions below:

1. How much coverage does *Sowetan* give to gender-based violence? How often do gender-based violence stories appear on the front page of the paper?

2. Does *Sowetan* give a voice to victims of gender-based violence in its stories? Who are its main sources in gender-based violence stories?

3. How does *Sowetan* represent victims and perpetrators of gender-based violence?

Content analysis

Content analysis was the major research method used to collect and analyse data for this study. It took both quantitative and qualitative tools of analysis. Content analysis is a method that has been developed to investigate the patterns that characterize the manifest or surface features of large quantities of media content (Sullivan, 2003). For a study that looks at ninety seven issues of a paper, content analysis was ideal in establishing a pattern in terms of representation of victims of gender-based violence and sourcing. Sources were also put in categories and quantified.

Content analysis is typically called a quantitative method because it involves counting and summing phenomena of already existing texts. This method is considered an unobtrusive technique because

researchers study texts that already exist rather than asking people to produce texts (Frey et al, 1999). The quantitative study sought to establish quantity of coverage as well as a sourcing pattern in the paper by quantifying certain types of sources and representations. While quantitative methods are not usually ideal for studies on representation, they can be used together with qualitative methods to support them. For example one can count how many times victims of gender-based violence are referred to as victims or survivors and further expand on this using qualitative textual analysis for example. Content analysis is usually concerned with asking quantitative questions about how far media representations mirror reality.

Content analysis is also useful if used over a given timeframe to establish patterns in media. If you want to establish patterns of representation in media content over a given period of time-content analysis provides you with a methodological approach for doing so (Deacon, 1999). Content analysis is another of main approaches that has been used for assessing the representation of social groups in media studies (Taylor and Willis, 1999). As a methodical approach with roots in sociology, it is concerned with collating and gauging the manifest content of large amounts of media output.

Where research on gender and media is scarce, content analysis is instrumental in providing a general impression of the representation of women and men (Van Zoonen, 1994). This can work for both short studies and large scale research carried out over a number of years. For this study on representation of victims of gender-based violence, content analysis becomes an effective method of analyzing this. One other advantage of this method is that it allows the researcher to make use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. It also provides insight into complex models of human thought and language use in media output.

This research made use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods to analyse *Sowetan's* sourcing as well as representation of victims of gender-based violence. The quantitative aspects were useful in quantifying features of the coverage in order to make generalizations based on this. The qualitative methods were used to support observations made in the quantitative modes of research.

All pages of the paper were monitored except supplements. However only those stories concerned with gender-based violence were subjected to textual analysis whilst other more general stories were used as statistical evidence to support observations made. For the purposes of this study gender-based violence

included stories on sexual and physical assault outside the home assault, domestic violence which includes physical or sexual assault, economic violation and forced marriages as shown in the table below.

Table 1: categories of gender-based violence

Categories of gender-based violence	**Sexual assault**	**Physical assault**	**Verbal abuse**	**Economic violations**	**Forced marriages**	**Domestic violence**	**Total number of stories**
Number of stories							

The table above shows the breakdown of gender-based violence stories. This was done so as to provide more conclusive results on which categories of gender-based violence are most prevalent in the media. Gender-based violence takes various forms and some types of violence are more prevalent than others. Whilst domestic violence is a broad category which encompasses the other forms, this category has been included so as to question the hypothesis that the home is the site for most of the gender-based violence incidences.

As one of the study's objectives was to analyse whether victims of gender-based violence are given the opportunity to talk about their experiences, the question of who speaks on gender-based violence was a crucial one. The table below was used to measure how often victims speak compared to other people. It was also important to see whether media rely on 'official sources' like law enforcement agents and government officials for information on gender-based violence or they give equal space to ordinary people.

Apart from establishing who the sources are, it was important to gender disaggregate this data so as to see whether women and men speak equally when it comes to gender-based violence. Since women are the majority of victims of gender violence it is natural that they should be speaking more on it. There has been an observation that women are often spoken for even on issues that affect them more than anyone else.

This research did not lose sight of the fact that victims of gender-based violence are sometimes reluctant to speak to media about their experiences (Gans, 1979). While some victims would want nothing to do with the media, others will court media coverage. Case material has also been used to support the findings of the study.

Table 2: Sources in GBV stories and their sex

Date	Victim/survivor		Perpetrator		Police spokesperson		Govt official		Social worker.		Relatives		Judiciary		Other		**Total**	
	M	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**
1/1/2008																		
2/1/2008																		
3/1/2008																		
4/1/2008																		
7/1/2008																		
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24/1/2008																		
25/1/2008																		
28/1/2008																		
29/1/2008																		
30/1/2008																		
31/1/2008																		

Qualitative analysis

The study also employed qualitative content analysis methods to support the quantitative study. All this was done as part of content analysis. This was to ensure that both meaning, as intended by the source and its latent content as well as meaning read by the reader are captured.

As such textual analysis was used to compliment the quantitative tools. The analysis of language and diction of gender-based violence stories in particular were part of gaining an overall picture on representation of victims. Each story was scrutinized so as to gain an insight into *Sowetan's* attitude towards GBV in general. Language is crucial in revealing tone and attitude.

Language plays a very important role in representation as it is vital in the construction of meaning about the world and in depicting it (Hall, 1997). According to Swiss linguist Saussure, the production of meaning depends entirely on language. The headlines in particular were analysed as they often carry the story. Language cannot be divorced from the cultural conventions and configurations and social order in which media operates. Media will often borrow from the culture in which it operates. As such cultural myths that underlie gender violence are likely to manifest themselves in language used in media.

Textual analysis

This method of analysis falls within content analysis. This study made use of *Sowetan's* media output as texts for analysis. While textual analysis can also be quantitative in nature, this method was mainly used to analyse the qualitative aspects of reporting on gender-based violence. The important considerations in textual analysis include selecting the types of texts to be studied, acquiring appropriate texts, and determining which particular approach to employ in analyzing them (Frey et al, 1999).

Whereas quantitative methods are more deductive, statistical and confirmatory, qualitative methods are more inductive, non-statistical and more exploratory thereby providing more insight into the field of study (Berg, 1995). Whilst the quantitative content analysis, methods

applied in this research give a lot of insight into *Sowetan*'s representation of victims of gender-based violence and sourcing, they cannot be said to sufficiently cover all aspects of the research questions.

Textual analysis is the skill of deconstructing media texts which involves a detailed examination of the way a text is constructed. This research made use of two types of textual analysis, thematic and semantic textual analysis. Gender-based violence was selected as a specific theme and as such all stories that relate to this theme were analysed. These stories differed in that some were about incidences whilst somewhere court reports and even general stories that mention gender-based violence. Stories that had nothing to do with theme were therefore not subjected to analysis. They were however counted and compared against the total number of gender-based violence stories so as to give a sense of how prominent gender-based violence is as a topic in *Sowetan*.

The other level of textual analysis explored was semantic analysis whereby sentences were subjected to scrutiny especially the use of language and interrelated signs. Stories on gender-based violence were therefore broken down into smaller units of enquiry such as looking at the headlines, the language used when writing about victims and perpetrators of gender-based violence as well as the images and captions accompanying the stories. Unlike other methods of analysis which look at only the manifest features, semantic analysis goes deeper into inference rather than manifest features.

Case study

Nwabisa Ngcukana‘s story was used as a case study with which to measure changes in the coverage of GBV before and after the incident as well as to establish patterns in the coverage of gender-based violence in the media in general. Nwabisa Ngcukana, the survivor of the incident stood out as a survivor in that she was able to come out and openly ‘face her demons’ by denouncing gender-based violence. This story is in sharp contrast to many gender-based violence incidents which go on unreported in South Africa.

The case study is an in depth study of a particular situation rather than a sweeping statistical survey which may not go very deep. It is a method used to narrow down a very broad field of research into one easily researchable topic.

As a research strategy, the case study technique involves an in-depth longitudinal examination of a single instance or event in a systematic way. In analyzing this case study, both quantitative and qualitative research methods of analysis will be used. Case studies are also effective in providing statistical framework for making inferences from quantitative case-study data. The case study is a research approach, situated between concrete data taking techniques and methodological paradigms (Lamnek, 2005). Whilst the case study will not answer a question completely, it gives some indications and allows further elaboration and to formulate a position on a subject.

A case study provides more realistic responses than a purely statistical survey because it uses exploratory qualitative techniques to analyse units of enquiry. In analyzing gender-based violence in *Sowetan*, it was useful to bring in a prominent story which was rich in exposing both positive and negative coverage of gender-based violence. To date no detailed study of this incident has been done in the country. Only brief papers and opinion pieces have been written on this.

This method allows the researcher to analyse raw data using many interpretations in order to find linkages between research object and the outcomes with reference to the original research questions. Throughout the evaluation and analysis process, the researcher remains open to new opportunities and insights. The analysis of the 'miniskirt' incident still remained linked to the broad study questions.

Instead of randomly choosing a case study, this research chose information-oriented techniques to come up with the miniskirt incident as a case study. The purposive sampling technique was used to choose this case study. This gives the study more depth as it is likely to find more revealing information pertaining to gender-based violence in this instance. The miniskirt incident was an already existing story when this study commenced. It was chosen mainly to give more in-depth information on *Sowetan's* coverage of gender-based violence.

The case study was also subjected to the same methods of analysis as the other stories on gender-based violence. There was an analysis of how Ngcukana was represented by the media as well as the sourcing patterns in all Sowetan*'s* reports. As images are part of text, these were also analysed. However, unlike the other types of violence which were categorized by type, it was not necessary for this case study as it was just one story being looked at.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Gender-based violence stories in *Sowetan*

This chapter will detail the findings of the research starting with the quantitative findings on the overall coverage of gender-based violence during the entire period of the study. This will be followed by a comparative analysis of pre-miniskirt stories, the miniskirt incident story and other linked stories and stories covered after the incident. While gender-based violence as a topic is covered by the paper, it is to a lesser extent compared to other non-gender violence stories.

However, the 'miniskirt story' received a lot of coverage even attracting remarkable political responses with *Sowetan,* 7 March 2008, reporting on '*Threat to close Noord taxi rank.*' This stern instruction was given by the Gauteng Transport portfolio committee to the Gauteng police. Top taxi industry personnel also called on government to take decisive action over the loss of lives and harassment at the country's taxi ranks.

The miniskirt story falls within the broader stories on GBV but is being discussed separately as it sparked a lot of media debate and detail. The debates focused on violation of women's rights as well as cultural interpretations of the incident. The assault received widespread media coverage as well as high-level political attention (Nyar, 2000) something, which rarely happens with gender-based violence stories. In subsequent weeks after the miniskirt story, similar stories from other parts of the country started getting media attention. *Sowetan*, 31 March 2008, carried the story, '*Taxi drivers abuse another woman'*. There were several other stories following Ngcukana's attack with other South African women opening up about their experiences of having been groped and humiliated by men at taxi ranks and in crowded places.

There were other general gender-based violence stories that happened before the miniskirt story. An example is the February 11 2008 article on a murdered girl's mother blaming the justice system for the delay in finalizing her daughter's murder case.

The stories have been categorized into three periods, the pre-miniskirt period, the miniskirt story and the post miniskirt story period. This breakdown of stories is meant to observe patterns of coverage before the incident compared to afterwards. One of the objectives is to observe

whether the miniskirt incident influenced media, especially *Sowetan*'s coverage of gender-based violence.

