

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA A COUNTRY IN CRISIS

2017

Nonhlanhla Sibanda-Moyo, Eleanor Khonje and Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey



OXFAM
South Africa



CSV
Centre for the Study of
Violence and Reconciliation



CSV
Centre for the Study of
Violence and Reconciliation

Contact details:

Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation
Johannesburg Office
Physical address:
33 Hoofd Street, Braampark Forum 5, 3rd Floor
Braamfontein 2001, South Africa

Postal address:
PO Box 30778
Braamfontein 2017, South Africa

Phone: +27-11-403-5650
Fax: +27-11-339-6785
Email: info@csvr.org.za

Cape Town Office
451 Main Road, Premier Centre 5th Floor
Observatory 7925, South Africa

Phone: +27-21-447-2470
Email: ctadmin@csvr.org.za

www.csvr.org.za

The content of this publication is protected by copyright. Readers are, however, invited to freely use the information as published here, subject to acknowledging the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation and the "Violence Against Women In South Africa A Country In Crisis"

Layout/design by Carol Cole

Published April 2017



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abbreviations and acronyms	2
Acknowledgements	3
Executive summary	5
BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION	8
A country in crisis?	11
Brief comparative review of VAW in other postconflict countries	16
South African state responses to VAW	18
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	26
VAW: Applying a feminist framework	26
Research methods	27
Sampling: Who to study?	29
Limitations of the study	30
FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS	31
Understanding the persistence of VAW in South Africa: Socialisation, opportunity costs and institutional inadequacies	41
Strategies to overcome the persistence of VAW	60
RECOMMENDATIONS	66
CONCLUSION	69
REFERENCES	71



ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CGE	Commission for Gender Equality
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSVR	Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation
DSD	Department of Social Development
DVA	Domestic Violence Act (1998)
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation or Cutting
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HIV/AIDS	Human immunodeficiency virus/Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual and Intersex
NCGBV	National Council against Gender-Based Violence
NERT	National Emergency Response Team
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSP	National Strategic Plan
PFVA	Prevention of Family Violence Act (1993)
SAPS	South African Police Service
SOA	Sexual Offences and Related Matters Amendment Act (2007)
TAWU	Tshireletsong against Women Abuse
TCC	Thuthuzela Care Centre
VAW	Violence against Women
VAWC	Violence against Women and Children
VEP	Victim Empowerment programme



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research would not have been possible without the generous funding and support from Oxfam South Africa. Thank you for your guidance and technical support throughout the project.

Special thanks to Dr. Hugo Van der Merwe and Masana Ndinga for the reviews and critical comments on the first draft of the report and for their support throughout the research project.

To Tsamme Mfundisi and Melissa Hunter, many thanks for your contribution to the Basic Research Skills manual and ethical considerations in conducting GBV Research. Special recognition to Nomathamsanqa Masiko for her contribution and specific additions to the section defining South Africa's current dynamics and emerging trends on violence against women.

To the Research Reference group members, your guidance and support in shaping the methodological approach of this study cannot go unmentioned.

Our utmost deepest appreciation to the eight women participants who unreservedly shared their life stories with us. Here's to love, strength and hope for a greater tomorrow. To the focus group participants from all the provinces we worked in, this report is the sum total of your views and perspectives, thank you. *Nina nizimbokodo!*

To the community based organisations and field researchers we worked with in Gauteng, Limpopo, Kwazulu Natal and the Free State, much appreciation.

And much appreciation to the Maxeke Secondary school peer educators for the Teenz Alliance in ending sexual violence in schools for all the artwork and painting used in this report.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In South Africa, a country scarred by the history of apartheid, violence against women (VAW) is endemic. Statistics on femicide, rape and domestic violence demonstrate unprecedented prevalence rates. According to South Africa's 2016 Demographic and Health Survey, one in five women older than 18 has experienced physical violence. This figure is reportedly higher in the poorest households, where at least one in three women has reported physical violence. A 2009 Medical Research Council study reported that three women die at the hands of their intimate partner every day. This femicide rate is five times more than the global average. The rate of sexual violence is also one of the highest in the world. The country is characterised by a strong legislative and policy-enabling environment aligned with international conventions that seek to protect and promote the rights of women. At the same time, a comprehensive set of government programmes and dynamic civil society organisations (CSOs) are providing essential services to women. Yet, despite the myriad of legal protections and interventions by state and non-state actors, women in South Africa continue to experience extremely high rates of violence. This raises human security concerns for women particularly and for the country at large. It also begs the question of why VAW persists in South Africa, and what needs to be done to address it.