Prominence of gender-based violence stories

Figure 5.1: Coverage of gender-based violence in *Sowetan*

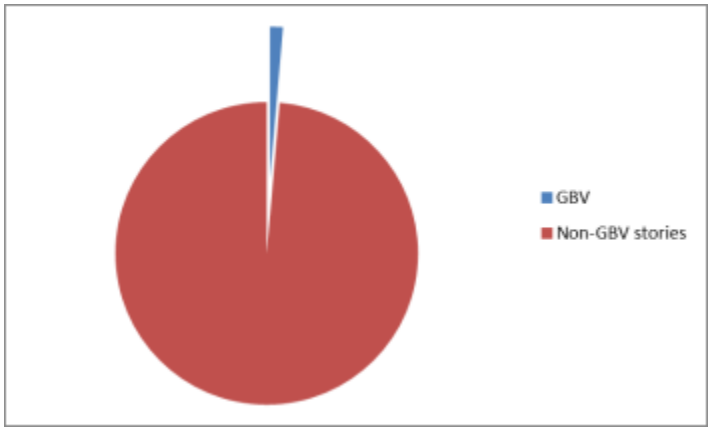


Figure 5.1 shows that there was minimal coverage of gender-based violence in the period under study. There were 74 stories on gender-based violence out of a total of 5460 stories covered. There were 5386 non gender-based violence stories. Gender-based violence stories represent 1% of all stories covered during the three months period.

One of the objectives of this study was to analyse whether prominent incidences like the Nwabisa Ngcukana case would lead to an increase in coverage of gender-based violence in *Sowetan*.

Figure 5.2: Breakdown of gender-based violence stories by period

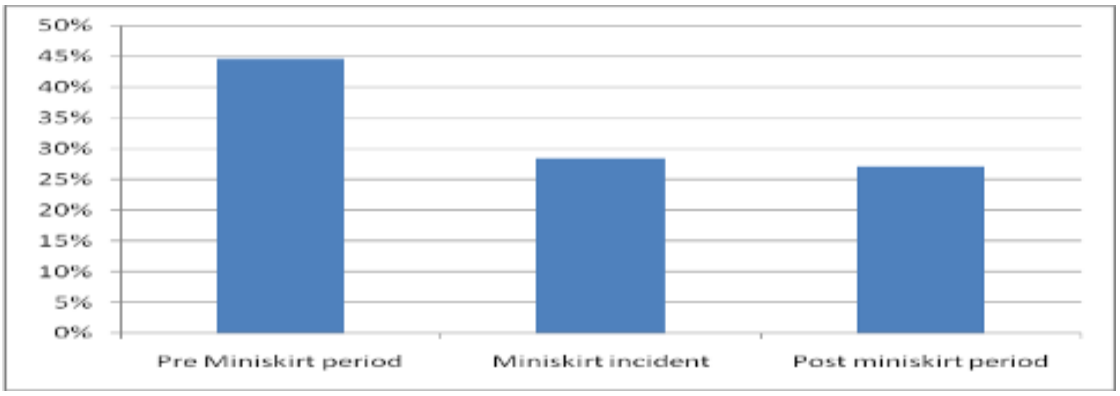


Figure 5.2 shows that most of the stories that were covered happened before the 'miniskirt' incident making up 45% of all stories. There were 33 gender-based violence stories between January and 17 February 2008. There was a drop in stories during the 'miniskirt' period with just

21 stories covered during this period, representing 29% of all gender-based violence stories. The lowest number of stories happened after the miniskirt incident at 26%.

Placing of gender-based violence stories in the paper

Out of the 74 stories reported only 5 (7%) made it into the first page. The miniskirt story broke this bias by having an unknown 25 year old Nwabisa Ngcukana making front page headlines after suffering humiliation at the hands of taxi drivers at the Noord taxi rank. The first lead page appearance was on the 18th of February. There were subsequent front page reports on the 19th and 20th of February, 5th and 7th of March 2008. For example, *Sowetan* March 5 2008 had a headline '*MINIS DARE TAXI DEMONS'* on the first page followed by the actual story on page three. This gave the story prominence even though the full story was inside the paper. There was a subsequent first page report, *'I FACED MY DEMONS'* of Ngcukana detailing how she went back to the taxi rank to face her 'demons'.


I FACED MY DEMONS'
Victim marches to taxi rank

The front page headlines associated with the miniskirt incident were bold and stood out. Pictures of Ngcukana in her torn skirt and exposed buttocks facing the camera accompanied some of the stories. On 19th February, the three quarter page headline '*MINISKIRT SPARKS HUGE UPROAR*" stood out. The picture of humiliated Ngcukana added to its visibility.

Gender-based violence stories rarely make front page news unless involving prominent people as was seen in 2006 during the Jacob Zuma rape trial. In this period there were no such stories involving prominent people such as politicians and celebrities. e amount of space given to the miniskirt story was exceptional. On 19 February, *Sowetan* gave a whole page to the story. There were three different stories each giving different perspectives on the incident. First was the row that had erupted as a result of the incident, which quoted civil society groups, taxi industry players and the police. The second story, 'They pulled, tore her skirt' is an account from security

guards' perspective. This story also cites people working at a nearby shopping centre saying they had witnessed similar incidents over the years.

The third story, '*Mixed reaction to dress attack'* gets the perspective of ordinary people on the streets. Whilst these people are sympathetic towards Ngcukana, some of them say that women should dress properly.



Mixed reaction to dress attack

DIVIDED: (From left) Katse Mosia, David Zulu, Mrs Ntilane and Lize Mthombeni. PHOTOS: ANTONIO MUCHAVE

Getrude Makhafola

Ordinary people on the streets sympathise with Nwabisa Ngcukana, the 25-year-old woman who was stripped and sexually molested by taxi drivers at Johannesburg's Noord Street taxi rank on Sunday – but also stress that women should dress properly.

Katse Mosia, a taxi driver at Highgate shopping centre, said such things only happened at Noord Street.

"Such things do not happen at Baragwanath (taxi rank). She is only a child.

"How could a group of grown-up men do this to her in full view of strangers?" asked Mosia.

He also said that people in the olden days used to wear traditional gear that exposed their breasts, lower body and thighs without fear of being attacked.

"What the taxi drivers did to her was wrong, finish and *klaar*.

"But what kind of parent would let their child dress like that?" asked David Zulu.

A woman who identified herself only as Mrs Ntilane said today's constitutional rights were out of line.

"I am old-fashioned, and I do hate what she went through.

"But women should respect the community, which in turn would respect them," said MmaNtilane.

Lerato Mmobi said Nwabisa had a right to dress they way she wanted.

"Those taxi drivers should be arrested.

"This woman has every right to wear a short skirt. She's still young and beautiful. I think they were jealous of her, that is all," said Mmobi

Lize Mthombeni said: "What can we say? The skirt is too short and, unfortunately, there are worse incidences where grown-up women dress like that.

"We see them every day. Maybe there should be a petition to stop this. I do not condone what they did, and I hope she recovers from that traumatic encounter," said Mthombeni.

There were no general gender-based violence stories in the front pages of the 74 papers studied except those about Ngcukana's attack and follow up stories on the incident. For example *Sowetan*, January 2 2008, carried a story, '*MOB MURDERS MOM'* which it placed on page 8 of the paper. The story, which is about a woman being stoned to death by members of her community on allegations of witchcraft, is told in just three paragraphs. It is combined with two other totally unrelated murder stories. Even though the woman's murder is in the headline readers are not given enough detail. There is also no reference to the Witchcraft Act. The Witchcraft Suppression Act 3 of 1957 is an act of the parliament of South Africa that prohibits witchcraft related activities such as witch smelling and witch burning.

After the miniskirt story's initial excitement died down, the newspaper went back to placing the stories in inside pages. There were no gender-based violence stories on the lead pages of the paper after that. Most of the stories were buried in inside pages. They were given little space unlike the big headlines and ample page space given to the miniskirt story. *Sowetan* 13 March 2008, reported 'Corrective rape rife' which is placed on the left bottom page 7 corner. Corrective rape which is often meted out on gays and lesbians for not conforming to society's expectations has been widely downplayed in the media.

Figure 5.3: Types of gender-based violence reported on

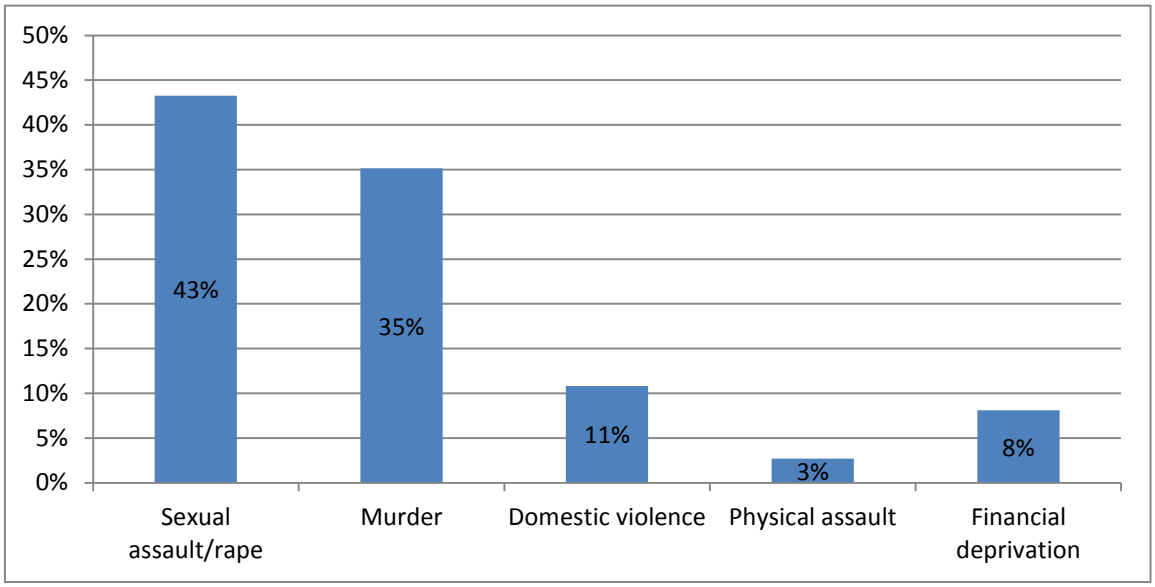


Figure 5.3 shows that sexual assault/rape is the most reported on type of gender violence making up 43% of all reported gender-based violence stories. This is followed by murder at 35%, then domestic violence at 11%. There were very few stories on physical assault at just 3%.

The sexual assault/rape stories covered during this period included actual incidents, follow-ups and court reports. Out of 32 stories on rape, 9 were actual incidents, 7 court reports and the majority of them, (16) were follow up reports. *Sowetan* makes follow up on reported cases of sexual assault. However, this concentration on already existing stories may deny audiences an opportunity to be informed on fresh incidences of gender-based violence.

Sowetan reported on different types of violence taking place within the home ranging from rape, murder and domestic violence. On February 15 2008, the paper reported on a story of a father accused of sodomising his 10 year old son after a beer- drinking binge. The HIV positive father is reported to have told a friend that he was erect and wanted to sleep with his own son. In the story, the man denies raping his son saying 'it was anatomically impossible for him to have sodomised the boy'.

During this period, there was another case of a brother raping his sister and infecting her with the HI virus (March 27, 2008). The question that comes to mind when one reads such stories is how many other such stories are being covered up by families? What is the media's take on this? As the 17 year old girl narrates her story, it brings to light the sad reality of families concealing sexual abuse. The girl's mother is said to have fought with her for reporting her abusive brother. This is one of the factors leading to the underestimation of such incidences by media because they are often hidden from the public.

There were three stories of rape by minors during the entire period. One was about two teenage boys raping a 13 year old girl after forcing her into one of the boys' shack. They released her at two o'clock in the morning after taking turns to rape her. Young boys internalize this culture of violence as they are growing up thereby leading to a continuous cycle of violence. Men of all ages, all educational levels and social standing within their communities mainly commit violence.

Media reports of men being affected by gender-based violence are still few and far in between. During this period there were two reports of women sexually abusing men, a subject that is still not openly discussed in contemporary South Africa. Sowetan, 28 January 2008, carried the story, '*Three women take turns to 'rape' hiker'*. The article reports how three Mpumalanga women had taken turns to rape a 20 year old man they had given a lift to. The women were allegedly in the company of two male accomplices. It is however unclear from the story whether these women were willing accomplices or they were also forced into it by the two men. The raped man was treated for a swollen penis at a local hospital.

The second story was of a disabled man who was allegedly forced by three 14 year old school girls to show them his penis or risk false rape charges. The story, 'Show us your manhood or else…3 girls tell disabled man' details how the three girls further insulted the man saying he was not man after he showed them his uncircumcised penis.



Show us your manhood or else ... 3 girls tell disabled

Riot Hlatshwayo and Victor Hlongwane

A disabled man says three 14 year-old girls told him to "take out his penis" or face bogus rape charges.

"I was really afraid that I could end up near behind bars for doing nothing wrong so I unzipped my trousers and showed them my manhood," said Thomas Maluleke, 44, of Xihosana village near Malamulele in Limpopo.

Maluleke said the girls threatened to call the police and claim that he had attempted to rape them if he did not "show it" to them.

He said after he had exposed himself to the girls they ridiculed him, saying he was not man enough because he had not been circumcised.

Maluleke claimed that the girls then told him that they were going to fetch condoms because he would not be allowed to have sex kept with him because of his uncircumcised penis.

"As soon as they left I immediately informed my relatives about the whole matter. When the girls returned, my mother and other relatives were present," said Maluleke.

His mother, Lizzie Baloyi, confirmed the incident and said she immediately went to the local induna, Judas Chauke, to report the matter.

When they could not find Chauke, Baloyi reported the matter to the Malamulele satellite police station on Wednesday, a day after the threats.

Police spokesman Ndo Mangala said he had not yet received the report.

Baloyi said the police advised her that the girls were too young and that the matter would be better resolved at the school than in court.

School principal Mgwambani Baloyi, refused to comment, saying the incident did not take place at the school.

Limpopo education spokesman Ndo Mangala said if the incident was true, then parents and teachers had to teach the girls good morals.

Magozi Mapimdani, Malamulele police spokesman, confirmed the incident but refused to comment, claiming that the matter was being handled by the girls' school.

RAPE THREAT: Thomas Maluleke says three young schoolgirls blackmailed him into exposing his genitals. PHOTO: VICTOR HLONGWANE

Murder contributes the second highest number of reported stories. 26 of the 74 stories (35%) were about women dying as a result of gender-based violence. Most of the incidences reported on were on intimate partner relationships such as husbands killing their wives, boyfriend murdering his girlfriend. An example is the story that appeared in *Sowetan*, 2 February 2008, with the headline '*Jilted man pumps bullets into former lover*.' The woman in the story was killed for ending the relationship. The phrase 'pumps bullets' captures the gruesome nature of the murder. A number of bullets were used to end the woman's life. Another woman was killed for disclosing her HIV positive status to her boyfriend. However, there were two other murder stories happening in non-intimate relationships but involving close relatives in the home setting. One was the story of a father killing his daughters and the other a son-in-law murdering his mother in law.

The least reported on categories are financial deprivation (8%) and physical assault (3%). These included stories on women fighting to ensure that they receive child-care grants for their children. Other story was on the rise in number of cases of women taking their children's fathers to court over lack of payment of maintenance. This obvious abdication on responsibilities affects children the most and often denies them the right to a life of dignity and decency.

Physical assault has been separated from domestic violence to refer to physical violence that happens outside the home in settings such as public spaces, bars and taxi ranks among others. Domestic violence refers to the type of violence that happens in the home. This is mainly physical and emotional abuse. Sexual assault is analysed as a separate category.

Who speaks on gender-based violence?

Figure 5.5: Sources in gender-based violence stories

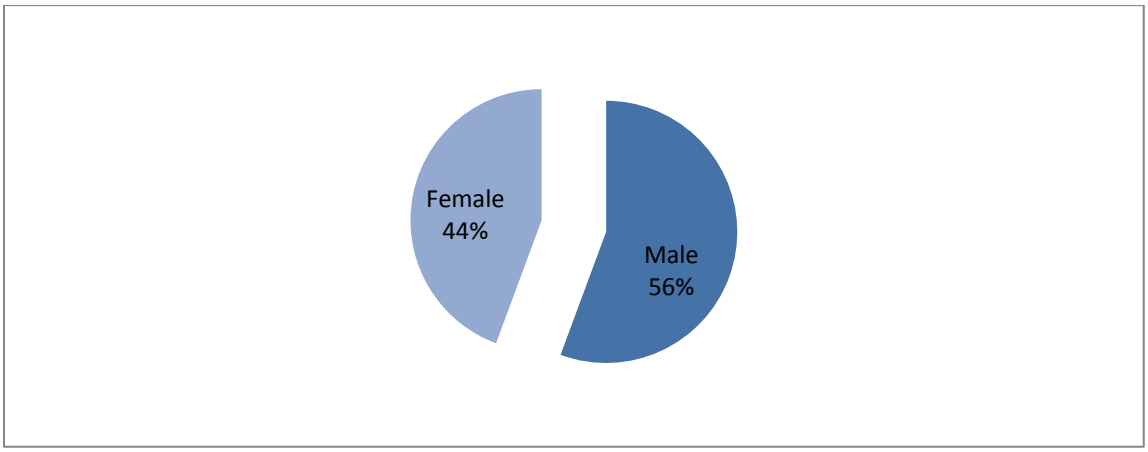


Figure 5.5 shows that the majority of people speaking on gender-based violence are men. The overall breakdown of sources by sex for the 74 stories showed that most of the sources are male with 56% representation. Conversely women constitute 44% of sources in gender-based violence stories. 124 sources were recorded for the 74 stories with 55 of them being female and 69 male.

Figure 5.6: sourcing in gender-based stories across the three periods

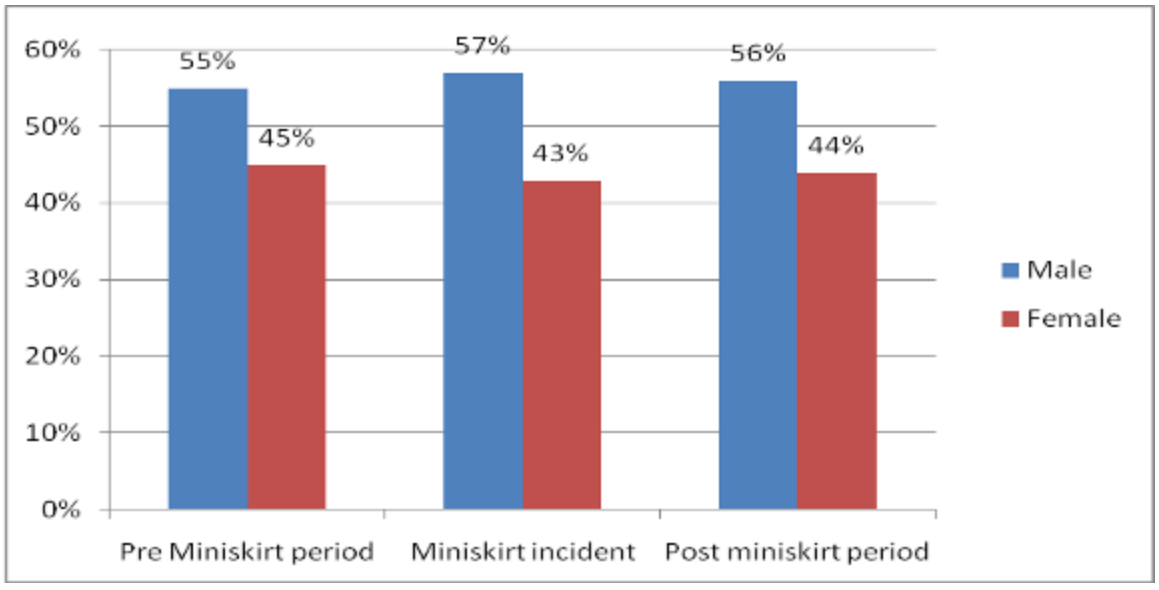


Figure 5.6 shows that the period first January up to 17 February had the highest number of female sources at 45%. Even though the miniskirt incident received a lot of comment and critique from women's groups and civil society in general, this did not directly translate to an increase in women's voices in gender-based violence stories.

Notably Nwabisa Ngcukana, the woman who was humiliated for wearing a miniskirt, was given some space in the media to talk about her experiences. However, this did not significantly push up the proportion of femnale sources with the proportion of women's voices going down to 43% during the incident and going up slightly by 1% after the incident.



Despite the amount of attention the miniskirt story attracted, it was still told mostly by men with women campaign efforts captured mostly in images or through the words of men. Pictures stories such as the one to the right were common during the period. For example the protests and solidarity marches organised gender activists and civil society were captured in the image of the woman in a short dress surrounded by police. Another example is the picture story adjacent to it showing male taxi drivers and marshals removing their clothes in protest.

Picture stories such as these ones do not accommodate a multiplicity of sources as would have been the case if they had been told in prose form. The protests march organised by the People

Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) were also covered in this photo story. Apart from informing viewers that such action took place, this does not capture the mood and feelings of the protestors as there are no voices included.

Figure 5.7: Types of sources in gender-based violence stories

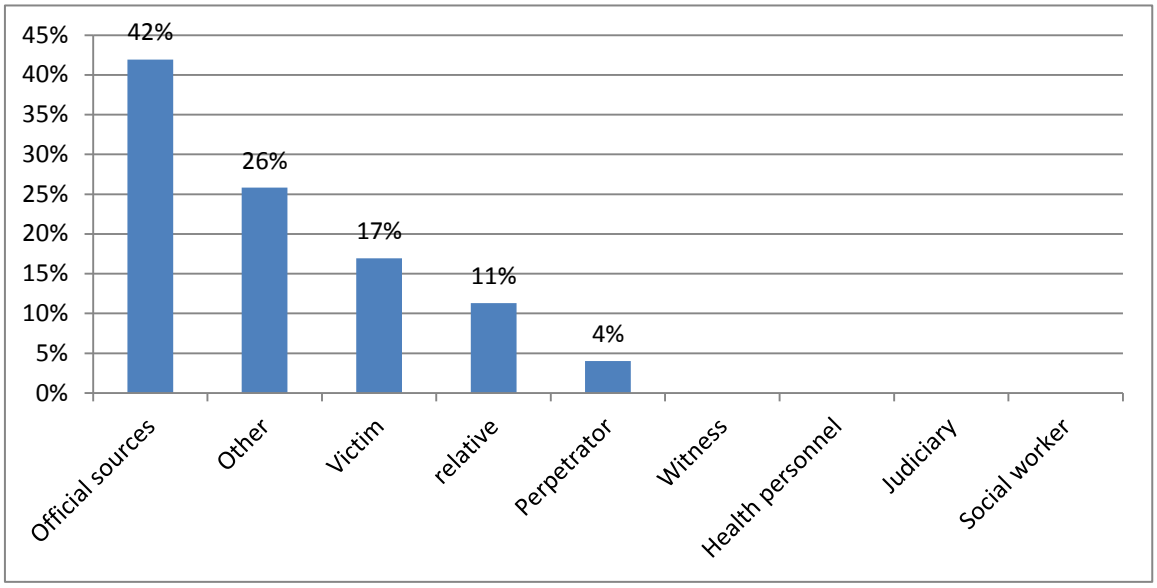


Figure 5.7 shows that, *Sowetan* relies heavily on official sources for comment. These include police officers , all from the South African Police Service (SAPS), government officials and spokespersons. This category of sources constituted 42% of all sources. Victims make up 17% of sources. This includes male and female victims. Relatives of victims and survivors account for 11% of sources and perpetrators 4%.