This research contributes towards explaining the high prevalence of VAW in South Africa, and presents recommendations to inform interventions by women, government departments and the wider society for addressing VAW. It does so from the experiences and perceptions of survivors of VAW, a perspective that is underexplored.

Women's quality of life the world over and particularly in South Africa has long been observed as curtailed by the balance of social power, which is tilted in favour of males. The literature reviewed for this research confirms that VAW is a significant aspect of women's experiences where this can be felt in South Africa. Also, socioeconomic uncertainties, often exacerbated by women's limited access to education, capital, labour opportunities and resource control, further compound this situation. The persistence of VAW is a process and a conflict that oppresses women while simultaneously expressing the ills of society. The evidence suggests that most survivors of VAW experience violence throughout their lives. For instance, all of the respondents in this study had experienced violence more than once, across different periods in their lives. Again, VAW is interlinked in relations of power and feeds on and induces multiple vulnerabilities, including disability, economic dependence, identity-based inequalities and the personal circumstances of women and children.

Attempts at tackling VAW in South Africa must consider these complexities and should not be looked at in isolation from other structural and social problems. This report reviews policy interventions made for VAW. Recognising the opportunities and challenges presented by these existing intervention approaches, the report suggests that both state and non-state actors must develop and commit to a more nuanced understanding of VAW.

Despite the myriad of legal protections and interventions by state and non-state actors, women in South Africa continue to experience extremely high rates of violence.



The following recommendations are thus made:

Need for multifaceted approaches: VAW is an intricate phenomenon requiring a multifaceted approach and should be understood as the outcome of multiple factors interlinked at the individual, family, community and societal levels. Workable approaches must take into account the individual-level factors of women's socioeconomic realities (e.g., education, income and employment) as well as macro structural factors (e.g., patriarchal structures, social and economic policies) that shape women's lives and experiences.

Need for a targeted focus on VAW: While cognisant of the fact that gender violence affects different genders, statistics show that women are the ones most affected. Also, women's unique experiences of the intersecting dynamics of race, sexual orientation, class and gender make their experiences of harm that much more distinctive. A targeted and focused approach on VAW will allow us to understand the specific gendered harms and challenges women face, as well as to further unpack the diversities that exist within women and to develop relevant interventions. The ability to name a problem for what it is means being able to define how we view the problem and how it is experienced by different people within specific categories, and ultimately how it impacts on them. Also, by naming VAW for what it is, this opens up opportunities for the development of specific and relevant strategies and interventions to effectively address it.

Address interdepartment and intersector coordination issues in the implementation of VAW programmes and policies: There is an urgent need to address the fragmentation and divisions within and among elements working towards women's rights. It is also important that a comprehensive national strategic plan that has legislative clout be developed and adopted. This definitely requires that the National Council against Gender-Based Violence be revitalised.

Strengthen implementation of existing laws: South Africa boasts a largely progressive national legislative framework to address VAW and as such does not necessarily need new laws. What needs to be strengthened is implementation and accountability for those already in existence. This will require costing and adequate resourcing of relevant laws and policies. Funding also needs to be committed towards the development and implementation of accountability mechanisms required to realise success. Further, the decriminalisation of sex work needs to be accelerated, as criminalisation puts sex workers (the majority of whom are women) in increased vulnerability.

Address challenges in the criminal justice system: One of the main reasons accounting for the persistence of VAW in South Africa was attributed to challenges within the criminal justice system, particularly within the police services. It is therefore crucial to address the systemic challenges within the police services in order to restore trust and confidence in the justice system.