Sowetan, January 15, 2008, reported on story of a six year old girl who was raped by a man from her neighbourhood, '*Raped girl to undergo operation'*. The girl who was waiting to undergo a womb surgery was said to be living in fear after the rapist escaped from police holding cells. The story qoutes the girl's mother and two police officers who comment on the pending rape trial and the rapist' escape from the cells. The mother is the only one who talks about her daughter's fears. Even her sentiments do not fully capture the trauma that comes with being raped, especially at such a a young age. The mother is worried about her daughter healing physically and returning to school. Her other worry is that the rapist is free. There is no

attempt by the paper to interview health personnel on what the womb surgery means. As such the phsycological trauma she is going through is not fully explored.

Victims and survivors of gender-based violence constitute 17% of sources followed by relatives (11%) and perpetrators at 4%. The term survivor is used in this case to refer to those who have come out of the abuse alive. Some victims have not been so lucky with 26 stories of murder being reported. Survivor also refers to those who have refused to have their spirit battered by the abuse and have sought a new beginning after the trauma.

While it is understandable that there are ethical issues around reporting on gender-based violence the paper made visible efforts to solicit comment from the abused . An example is the March 27 story of a 17 year old girl who had been raped by her brother. In her own voice, the girl details how her brother had infected her with the HI virus. Considering that this girl is still a minor and the sensitivity around her story, the paper still gave her the opportunity to let out and get her story heard in her own words. The January 11 'Brilliant and Brave Janie' narrates how 17 year old Jamie achieved seven distinctions after her rape ordeal. Jamie opened up and about life post the trauma.

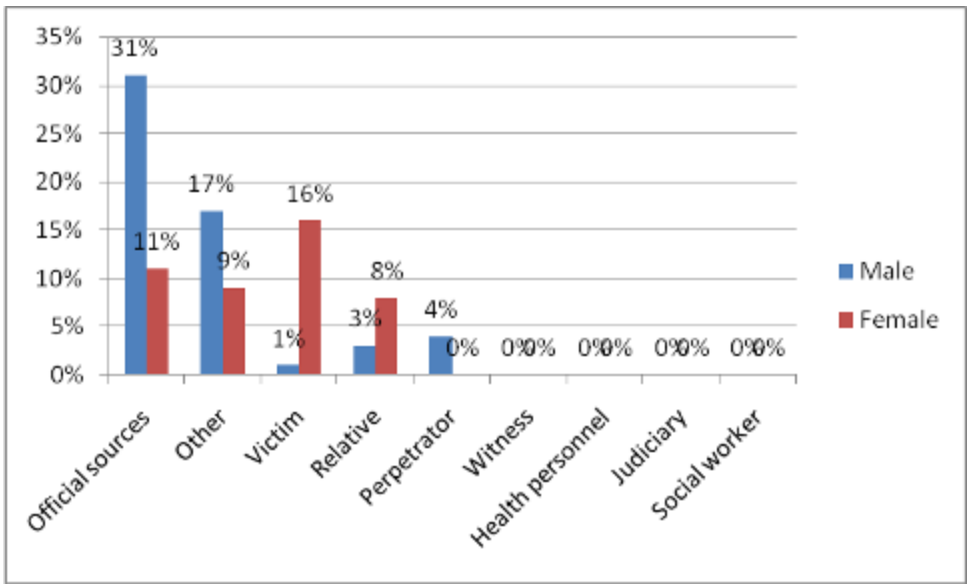
There were other stories like the March 28 2008 story of a woman who was being physically abused by her husband. Despite having been hacked by a panga before, the woman airs her opinions on the abuse. She says,

> "Iam tired of being used as a punch bag every evening. ..He always wants me to give him money to buy liqour with his friends. When I refuse, he calls me names and sometimes beats me up."

There are also other male victims who have been given a voice. An example is the disabled 34 year old man, (February 15, 2008) who was allegedly forced by three teenage girls to 'take out his penis' or face bogus rape charges. The man narrates how he had been ridiculed by the girls who even went to the extent of going to fetch condoms so that they could have sex with him. The other victim speaking out is a man allegedly forced to have a sex orgy with three women who had offered him a ride in their car. The man says,

"I was feeling pain in my manhood, but I was forced to continue with their evil work. I will not forget this day in my life."

Figure 5.8: Sex of the different types of sources



A further breakdown of different types of sources by sex in figure 5.8 shows that men dominate in all categories. This is especially as official sources. The sources are given as a proportion of the overall number of sources (124), for example the different categorizations, divided by sex should add up to 100%. Male official sources dominate at 31%. Female official sources make up 11% of all sources.

Notably male victims make up only 1% of all sources. This is because of the low number of male abuse stories reported on. The two male victims in the reported stories have been given an opportunity to speak. These two elderly men are not ashamed to relate their experiences in spite of the stigma associated with male sexual abuse. Allowing victims of male rape especially to speak out gives a human touch to their stories and makes them more real. It also contributes significantly to raising awareness on the existence of male abuse in society.

Apart from dominating as victims in the sources category, women are also quoted as relatives. They make 8% of all sources. Most of these relatives are mothers of murdered victims. Male relatives speak marginally at 3%. All the quoted perpetrators were male. In the two incidences of male sexual assault/rape reported on, the female perpetrators were not given a voice or named. The first story involved three school girls and as such they were shielded from the public. Instead the area's Education spokesman was quoted saying, 'if the incident was true, then parents and teachers have to teach the girls good morals.' The other source quoted in the story is the 34 year old man's mother.

Sourcing in the 'miniskirt' story

The Nwabisa Ngcukana story also referred to as the 'miniskirt' story is a powerful case study of the media giving a victim of gender-based violence the opportunity to speak about her experiences. She was not a silent victim, but a survivor who spoke out on the abuse and humiliation she had suffered at the hands of the Noord taxi drivers and rank marshals that fateful 17 February afternoon. Whilst it has been observed that *Sowetan* often gives victims of violence a voice, the amount of space and attention given to Ngcukana's story was unparalleled. The mere fact that she was brave enough to report her assault to the police turned her into a public figure and a symbol of hope and resilience to the hundreds of abused women.

The total number of stories in the miniskirt story between February and March were 21. This represents 28% of the total number of stories on GBV. This shows the level of interest it generated in the media. Most of the coverage on the story was in February which had 11 stories out of the total of 21. Interestingly there were four other women who were assaulted at the Noord Taxi rank the same day as Ngcukana. They did not report their stories to the police and as such, the media did not give them attention. They were subsequently mentioned in passing in the Ngcukana story.

The first report on the miniskirt incident was carried by *Sowetan* on the 18th of February. This coverage spilled into the next month, March with a lot of follow up stories and other related incidences. This study also looked at other stories on gender-based violence, in the form of

indecent and sexual assault, which were linked to the miniskirt incident and these will be discussed in this section of the research findings.

In the other related taxi incidents, all the victims were also women. There were no men reported to have experienced gender-based violence in public spaces during this period. There were stories about women being physically assaulted by taxi men in Hillbrow, Johannesburg and in the Limpopo province. These had similarities with the Noord Taxi incident, especially the Limpopo one (10 March) where two women were attacked for wearing miniskirts. In Hillbrow, a woman taxi passenger was attacked for 'talking too much'. There was also a story of a woman who was repeatedly slapped on the bum by a taxi marshal as she got into a taxi.

Though not directly linked to Ngcukana, these fall under this category because the abuse happened in public places like taxi ranks with men often seeking to assert their power and prescribe how women should dress and behave. All these stories reveal how gender stereotyping still abounds in society. Such violent behaviour is always linked to women's refusal to be boxed and to conform to stereotypical expectations imposed on them by society.

The miniskirt story was first reported by *Sowetan* on the 18th of February 2008. The paper carried a full page headline '*MINISKIRT TERROR HITS JOZI*' on its first page. The actual story was carried on page 7 and mostly told by Ngcukana herself. Her first statement was, 'I have never been so traumatized in my life. I thought these taxi drivers were going to rape me.'

This statement captures exactly how she felt as she went through her ordeal. Having this story told by a third person would not have fully explained the motions that she went through at that particular moment. Ngcukana was allegedly attacked by taxi drivers for wearing a miniskirt.

She says,

> "The funny thing about this is that I thought security guards would sympathise with me. Instead they mocked me and asked what was I thinking parading around in a miniskirt at a taxi rank….they just laughed at me and said this is the kind of attitude that makes taxi drivers do these things."

This discourse on dress was carried forward by the paper in subsequent reports. For example *Sowetan*, 19 February 2008, cited 'mixed reactions to dress attack' from ordinary people on the streets. While people sympathised with Ngcukana, they also 'stress that women should dress properly.' Some culturalists were quoted asking, 'what kind of parent would let their child dress like that.' Interestingly there were some women who justified the taxi drivers' actions saying 'women should respect the community, which in turn would respect them.

When Ngcukana was first quoted by *Sowetan* she said her friends had come to her defense saying that she had a right to wear whatever she liked. Even after her humiliation Ngcukana is still able to stand her ground and speak confidently about what she thinks and feels after her ordeal. She just refused to be battered. She openly refuses to buy into the 'dress' argument as a reason for her assault. She continued wearing short dresses and skirts in defiance. She boldly says, "I had to come back to face my demons and show my attackers that I am not afraid."

Ngcukana's comments that she is free to wear whatever she wants is backed by the story, 'Custom allows girls to dress in miniskirts' on February 28. This story which is written from the point of view of traditional leaders seeks to dispel the notion that women way of dressing is a factor in men's abusive behaviour. The newspaper significantly balances the views on the miniskirt story by also giving space to people who support Ngcukana's right to wear what she wants in a free and democratic South Africa. National House of Traditional Leaders spokesperson, Mandlenkosi Amos Linda is quoted saying, "the national house of traditional leaders therefore calls on the nation at large to unite in action against archaic men who take advantage of culture as a means of assaulting women."

Linda refers to days gone by where girls used to wear traditional miniskirts, (Makgabe or mabheshu) at traditional ceremonies, some of which required that they dance bare breasted. These statements dispel stereotypical views of women in miniskirt as being disrespectful to the community or asking to be raped. From these sentiments, it is obvious that the national body of traditionalists does not condone the abuse of women under the guise of culture. He says, "At no point has culture dictated to young lasses to wear dresses below their knees and neither has it dictated to men to assault women who choose to wear miniskirts."

Notably, this story by culturalists is the only one that comes closest to mentioning the legislation and constitutional provisions on gender. The traditional leaders highlight that the attacks on Ngcukana were barbaric as well as unconstitutional in that they violated gender discrimination provisions.

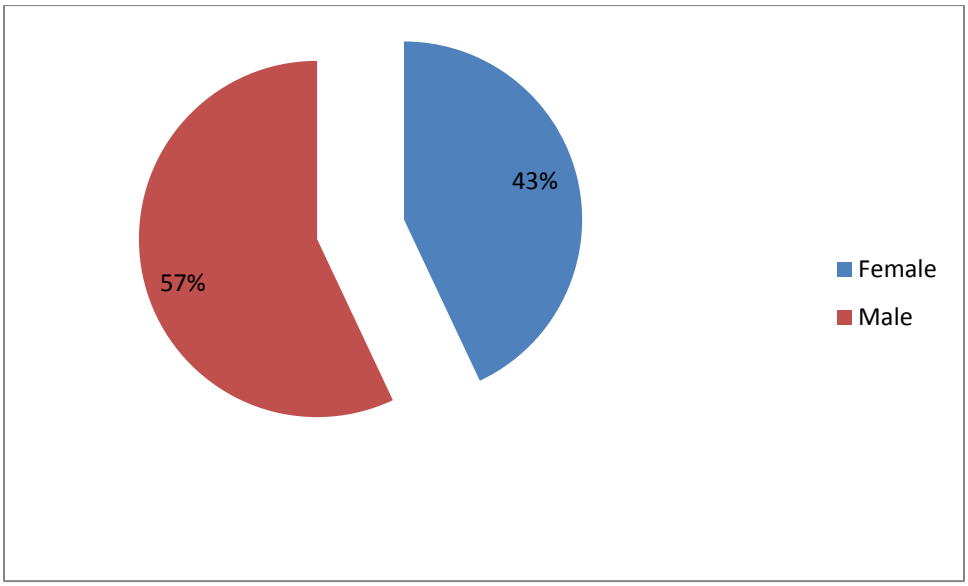
This story also gave human rights activists the platform to denounce the attack and call for the perpetrators to be brought to book. For example, Lisa Vetten of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation was quoted expressing her outrage at this complete disregard for human rights. She said the taxi drivers 'need to know that what they are doing is against the law. Women have rights in this country.' The South African human rights Commission was also quoted condemning the attack. Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre, which helps women who are victims of gender-based violence, committed to help Ngcukana and the other four women to lay charges. Radio personalities such as Radio 702's Redi Direko also joined in giving support to Ngcukana.

Ngcukana's story and the non-judging manner in which it was covered opened up space for other women to speak about their experiences at the hands of taxi drivers. Redi Direko, was one such person who narrated how she had been subjected to insults and derogatory remarks as she used public transport as a school child.

Commendably this story brings to readers' attention, organisations that are working with abused women. This in itself brings hope to thousands of other abused women and an opportunity to start afresh after the abuse. The support that Ngcukana received from human rights groups was also significant in her transition from victim to survivor.

Sex of the sources

Figure 5.9: Sources in the miniskirt story



Although the victims of the Noord taxi rank miniskirt attack and other related incidents were women, most of the sources quoted were men as shown in figure 5.9 with women constituting 43% of sources in the miniskirt story. This was partly because most of the stories relied on official sources such as the police and government officials. There were very few ordinary women and men speaking.

The voices of ordinary people were mostly captured in the story, 'Mixed reactions over miniskirt incident.' They expressed different sentiments and perspectives which helped balance the angles taken in reporting the incidents. After that the paper tended to rely more on the police, taxi associations representatives and government officials like the MEC for transport. Women's rights activists were marginally quoted although they organised a number of protest marches in solidarity with Ngcukana.

Ngcukana was the constant voice of an ordinary person. Even though there are several high profile people quoted in the miniskirt stories, their voices did not drown Ngcukana's voice.

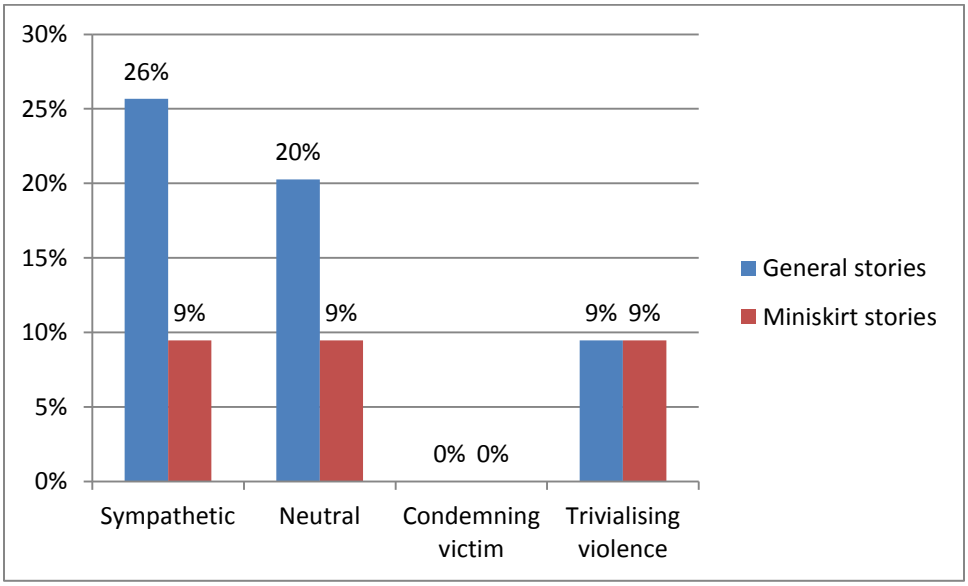
Portrayal of victims and perpetrators

An analysis of headlines and language used in gender-based violence stories has provided valuable insight into the way the paper portrays the victims/survivors and perpetrators of gender-based violence.

Headlines

The headlines during the period under review were grouped under four categories to show the papers' attitude towards gender-based violence as well as its portrayal of victims and perpetrators. These are 'sympathetic, neutral, condemning victim and trivializing gender-based violence.' The headlines relating to the miniskirt story have been analysed separately and compared with the headlines for the other general gender-based violence stories. Headlines were especially picked because they tell the story at a glance and are what usually attracts readers to read on.

Figure 5.10: Headlines in gender-based violence stories



Sowetan is more likely to be sympathetic to victims of violence than to condemn them for their experiences. Figure 5.10 shows that there were no headlines that condemned victims for the

abuse they had gone through. This is an indication that *Sowetan* is moving away from the stereotypical portrayal of victims of gender-based violence that was seen during the 1996 Jacob Zuma rape trial. This is especially so in headlines that focus on the victim and not the perpetrator.

Headlines such as 'They tore, pulled her skirt' is one sympathetic headline which mildly captures the way the taxi drivers assaulted Ngcukana. The word 'they' is also an indication that this act was committed by a mob of people not easily identifiable. The fact that she was a lone woman being pulled by a number of people makes her case even more sympathetic.

The cultural dimension was also brought in a positive light by two headlines, 'Culture misused in miniskirt wars', and 'Custom allows girls to wear miniskirts,'. These two headlines fall into the category that are sympathetic to Ngcukana. They also dismiss the view that culture demands that woman dress in non-provocative clothes. Such positive portrayal of Ngcukana is likely to have encouraged other women to report such cases and speak out about their abuse. However this is not reported in media coverage as there was no increase in the number of gender-based violence stories after the Ngcukana story. It has been noted that every time a damaging article appears, it can only reinforce women's silence around sexual violence.

However the paper also has a tendency to trivialize gender-based violence cases and present them in a light hearted manner. This type of headlines constituted 9%. Such headlines usually reduce the gravity of the matter and influences readers' perceptions of the violence. An example is the headline which describes the indecent treatment of a woman as a '*BUM SMACK AT TAXI RANK'*. Referring to it as a smack lightens the act and makes it sound normal. This headline is in sharp contradiction to the contents of the story which presents the 'smack' as a humiliation. This incident happening just two weeks after the attack on Ngcukana could have been used to monitor whether people's perceptions of gender-based violence were changing. Another headline stated that, "Minis dare taxi drivers.' The demonstrators were now being referred to as 'minis'.

Headlines such as 'mixed reactions to dress attack' show how the paper views gender-based violence and how it seeks to give structural explanations for it. This act of violence is reduced to

a dress attack, thereby underplaying its seriousness. This headline exposes the newspaper's lack of awareness of the power dynamics around gender-based violence. The attack is an expression of a desire by the taxi drivers to ensure that women live within society's definitions of what is acceptable feminine behaviour. Other headlines which followed this line of thinking include, '*CAMERA BLOW TO 'MINISKIRT*'. The absence of cameras at the rank was a blow to the fight for justice and not just the miniskirt.

The overall finding is that *Sowetan* does not place blame on victims of gender-based violence for the violations they have encountered. The stories written narrate the events without putting any value judgment. Whilst *Sowetan* has been criticized for not revealing its position on gender-based violence, the majority of its stories use neutral language that does not perpetuate gender stereotyping. For example it has not enforced any stereotypical views of victims of gender-based violence. This stereotyping is often accentuated by having gender-based violence stories told by third persons. In the period under review victims of violence have been given space to express their opinions on the abusive circumstances they have found themselves in although they are outnumbered by official and male sources.

Whilst victims are not judged negatively for the abuse, there are instances when the paper makes the affected women invisible. This is especially in the way that the headlines focus on the perpetrators instead of the abused women. This shifts focus from the victim to the perpetrator. Headlines focusing on victims have presented them in positive light. Such headlines have given the abused women agency and shown them as people who have risen above their circumstances to reclaim control of their lives.

An example is the headline, '*BRILLIANT AND BRAVE JAMIE*,' in bold capital letters, (*Sowetan* 11 January, 2008). It is clear before one even goes into the story that Jamie is not just a helpless victim of abuse. She has been brave and has managed to realize her dreams even after the abuse. Although the young victims in the stories were able to continue with their education after their ordeals, there was a significant amount of physical and emotional healing that they had to undergo before they were able to pick up the pieces.

Focusing on Jamie makes her a heroine that other abused women can get inspiration from. The sub heading tells the entire story in just one line, 'raped matriculant achieves seven distinctions.' She is an achiever contrary to stereotypical portrayals of women as weak and not capable of surviving in the middle of adversity.

Sowetan sometimes goes to extremes in trying to bring out the alarming levels of abuse of women. For example when the Ngcukana story was first reported on, the headline, '*Miniskirt terror hits Jozi'* was used. Although the abuses in public spaces had left many of the women terrified, such a headline bordered on the sensational.

There are still instances where headlines in *Sowetan* render the affected women invisible in the stories. An example is the headline, '*Three school boys held for rape*.' This title excludes the raped girl and instead gives visibility to the perpetrators. In such an instance the report could have focused on the affected girl thereby showing how much trauma gender-based violence causes.

On 7 January the paper carried the headline, '*Son kills old mother*.' The subject of the story is obviously the son and not the mother who has lost her life. This type of headline is cold and emotionless; it does not pass any judgment on the killing. The use of the word 'old' used to describe the mother may give the mistaken impression that the crime is not serious as the mother was 'old' anyway.' The phrasing of the headline portrays the woman as an 'old' helpless victim who could not have defended herself as the son attacked her. This is the same tone of classifying people used in the headline, 'Village girl found raped strangled.'

Other stories such as '*MOB MURDERS MOM'* (January 2, 2008) follow this trend of focusing on the perpetrator. For example readers are told of how furious the crown was as they stoned the woman to death. Below are some of the headlines that appeared in Sowetan during the miniskirt stories.

Table 3: Snapshot of headlines in *Sowetan*

Date	Headline
18 February	Miniskirt terror hits Jozi
18 February	Attacked for miniskirt
19 February	Miniskirt sparks huge uproar
19 February	Big row over miniskirt
19 February	'They pulled, tore her skirt'
19 February	Mixed reaction to dress attack
20 February	Camera blow to 'miniskirt'
21 February	Miniskirt row irks province
22 February	MINI SKIRT RAID: MEC AT TALKS
27 February	BUM SMACK AT RANK
28 February	'Custom allows girls to dress in miniskirts'
3 March	Drivers taunt sisters in miniskirts
5 March	MINIS DARE TAXI DEMONS
5 March	'I faced my demons'
7 March	ULTIMATUM FOR MINISKIRT RANK
10 March	'Speak out against abuse of women'
18 March	Pledge to treat passengers well

Images in gender-based violence stories

There were 16 various images accompanying gender-based violence reports. Some showed victims and some perpetrators. However what stood out during this period was the image of Nwabisa Ngcukana clad in a torn denim skirt with her underwear showing. This image was obviously meant to appeal to readers' emotions and emphasise the extent of the humiliation suffered by Ngcukana.