Promote gender equality to prevent VAW: Strategies to address VAW must be intrinsically linked to efforts towards achieving gender equality more generally. Prevention must start early in life by educating and working with girls and boys to promote respectful relationships and gender equality. While public policies and interventions often overlook this stage of life, it is a critical time for forging values and norms around gender equality. Arguably, it also appears to be easier to change the attitudes and behaviours of boys and younger men than of older adults, highlighting the need to target young people.



Increased women's economic empowerment: The lack of access to financial resources and support is a central barrier to leaving abusive relationships or even reporting incidences of abuse, both of which are important in the fight against VAW. Thus, efforts to increase women's economic empowerment through encouraging and strengthening their entrepreneurship and labour rights, encouraging universal access to education and providing access to capital and resource control, are recommended as essential to combat VAW in South Africa.

Improving services for intimate partner violence (IPV): Improving access to services for abused women is a critical measure to prevent future or recurrent violence. To ensure this, broad-based community involvement is crucial. This includes taking advantage of preexisting community resources, as has been done in Liberia, especially in rural areas where women are short-changed by resource inadequacies.

Enhancing parenting practices: Childhood experiences such as neglectful and violent parenting practices have been shown to influence the formation of violent masculinities. Approaches to VAW intervention must encourage healthy parenting practices as a prevention strategy. It is also critical, when thinking through parenting to recognize the wide network of influences on the rearing of children. Communities and institutions such as schools, faith communities and the media are critical in the parenting processes.

Role of media: Women's accounts and perceptions of VAW point out that violence is a learned behaviour. This learning takes place through various mediums. At present, the South African media is identified as being instrumental in shaping individual perceptions of VAW. It is recommended that CSOs and community-based organisations employ the media as a dissemination tool for positive messaging and images of women. They must collaborate with the media, in partnership, to ensure sustainability and a shared sense of responsibility.

The value of using an intersectional analysis: Given that no single factor can sufficiently explain the violence experienced by women in South Africa, it follows that it is in the intersections of oppression that violence occurs. This study highlights the added vulnerability of lesbians (or those assumed to be) and women in poor and less resourced communities as being particularly at risk. Thus, approaches and interventions to address VAW need to use an intersectional analysis in order to ensure that those who are most marginalised are reached.

Lifecycle approach to addressing VAW: The various accounts by the women in this study point to the reality that VAW takes on many forms and can occur throughout a person's life. A number of the life-history respondents recounted experiences of multiple episodes of violence that (in some instances) started in the prenatal period and continued through childhood to adulthood and old age. Interventions therefore need to be framed in ways that take this into account.

VAW research and policy recommendations should account for the lived experiences of women: There is a critical need for VAW research to take into account women's lived experiences. Policy recommendations need to be based on what women say their lives are like rather than on ideological perspectives that researchers might think is happening. There is a need to centre women's voices and experiences (e.g., by applying feminist methodologies, as done in this research) in order to improve the implementation methods and the results experienced by women themselves.



BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

More than two decades after South Africa's transition to democracy, the country is seen in the eyes of the international community as a regional example of democratic and social rebirth. South Africa is characterised by a strong legislative and policy-enabling environment that is aligned with international conventions that seek to protect and promote the rights of women. At the same time, a comprehensive set of government programmes and dynamic civil society organisations (CSOs) are providing essential services to women. Yet, despite the myriad of legal protections and interventions by state and non-state actors, women in South Africa continue to experience extremely high rates of violence.

The alarming statistics on femicide, rape and domestic violence demonstrate these unprecedented levels. According to South Africa's 2016 Demographic and Health Survey, one in five women older than 18 has experienced physical violence.¹ This figure is reportedly higher in the poorest households, where at least one in three women has reported physical violence. A 2009 Medical Research Council study reported that three women die at the hands of their intimate partner every day.² This femicide rate is five times more than the global average.

Countless studies, including evaluative and exploratory assessments of violence against women (VAW), have yielded explanations that name structural problems, the violent legacy of the apartheid state and contemporary social problems as accounting for VAW in South Africa. Considering that these explanations have for decades been employed to understand VAW and to advance approaches to transformation, without the desired improvements, this situation presents an impasse. It also throws a cloud over the efforts against VAW in South Africa.