The fact that she agreed to be photographed at her lowest, with her underwear showing, shows her spirit that refused to die even after the humiliation. Although she admitted being scared she was not afraid to let South Africa and the world to know what had happened to her.

After the initial shock Ngcukana constantly appeared in the papers with a short grey dress with hands folded across her chest. Even after what she had gone

through, she refused to change who she was and continued to dress the way she wanted. She also looked confident as she 'faced her demons' at the taxi rank.

There were 7 images of victims.2 of the images were of two young girls who had survived rape. In the first image the face of the victim was hidden as she was a minor aged six. Only her doll and her lower body is shown. In the second image, a 17 year old who also survived rape is shown smiling and celebrating her academic achievements after her ordeal. She is with a reporter from *Sowetan*. There are also instances where victims are abuse have to be protected or shielded from cameras in cases where ethical considerations have to be made. An example of this is the two photos of a 17 year old girl who was raped by her own brother. She has her back to the camera. Similarly three school boys accused of raping a murdering a woman also have their backs to the camera. This is meant to protect them as they are all minors. Notably there were very few images of victims and perpetrators during this period. Ngcukana was an exception. Most of the photos used are of ordinary people and law enforcement agents.

There were 3 images of women who were facing economic difficulties due to delays by government officials in dispersing their child maintenance allowances. These women said they have to go through tough economic times as they are unable to take care of their children. All of them had their faces shown.

The other 2 images of victims were of two women killed, one by her son and the other one by her boyfriend. There were obviously pictures taken before the women were murdered. There were 5 images of perpetrators, all showing their faces. Some of these had already been arrested while 2 were of the men were still on the run after committing the offenses. The other 5 images were of relatives of victims, members of the community and members of the South African police force.

It is therefore apparent that *Sowetan* rarely uses images of survivors of gender-based violence in its coverage of such issues. It therefore makes use of the police, government officials and ordinary people. However when it comes to sourcing, victims speak significantly although they are outweighed by official sources.

CHAPTER SIX: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Proportion of gender-based violence stories

Gender-based violence stories constituted just 1% of stories covered by *Sowetan* in the period under review. This is in line with other scholarly work which has shown that gender-based violence is not a topical issue in the media. A 2010 survey of media houses in South Africa showed that gender-based violence stories make up only 2% of topics covered, (Gender Links 2010). The low proportions of gender-based violence stories in *Sowetan,* is worrying especially considering the high gender-based violence prevalence rates. The way media reports on gender-based violence, such as subjecting victims to moral scrutiny could be a contributory factor, with most victims preferring to remain anonymous.

These statistics give credence to the observation that under-reporting is a well-recognized problem due to the personal nature of violence against women (Human Rights Watch, 1995, Putt et al, 1997; Statistics South Africa, 2000; Vetten, 2000; CADRE, 2003; Johnson, 2006; Walby, 2007). Since most gender-based violence stories happen under the cover of private spaces like homes, they remain family matters unknown to the public.

Most abused women prefer to be silent and suffer the consequences of being a victim of circumstances, instead of reporting the matter to the police. Some victims recount being harassed, ridiculed and sometimes chased away by the police to go to the community to resolve their dispute (Gwebu, 2008).

The under coverage of gender-based violence therefore gives credence to the observation that mass media are not doing their part in raising public awareness on social issues. There are no deliberate efforts by media to keep the public informed on cases of gender-based violence cases in their communities. This is seen in media reactionary approach to gender-based violence reporting, often relying on events and court stories. This was noted during the period under review where there was only one non-event based report. The rest of the 74 stories were based on events happening. For example there have been cases of women being abused for wearing what is called ‘provocative clothes’, but most of these cases have gone largely unnoticed by the

media. Media usually react when the violence has gotten out of hand or when the abused take it upon themselves to publicise the abuse such as in the Nwabisa Ngcukana miniskirt incident which has been used as a case study in this study.

The low coverage of gender-based violence also brings to the fore, questions around the concept of media as potential agents of change. Do media have a role to play in raising the public's awareness on the alarming levels of gender-based violence? While it may be argued that the media does not have mandate in this regard, citizens get an accurate understanding of what is happening in their community by following media' reports of events.

This is an indication of the fact that media practitioners do not necessarily see themselves as having a responsibility to fight gender-based violence. Media seem to be wary of being accused of "advocacy journalism. As *Sunday Times* Deputy Editor Susan Smuts (July 2008) put it: "I don't think we really do anything specifically to prevent gender violence except expose it when we can." Mass media is critical in getting the message out to the public due to its wider reach compared to other mediums of communication.

*Sowetan'*s general under-reporting of gender-based violence could also be linked to economic interests that media houses often have to contend with. Media are shaped as business entities whose primary role is to make money. When gender-based violence happens it is covered just like any other story. Media will not go out of its way to actively write on and critique the high prevalence rates. Modern day media have shifted from that role of setting the agenda and directing public discourse. Political and economic interests have now taken over.

The low coverage of gender-based violence in *Sowetan* could also partly be attributed to the fact that most cases of gender-based violence go unreported thereby making it difficult for the media to give accurate coverage which captures the extent of the problem. As such media, especially *Sowetan* cannot be taken as a reliable source of information on prevalence of gender-based violence. The statistics given by SAPS are likely to be a more accurate indicator of the extent of the problem. It has to be noted that a lot more cases go unreported, which shows how big the problem is.

By underreporting gender-based violence, *Sowetan* has reneged on one of its core functions, which is to inform citizens about what is happening in their environment, (Ronning, H. et al, 2002). Media as agenda setters have a responsibility to bring such issues to the fore for public debate and dialogue. As reflectors of reality, media are expected to give a true reflection of the societies in which they exist. *Sowetan* therefore does not give a true reflection of the magnitude of gender-based violence in South Africa. This is especially so when looking at the complete decline in gender-based violence stories after the initial 'frenzy' around the miniskirt story died down.

The coverage given to different types of violence does not necessarily mirror what is happening in contemporary South Africa. Domestic violence for example is very widespread in South Africa although media reports do not reflect this. This underreporting downplays the extent of the problem, which may result in the relevant stakeholders not taking appropriate action to address the problem. Media will almost always go for cases that have come out or follow up on the same existing stories. The fact that media do not carry opinion and commentary pieces on gender-based violence results in a warped sense of its role as agenda setters and avenues for discussion and debates. Citizens rely on media to bring such issues to their attention and stimulate dialogue. It has been observed that what people talk about in public spaces is often influenced by the stories running in the media. For example the miniskirt story was a widely talked about story because of the space and attention media gave to it. But as soon as media moved on to the stories, so did the audiences.

Apart from highlighting what is happening in the media, media are social commentators which can contribute positively to public discourse on social issues. Whilst there have been questions on the power of the media to influence public opinion, media have an effect on how society views issues and events (Creedon, 1978).

Most reporting on GBV is event based or court reports. Such stories often cover the perpetrators' side of the story often lacking objectivity and critical analysis. There was not even a single report during the monitoring period which takes a holistic look at the problem of gender-based violence. All the stories reported are based on court reports.

This miniskirt story, which sparked a lot of media attention, did not have any impact on the extent of coverage of gender-based violence. As shown in the graph above, coverage of gender-based violence before this incidence accounted for 45% of the total coverage of this topic. The incident itself contributed 28% of the stories. There was a slight decline after this with coverage dropping to 27%. It therefore does not necessarily follow that such an incident would mark a turning point in the way media view gender-based violence. This interest was only periodical and centred on the Ngcukana story and not necessarily other gender based stories. During the time the Ngcukana incident was reported, there were only four other stories of abuse in public spaces.

The interest and attention given to gender-based violence during this period died down when the noise about the taxi rank incident subsided. This also speaks to the lack of sustained coverage of gender-based violence. Coverage of gender-based violence increases around the 16 days of activism campaign or when there are high-profile cases involving prominent people. An example was the 2006 Jacob Zuma rape trial. However this coverage is not carried forward or sustained in the media. As such, gender-based violence becomes a periodic sensationalized topic when it relates to high profile people and celebrities and when there are interventions by stakeholders such as political leaders, civil society and culturalists.

Sowetan Editor Ntsikelelo Moya, was quoted during a Gender Links discussion on whether 'media and women are friends or foes' (28 November 2008) saying that gender-based violence is treated like any other topic in *Sowetan*. He said that stories get space in the paper based on merit, which is freshness and relevance. He also questioned why gender equality should be given special treatment compared to other diversity issues. Nyar (2008) observes that the horrific violence, cruelties and injustices that women face on a daily basis rarely make headlines in the media. The press habitually under-reports, ignores and underplays gender-based violence in all its manifestations by tucking stories inside the papers.

Prominence of rape stories in *Sowetan*

The high number of rape stories reported on correlated with the endemic levels of sexual assault and rape in South Africa. High number of cases reported on support research that rape is

one of the most conspicuous forms of gender-based violence and has reached epidemic proportions in South Africa (Vogelman and Lewis, 1993).

Women in South Africa live in constant fear of being raped, murdered and humiliated by their male counterparts. Women's human rights are constantly being violated in both public and private spaces. This includes babies as young as 18 months old. This brings to light the pervasiveness and rottenness of modern day South Africa. If men rape babies as young as 18 months, then there is need for radical measures to change mindsets and foster that spirit of 'ubuntu'. This however does not lesson the gravity of other gender-based violence stories.

School safety is a major education problem in South African secondary schools, and many students have reported feeling unsafe in the school environment (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Yet media does not capture this problem. There was only one story of rape happening within the school environment. This is a problem that media has not captured adequately. Even where reports are given, there is no attempt to situate this violence within the context of the unequal power relations between the two sexes. Most reports on deviant behaviour in schools have centred on drug use and have not explored the gendered implications of this. Boys, like men will tend to exercise and maintain their power over their female counterparts.

This type of violence extends beyond the schools to the communities. *Sowetan* 6 February reported on two school boys aged 14 and 17, raping a 13 year old girl in one of Johannesburg's townships. The boys are said to have dragged the girl into one of the boy's shack and took turns to rape her, only releasing her at 2am. This goes to show the extent to which total disregard for human rights has permeated society all levels. There was another story reported on three school boys being held for murder and rape. These boys raped a 17 year old girl and later killed her. It is therefore clear that age is not a factor in gender-based violence.

The fact that young boys are also raping and murdering their female counterparts puts to the fore the quality and values of South Africa's future adults. This also shows that the violence that happens within the homes, in the presence of children ultimately influences their understanding and perception of the relationships between women and men. Boys who grow up in witnessing gender-based violence with their homes are likely to be abusive later in life. Likewise the girls

who witness female members of their families being abuses are likely to be more accepting of violence. This therefore poses challenges to the larger fight against gender-based violence.

The MRC (2003) provides statistical data of violence in schools showed alarming levels of gender violence in schools. The landmark study established a baseline for future studies by providing information on the unsafe school environment. The study consisted of 23 schools in each province, which sampled 14,776 learners. The quantitative report revealed the following:

- 17 percent of students carried weapons,
- 41 percent of students were bullied,
- 14 percent belonged to gangs,
- 15 percent had been forced to have sex,

This serves to illustrate how huge the problem is and the need to raise the public's awareness of this. *Sowetan* carried one report on gender-based violence taking place in schools. The story '*Corrective rape rife'* brings to light the growing phenomenon of this type of violence in schools. This is where a male pupil rapes a female lesbian pupil to 'make her heterosexual'. Corrective rape is not unique to schools only but largely stems from homophobic violence that has been on the increase in recent years. Homophobia is rife in South Africa and lesbians reveal their sexual orientation at their peril (Nyar, 2008). An example is the Soweto Lesbian couple raped and subsequently killed in 2007. The 'othering' of divergent genders and sexualities plays out in homes, institutions, the media and the fabric of society (Judge, 2009) and ultimately leads to gender-based violence.

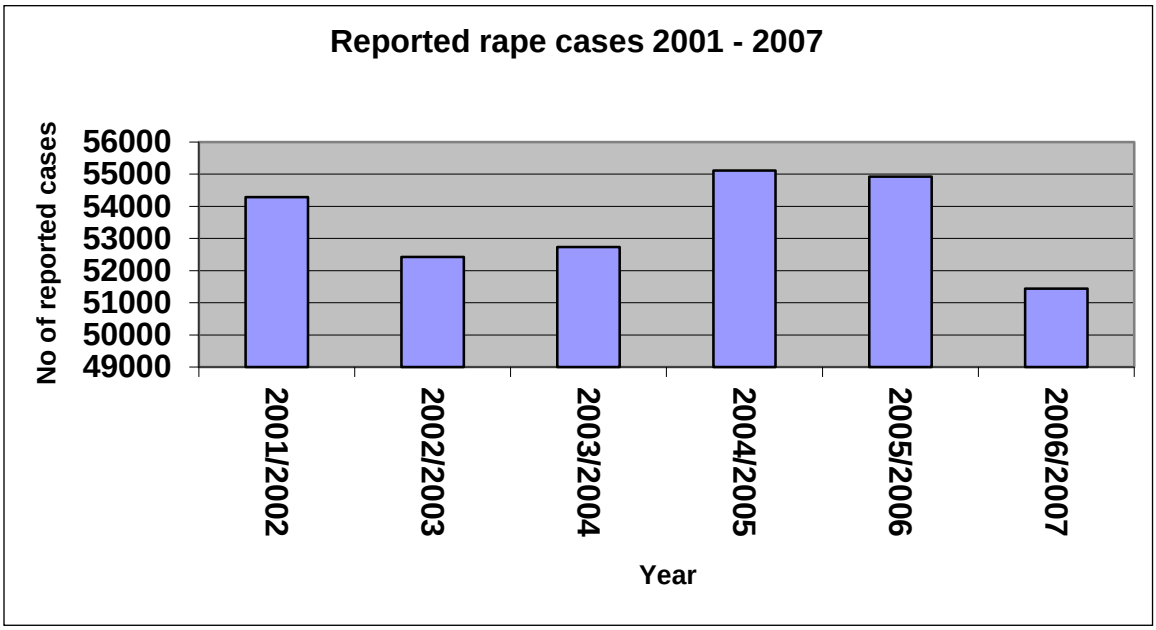
The continuing homophobic attacks are evidence of the non-tolerance of modern day South Africa to sexual freedoms. Despite the fact that the constitution guarantees freedom around sexual orientation, society and the media at large is yet to come to terms with that. Likewise, media reporting is bereft of analysis and merely narrates such cases.

For example the 'corrective rape' story did not go the full mile of discussing it under the context of homophobic violence. Such stories are usually reported in isolation which often denies audiences a full understanding of their context and root causes even.

Types of gender-based violence reported in *Sowetan*.

Rape is the most reported on form of gender-based violence in *Sowetan*. This is in line with the high number of rape cases in South Africa. Although media and police statistics do not capture the full extent of the problem, the high numbers in police reports are cause for concern.

Figure 6.1: Reported rape cases, 2001-2007



Source: South African Police Service

This table is a trends report on the number of reported rape cases reported to the South African Police Service (SAPS) between 2001 and 2007. The table shows that in 2001/2002 there were more than 54000 reported rape cases. In 2002/2003 there was a drop to slightly more than 52000. There was an increase in 2003/2004 to almost 53000. 2006/2007 had the lowest number of reported cases at just above 51000. These figures are an underestimate considering that 'Only one in nine rape cases are reported in South Africa' (Medical Research Council, 2005).

During this period, there was a report on March 27, 2008. '*BROTHER RAPED ME*' of a brother raping his sister and infecting her with the HI virus. The question that comes to mind when one reads such stories is how many other such stories are being covered up by families? What is the

media's take on this? As the 17 year old girl narrates her story, it brings to light the sad reality of families concealing sexual abuse. The girl's mother is said to have fought with her for reporting her abusive brother. This is one of the factors leading to the underestimation of such incidences by media because they are often hidden from the public. Interestingly women have become active players in the perpetration of violence against fellow women by either ignoring the abuse or 'socialising' young girls and fellow women to accept gender-based violence as a norm and discourage them from reporting.

Another form of violence which is underreported by media is witchcraft related killings. Witchcraft killing is still rife in South Africa, with isolated media reports of perceived witches being stoned to death. What is interesting about witchcraft is the feminization of the practice with the word 'wizard' rarely featuring in discussions around witchcraft. Conversely the people being stoned to death or burnt alive for this 'evil' practice are women. Even though this practice is still ongoing, *Sowetan* reported on only one incident during the period. Even though the assault on perceived witches does not always result in death, it has to be brought to society's attention that this practice is still very much alive. *Sowetan*, January 2 2008 story, '*MOB MURDERS MOM*' is the only reminder that older women are ill- treated by society whilst older men are valued for their wisdom.

This type of violence often leads to emotional trauma whereby one is ostracized by her community. There have been reports of extreme cases in the Limpopo province of South Africa, where older women's homes are either burned or these women are kicked out of their communities. Such cases rarely make it to the media as they are treated as closed community matters.

Gang rape is still prevalent in South Africa. However, this time around it takes various forms with reports of women gang raping men. Of the three gang rape stories reported on, two were by teenage boys and one by three women who forced a 20 year old man to have sex with them. This shows that rape is not affecting women only and there is need to bring this phenomenon out for discussion. At the moment, men are not comfortable coming out to report being raped by women as this puts to question their masculinity.

Socialisation contributes significantly to men's unwillingness to report abuse at the hands of women. Society has taught them to be strong and in control and as such it would be an embarrassment to report being abused by a woman. This would call to question their manhood. There is a lot of stigma against being an abused man. The concept of women raping men has been a highly contested one with some sections of society disputing that a woman can ever abuse a man. This is largely because it goes against the traditional stereotype of a helpless and passive female. This has contributed to gender-based violence being framed in the media and political arena as one of male perpetrators and female victims.

However, the story of a father quoted saying it is physiological impossible for him to rape his son, also brings to light some critical questions around male on male violence. Since gender-based violence is largely an expression of power over the other individual, male rape is therefore an exertion of power over the less powerful men in society.

Gender-based violence is often viewed as a problem that only women face. Men also face gender-based violence though to a smaller scale (Ernst, 1995). Women commit violence against men as a way to ensure their own survival and security within a social, economic and political context that is shaped and dominated by men (Pickup, 2001). Arguably, men subjected to this type of gender-based violence, who become rapists, are both victims and perpetrators of violence (Sigsworth, 2008) as they seek to express their power in the process.

Sourcing in gender-based violence stories

The sourcing patterns observed in this study are in line with previous studies on gender in the media. The Gender and Media Baseline Study (2003) conducted by revealed that In 2003, women were grossly underepresented as news sources in South Africa making up just 17% of news sources in general (Gender Links and the Media Institute of Southern Africa, 2003) There has been a 2 percentage point increase to 19% (Lender Links, 2010). Whilst the average for this study shows that *Sowetan* gives more voice to women compared to other studies on media, the reliance on male sources is still worrying.

Men continue to be the voices of authority and from whose point of view news is mainly told. In South Africa gender-based violence affects society as a whole although women constitute the majority of victims. The voices of women are underrepresnted despite them constituting 52% of the population. This underrepresentation of women's voices in gender-based violence stories at 44% is an anomaly considering that women are the majority of the victims in reported cases. This does not mean to dispute the fact that men also exeprience gender-based violence though to a lesser extent.

On the other hand having men speak on gender violence could be viewed in a positive light as it goes a long way in helping achieve behavioural change among men who are the majority of perpetrators. This also makes gender-based violence, a men's problem too as they live is this society that is bedeviled by the phenomena.

Sourcing in media is closely related to representation where minority groups are denied access to media and almost always spoken for even on issues that affect them directly. The way women and other 'minority groups are treated by society is closely related to their representation (Dyer, 1993). This leads to stereotypical portrayal of those people by the more powerful in society. The stereotype is taken to express a general agreement about a social group, an observation that renders all perceptions stereotypical (Lipman, 1956).

Because of their subordinate position in society, women's voices have also been silenced by the media resulting in only a few of them expressing their opinions on topical issues.Whilst the South African constitution has been described as a progressive one, advocating for freedom of expression to all citizens regardless of their sex, this has not entirely trickled down to the level of the media. There are some voices that almost always get into the media whilst groups such as women and children are subtly denied this access to the news media.

Many survivors of violence feel that they are unable to speak about their experiences for fear of negative consequences. This includes the fear of being ostracized and judged by their families and communities; the fear of retaliation through more violence; of not being believed; or of having to relive their trauma. The 17 year old girl raped by her brother is an example of one person who was denied family support and love during her time of need.

Speaking out is a powerful way of leading victims towards healing as these are stories of struggle and survival. Telling their story in their own words often forms the transition from victim into survivor and ultimately healing (van Dyk, 2008). Telling one's own story is also helpful in *secondary prevention*, which is helping survivors to deal with the emotional aftermath of abuse, and possibly sensitising service providers who may provide treatment and counselling to other abused people. They can also be an inspiration to other survivors who read the stories and who find themselves in abusive relationships to seek help.

Since 2005, Gender Links has been running an 'I' stories series whereby victims and survivors of gender-based violence gather and share their stories. The 'I' stories concept is meant to help victims let out their pain through writing their own stories as part of the transitional process from victim to survivor. Past participants in this project have been quoted giving testimony of the way speaking out has helped in their healing process.

Hearing their voices captures the pain that families go through as a result of losing loved ones in circumstances relating to abusive relationships. Men speak marginally in this category. However, having more women than men express their pain of losing loved ones portrays women as the emotionally weaker ones and men as emotionally strong.

People recognise themselves and their family members and friends in the stories because they are about human beings with voices. They make audiences see what the real impact of domestic violence is, in ways that statistics and analysis cannot do. A story was told (*Sowetan*, 17 March 2008) of a woman who went into a coma after she was kidnapped from her home, severely assaulted and raped. Although the newspaper does not quote her verbatim, it does allude to the statements that she had given to the police after she came out of the coma. Such stories give hope to thousands of people who are experiencing abuse.

Sowetan however does to a certain degree, give victims of gender-based violence the space to tell their stories. Most people who have suffered abuse and survived have been quoted in some of the stories. All the victims speaking to the paper have been named. There were however exceptional cases like when victims are minors. Ethical considerations compel media to be

sensitive when dealing with minors. In such instances relatives have spoken on behalf of these children.

Campbell, (2004, 81) notes that victims of crime or disaster may decline to give comment in media. He notes that people do this for various reasons, including security concerns. Where possible *Sowetan* has solicited comment from victims. Court cases are one category where victims' voices are often missing. This could be attributed to the fact that media mostly rely on court proceedings for these stories. They would usually quote the people who speak during the court sessions.

The question of who secures media access, has a close link to the unequal power relations where the more powerful in society make the news. There were no marked differences in sourcing across the three periods with most of the stories being told from the point of view of the authorities such as the judiciary and police.