In the face of persistent VAW in South Africa, a different approach to understanding it must inform our perceptions of the issue and how to tackle it. Beyond the 'known' and stated explanations for VAW, perhaps there is a need to explore the processes by which structural and social issues interact to produce VAW in South Africa through the lenses of those who experience it. This seems to be a gap in current studies aimed at understanding this phenomenon. Grounded in a feminist research methodology, this study therefore examines why VAW persists in South Africa through exploring women's experiences and the meanings they attach to these experiences, in order to inform further substantive intervention. The study questions the given explanations for VAW, and their underlying assumptions in the literature and in dominant discourses, through the explanations, standpoints and experiences of women. It focuses on women as the 'knowers' and expert authorities of their own experiences, which mostly take place on the margins of society, and represents their subjective knowledges.

The overall research question guiding the study is:

Why does VAW persist in South Africa, and what needs to be done to address it?

An overview of past studies, discourses on VAW and VAW intervention efforts in South Africa shows that they have largely focused on the nature of VAW, its extent and dimensions, the character of intervention efforts and survivors' support and services. These discussions have also included evaluations of legal, policy and organisational approaches in the VAW interventions in the country, and, to a much lesser extent, the experiences and perceptions of survivors of VAW. This study seeks to fill this gap.

¹ Statistics South Africa. (2016). *South Africa Demographic and Health Survey 2016*.

² Abrahams, N., Mathews, S., Martin, L. J., Lombard, C., & Jewkes, R. (2013). Intimate partner femicide in South Africa in 1999 and 2009. *PLoS Medicine*, 10(4), e1001412.



This report contributes towards explaining the high prevalence of VAW in South Africa, and presents recommendations to inform interventions by women, government departments and wider society to address VAW. It focuses on understandings of the phenomenon of VAW in South Africa, reasons for its persistence in spite of efforts to combat it, and strategies to make successful impacts. The perceptions and experiences of women generally, and of survivors of VAW particularly, are privileged in both the construction and the analysis of data. The findings from fieldwork in South Africa inform the examination of the present character of VAW as understood and experienced and of the interventions in South Africa presented in this report.

The first part of the report provides a contextual background to VAW in South Africa. It discusses the following three main areas: the nature, extent and dimensions of VAW in South Africa; the legislative, policy and institutional context; and the character of intervention efforts. Intervention efforts by both state and non-state actors are accounted for in this review. Given the time and scope limitations of the study, the non-state interventions are looked at through the lens of unified efforts rather than efforts by individual CSOs or community-based organisations (CBOs). This is related to the larger context of VAW research in two other postconflict African contexts. Following that is a brief discussion of the research methodology, the research findings and recommendations.

Conceptualising VAW in South Africa: Definitions, dimensions and manifestations

VAW is a pervasive phenomenon that has been the subject of different research studies, forms of activism and women's rights conceptualisations for several decades as it continues to affect women's exercise and enjoyment of these rights across the world. It is estimated that at least one woman in every three has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime.³ This has become the basis for a clarion call to increase efforts to decrease VAW worldwide. These efforts have included further research and advocacy work.

The 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women provided the basis for the dominant understandings of VAW in development and academic discourses. The Declaration defines VAW as

...any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.⁴

This definition employs the underpinnings of the human rights framework and other instruments which specifically address the human rights of women.⁵ These include the provisions in the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and its further expansion in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, as well as those in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This conceptualisation foregrounds a relationship between discrimination, violence and notions of power. VAW is understood as both feeding off and reinforcing discrimination against women, including discrimination based on race, ethnicity, sexuality, work, age, disability and other markers. This understanding of VAW implies that sociocultural ideas about men and women – gender ideology – in a particular context are important for the definitions of VAW.⁶ It also points to the responsibilities of state governments in their commitments to human rights and, as per the social contract, in their obligation to work towards social justice by preventing VAW, protecting women against it, investigating acts of violence and punishing perpetrators.

³ See United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's campaign Unite to End Violence against Women, <http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/pdf/VAW.pdf> (accessed August 2017).

⁴ 'Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women', UN Doc. A/RES/48/104 (20 December 1993), <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm> (accessed August 2017), art. 1.

⁵ Amnesty International, 'Gender, Sexuality, & Identity', <http://www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/issues/women-s-rights/violence-against-women/violence-against-women-information> (accessed August 2017); CSV, 'Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in South Africa: A Brief Review', 2016, <http://www.csv.org.za/pdf/Gender%20Based%20Violence%20in%20South%20Africa%20-%20A%20Brief%20Review.pdf> (accessed August 2017).

⁶ Bollen, S., Artz, L., Vetten, L., & Louw, A. (1999). *Violence against Women in Metropolitan South Africa: A Study on Impact and Service Delivery*. Monograph 41. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies.



The conceptualisation, which is broad enough to allow for the varied acts of violence experienced by different kinds of women, provided the tentative framing of VAW for this research. This was done in an attempt to overcome the tendency of research to have constrictive definitions that either negate some women's experiences of VAW or write them out of the data addressed in the literature.⁷ This study employed the terms 'abuse', 'violence' and 'assault' interchangeably and distinctively to ensure that women's diverse experiences and understandings of VAW were captured.

The women in this study unanimously agreed with this definition of VAW, in both in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). Owing to different viewpoints of some of the women concerning cultural practices such as virginity testing, however, there was a caveat that African cultural practices should not at all times be interpreted as being devoid of human rights considerations.

However, in light of the demographic limitation of the study, the findings cannot make claims of generalisation, but rather represent a particular lived reality.

A targeted focus on VAW

Another critical dimension to this study are the complexities surrounding the use of the concepts VAW and gender-based violence (GBV). GBV is the umbrella term used to capture violence that occurs as a result of the unequal power relationships and the normative role expectations associated with each gender in a specific society.⁸ VAW is therefore a specific type of GBV, which focuses on women's very unique experiences of harm. This study is premised on the feminist understanding that while it is important to nuance understandings of who the victims and perpetrators of violence are, it is simultaneously important to maintain a targeted focus on VAW in both discourse and practice.

In our view, a broad focus on GBV obscures the fact that while some experiences of GBV may be similar, there are many differences that need to be understood and captured in policy and practise work surrounding instances of such violence.⁹ This is especially true for women whose unique experiences of the intersecting dynamics of race, sexual orientation, class and gender make their experiences of harm that much more distinctive.¹⁰ Given the pervasive nature of VAW in particular, this study calls for specific targeted approaches and interventions to addressing this unique problem. Importantly, these targeted approach must not homogenise women, but rather take to cognisance the diversities of women, including transwomen. Such a targeted approach should not minimise or negate the effects of other forms of GBV not targeted at women. Efforts towards addressing these are important and must continue.

A COUNTRY IN CRISIS?

Even with limited data to work from, VAW in South Africa is enduring, and has been described as 'widespread, at a high level and normalised'¹¹ and as occurring in endemic proportions. Interpol's comparative statistics worldwide suggest that in 2002, South Africa ranked as the world's number one in terms of reported cases of VAW. Recent reports indicate that this situation has not changed for the better. The recorded murder rate of 24.7 per 100 000 females in South Africa is significantly higher than global levels.¹² Considering that a major problem linked to these statistics is gross underreporting, such extreme and high rates remain a cause for concern. Furthermore, prevalence rates of intimate partner violence (IPV) across population-based studies in South Africa put the rate at between one-in-five and one-in-three women reporting experiences of physical IPV in their lifetime, with 40 to 50% of men disclosing having perpetrated physical partner violence. Additionally, nearly one in five women reported having experienced sexual IPV.¹³

One can argue that the country has become accustomed to news headlines about VAW, be it physical assault, mutilation, sexual harassment, rape, gang rape, corrective rape or murder. The perpetrators cut across racial and colour lines, socioeconomic standing and educational background. Perpetrators of VAW in South Africa range from prominent sportsmen, high-ranking political officials and professors in universities, to the average man on the street.

7. Ibid.

8. Bloom, S. (2008) Violence against Women and Girls: A Compendium of Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators (Chapel Hill, NC: MEASURE Evaluation)

9. Mukhopadhyay, M. (2004). Mainstreaming gender or 'streaming' gender away: Feminists marooned in the development business. *IDS bulletin*, 35(4), 95–103

10. Ibid.

11. HRC (Human Rights Council). (2016). *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Its Causes and Consequences on Her Mission to South Africa*.