Discourse analysis

The discourse on gender-based violence in *Sowetan* does not differ from the general gender-based violence talk. There is rarely in-depth and sustained dialogue on this social ill. There is an obvious lack of dialogue on gender-based violence legislation. The Domestic Violence Act which came into law in 2007 is not mentioned in all 74 stories. This exposes *Sowetan*'s to contextualize gender-based violence and give it holistic coverage which fully informs audiences on what policy efforts and interventions are being made by the legislature to curb the problem. Often citizens do not know the legislation that exists and as such are hesitant to even take the legal route and being violated.

Obviously citizens need to be empowered with knowledge on the various instruments that protect them. It can also be argued that some women and men remain in abusive relationships or do not report abuse because of a lack of awareness on what the law says. Some victims live in fear of reporting the abuse without realizing that there are various instruments, organisations and even shelters that are there to protect abused women. Media have left the role of awareness raising to civil society. This kind of attitude could be linked to media's heavily

commercialized approach to news. What matters the most is the 'bottom line' more than social responsibility.

The opinion of health personnel, judiciary, social workers and witnesses is rarely requested by media when dealing with gender based violnce. There were no health personnel qouted in all gender-based violence stories. The absence of such key sources reduces gender-based violence reporting to a mere chronology/sequence of events around the crime. These are missed opportunities to explore the extent of the trauma that most victims go through. Health workers would normally shed more light on the physical and phycological effects as victims/survivors grapple to come to terms with their experiences. Survivors of gender-based violence often experince life long emotional distress, mental health problems and poor reproductive health (Sigsworth, 2008). Abused women are also at higher risk of contracting HIV and AIDS as they do not have the power to negotiate safe sex.

This lack of analysis of the cost of gender-based violence is evidence of the simplistic approach that media often adopts when dealing with gender-based violence. For example, some women forfeit their dreams after experincing gender violence. The six year old girl going for a womb operation is evidence of how life altering gender-based violence is and how innocent victims often carry the cost. Then cost to the nation as well is not fully explored when women can not achieve their full potential because of gender violence.

The dress explanation given as a reason for the attack on women like Ngcukana is a variation of the familiar script in which women who are victims and survivors of violence emerge as the 'cause' of their own victimization (Scully and Marolla, 1984). Even with these arguments, Ngcukana is still able to face her demons (March 5). She refuses to be silenced by the negative sentiments and comments expressions by culturalists and some sections of the media. This emphasises her agency and ability to rise above the violence and reclaim her life.

Most of the gender-based violence stories are bereft of critical analysis. They are mere narrations of events with no commentary. Media as agents for social change have to open the space for debate and dialogue on issues affecting communities. If rape constitutes 43% of stories on gender-based violence, then it is expected of the media to give a social commentary

on this ill. The link between high HIV infections and gender-based violence are not fully explored by the media. Rape and its use as a vector for the proactive spread of HIV and AIDS has become a symptom of societal sickness. *Sowetan* casually reports on HIV positive people raping minors and often does not comment on how these young children's dreams and ambitions are shattered by such experiences.

Ngcukana's statements about taxi drivers questioning her dress code brings to the fore discourse on what women should and should not wear in public places, a discussion that has been mired in controversy in most African countries including South Africa. She says,

> "The funny thing about this is that I thought security guards would sympathise with me. Instead they mocked me and asked what was I thinking parading around in a miniskirt at a taxi rank….they just laughed at me and said this is the kind of attitude that makes taxi drivers do these things."

The question of dress has been used in arguments that justify why sexual assault/rape happens.

These arguments have been dismissed by feminists as simplistic as rape is not about sex but about power. This is especially true for men whose self-esteem has been battered and as such try to assert themselves by prescribing what women should and should not wear. Controversy over the clothing of African women is not new. In the immediate post-colonial period, African leaders across the continent took a personal interest in what women wore and berated them for unsuitable choices (Vincent, (2009). These prescriptions reflect a patriarchal ideology characterised by assumptions of women's inferiority, lack of agency, the control of women's sexuality by men and the inappropriateness of sexual expressiveness on the part of women.

Most abused women often do not find the space to express their feelings and thoughts because society is sometimes not supportive of such people. In some cases the women do not feel safe enough to talk about their experiences. In the past media has also played jury in gender-based violence stories, often taking a stand to seek to explain the abuse. Most of this has been done through denying the victims and survivors the space to talk and often blaming them for inciting men to violate them. The miniskirt story is especially different because four other women had

been striped a day earlier. Their stories did not make it into the media and neither were they given the opportunity to speak out.

Detailed analysis of the language in gender-based violence shows that the paper seldom uses stereotypical language or language that blames victims of abuse, but instead seeks to see justice prevail. For example words such as 'brilliant, brave' have been used to describe some people who have been abused. Likewise the word 'murder' has been used in instances where victims have died.

The effect gender-based violence has on victims is aptly captured in the continued use of the word, 'humiliate'. It was used to refer to what Ngcukana went through as well as the victim of the 'bum smack' incident. This humiliation often erodes women of their confidence and self-worth. The words 'traumatic and brutally' are also often used to describe acts of gender-based violence.

Sowetan sympathises with the abused women and hopes that justice will prevail. This is captured in the story with the statement;

> "It seems Nwabisa Ngcukana who was stripped naked and sexually assaulted by taxi drivers… will get justice after all."

This statement is an expression of the paper's lack of confidence in the country's justice system. It would appear like it is rare for justice to prevail in such cases. The tone is this story is a plea for action for Gauteng's 'top brass' to act against this abuse of women.

Sowetan assumed a social responsibility role by keeping readers informed of the latest developments as the story unfolded. For example, on the 4th of March, the paper gave information on the solidarity March that had been organised by Radio 702's Redi Direko. The time and starting point for the March were given. It is as if the paper was encouraging Johannesburg residents to be part of this March. In other instances the paper provided space for law enforcers to make public announcements. For example on January 28, the paper carried a police appeal to members on the public to help them arrest the two men and three women who

allegedly forced a man to have sex with the women. This article provides readers with numbers to call.

Stigma has been cited as one of the major reasons why victims of abuse have found it difficult to report abuse. This failure by society to support these people has found its way to most media reports on gender-based violence where victims are not given the support that they need. Commendably, the paper even made it possible for men who have been abused by women to talk about their experiences.

The non-judging tone of the stories encourages victims to come out and talk about their experiences openly. Allowing dialogue on gender-based violence creates a conducive environment for seeking solutions to the problem. Although the still need to increase its coverage of gender-based violence, its treatment of victims is commendable. An example is the story of a woman who fell into a coma after being severely assaulted and raped. This story portrays her as a survivor and gives hope to hundreds of women who have been affected by gender-based violence. This woman did not give up on life even after her traumatic experience. What is especially encouraging is the fact that she is able to tell her story to the police.

There was however one instance when the paper fell into stereotypical portrayals of the two sexes where men are presented as the stronger ones with a responsibility to protect the women. The headline '*save our women'* portrays women as subjects owned by men. The possessive term 'our' is used to refer to the collective body of men who see women as theirs.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It emerged from the study that gender-based violence is not a topical issue in *Sowetan* constituting only 1% of all stories during the period under review**.** There were 74 stories on gender-based violence out of 5460 stories written during the period under review. This study, taking place against the backdrop of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development which was signed by SADC heads of State and governments in August 2008, provides valuable information on the extent to which media are working to expose the alarming levels of gender-based violence in society. The SADC Protocol compels member states to half the current levels of gender-based violence by 2015. Although the Protocol was signed after the period being covered by this study, it is still important to refer to it as South Africa is a signatory.

Gender-based violence stories rarely appear on the first pages of Sowetan. Out of the 74 stories on gender-based violence during the monitoring period only five made it to the first page. Nwabisa Ngcukana's story of harassment at the hands of taxi drivers broke this bias against gender-based violence stories making up the four front page appearances during the entire period. Commercial considerations still play a major role in the placing of stories in newspapers with papers reserving front page space for stories that are likely to sell their papers.

Gender-based violence mostly occurs in intimate partner relationships. Out of the 18 stories on rape and sexual assault reported on between January and February, 16 occurred in intimate partner relationships. Rape happens in both public and private spaces. Media's greatest challenge is reporting on sexual assault happening in partner relationships where there is reluctance on the part of the abused to report on the violations. This reluctance is usually exacerbated by fear of further victimizations and social stigma especially in the case of married couples.

Rape and murder are the most reported on categories of gender-based violence. Of the 74 stories on gender-based violence rape and murder made up the majority. Categories such as economic deprivation and forced marriages are still underreported.

Although women are the majority of victims of gender-based violence, men are also affected. This ranges from young boys experiencing violence at the hands of male adults or men experiencing violence at the hands of women. Women are however the main victims because of their subordinate status in society and the inability to negotiate with men in the relationships. Patriarchy as a system has helped maintain the status quo.

Some women have survived these violations and moved on with their lives while some have died as a result of these. Women made up the majority of the victims during the period under review with only two men reportedly being sexually assaulted by women. The other story was of a young boy 'sodomised' by his father. These isolated stories also point to the need for more research and analysis into the extent to which men experience gender-based violence. If they do are the structural explanations the same as the type of violence directed at women.

Gender-based violence stories are largely told from a male point of view. This is despite the fact that women are the majority of victims. Women constituted 44% of sources in the analysed stories overall and men 56%. A further breakdown of sources by type showed an obvious reliance on official sources for information on gender-based violence. Police spokespersons are the most quoted sources in gender-based violence stories at 40%. However, most of these official sources are men making up 31% of all sources. This over-reliance on official sources is linked to event based reporting witnessed in *Sowetan*.

Women on the other hand are heard more as victims, relatives and other. There were no social workers, health personnel or the judiciary quoted during the monitoring period. Men are then voices of authority in the stories with women being relegated to witnesses.

Notably female victims of gender-based violence speak marginally about their experiences constituting only 17% of sources while male victims made up 1% percent of victims quoted. Perpetrators make up 4% of all sources. There were only two stories reported with female perpetrators. However they were not given the opportunity to speak.

The qualitative analysis of the stories shows that headlines in gender-based violence stories often sympathise with victims of abuse. There are however, some stories which are sensational

and others which tend to trivialise gender-based violence. An example is the headline, 'bum smack at taxi rank.'

The language used in the stories does not place any blame on the victims for the violations they have experienced. For example in the miniskirt story and other related incidences of violence taking place in public places, such as taxi ranks, there was no judgment or accusations labelled against the victims of abuse. In fact the miniskirt story represents a paradigm shift in the portrayal of gender-based violence victims. Nwabisa Ngcukana was able to tell her story in her own words. Likewise other opposing views were captured where security guards expressed their discomfort at girls who dress' indecently' in public.

Most gender-based violence stories do not make use of images. This could be attributed to the sensitivity around this type of violence. Some victims are not comfortable being photographed due to fear of stigmatization and further victimization whilst in other instances photos of minors cannot be used in such instances. As *Sowetan* relies heavily on court reports for stories on GBV, it is not always possible to get photographs of the people concerned.

Failure by society to acknowledge that gender-based violence is gross violation of women's human rights' has led to families and communities normalizing this type of violence and not actively fighting it. Women and girls continue to suffer in silence because society has accepted this type of violence. There are even misconceptions that abuse at the hands of an intimate partner is a sign of love. There is therefore need for awareness raising and public campaigns to fight gender-based violence. This has to include media as a key partner.

There is also need for a comprehensive study on the difference that the Domestic Violence Bill and the Sexual Offences Act have made in South Africa. Have these contributed to the fight against gender-based violence?

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