12. Abrahams et al. (2009); Dahlberg, L., & Krug, E. G. (2002). Violence – a global public health problem. In E. Krug, L. L. Dahlberg, J. Mercy, A. Zwi, & R. Lozano (Eds.), *World Report on Violence and Health* (pp.3–21). Geneva: WHO.

13. Gender Links & The Medical Research Council (2010). *The war@home: Findings of the Gender Based Violence Prevalence Study in Gauteng, Western Cape, KwaZulu Natal and Limpopo Provinces of South Africa*.



Violent crimes such as the rape and murder of Anene Booysen in 2009 and Banyana-Banyana national female football team player, Eudy Simelana, or the murder of Reeve Steenkamp communicate a particular message to women and children: you are as unsafe in public as you are in private spaces. South Africa is home to the rape of women as old as 86, evidenced in a number of cases where elderly women were sexually violated, as well as to the rape of infants, as demonstrated in the baby Tshepang case, where a nine-month-old baby was raped by her mother's boyfriend. These alarming occurrences point to the fact that rape is an enduring nightmare in the country.¹⁴

In Women's Month of 2017, a month commemorating the role played by women in the fight against apartheid, as epitomised by the historic Women's March to the Union Buildings on 9 August 1956, South Africans woke on the morning of 7 August to the disconcerting news that the Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, Mduzisi Manana, had physically assaulted a woman named Mandisa Duma in a Johannesburg nightclub. Incidents like these force the nation to collectively reflect on men in power, many of whom are held in high esteem as custodians of the values South Africans hold dear as a society – equality, rule of law and human rights. Another example is President Jacob Zuma's 2006 rape case. The need to come up with workable measures and approaches to addressing VAW in the country is therefore a matter of urgency.

While academically oriented research has tended to account for the failure to combat VAW by referencing the complexity of the phenomenon in South Africa, as well as its simplification when converted into policy and intervention programmes, development practitioners have characterised the issue in terms of policy implementation gaps. This study brings these two viewpoints into conversation. Significant work has been done in evaluating laws and policies pertaining to VAW in South Africa.¹⁵ All in all, though South Africa's legislative environment is recognised as progressive, the literature acknowledges that in spite of the efforts made to eradicate VAW, it continues unabated. This is widely attributed to problems of policy implementation, including the resource capacity and competence of service providers. These problems are exacerbated by a lack of institutional and policy coordination, funding issues and the necessary political will.¹⁶

¹⁴. Gqola, P. D. (2015). *Rape: A South African Nightmare*. Johannesburg: JM Books.

¹⁵. HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur*; CSVR (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation). (2016). *Mapping Local Gender-Based Violence Prevention and response Strategies in South Africa*. Cape Town: CSVR; Vetten, L. (2005). *Addressing Domestic Violence in South Africa: Reflections on Strategy and Practice*. Cape Town: CSVR; Keaorata, G. V. (n.d.). *Shortcomings of South Africa's Domestic Violence Act in Comparative Perspective*.

¹⁶. Sonke Gender Justice. (2015). <http://www.genderjustice.org.za/policy-development-advocacy/stop-gender-violence-national-campaign/>; *No Word from the National Council on Gender-Based Violence*; HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur*; le Roux, E. (2015). *South Africa's Rising Rates of Violence against Women Demand a Unified Approach*.



A review of public policy literature suggests that while policy implementation is often portrayed as a simple process involving the adoption of best practices, practical evidence shows that it is a more complex process entailing a range of different actors who translate policy into practice under a variety of conditions.¹⁷ This complexity is further complicated by changes in the public services, both incremental and disruptive, and the agency of those to whom policy is targeted. South Africa's institutional and political structuring, as well as complexities around which department bears responsibility for VAW, has been pointed out as a mitigating factor in the progress made in developing a national VAW strategy.¹⁸ Other explanations for VAW's persistence have pointed to deficits in the understanding of what VAW is, and to methodological challenges in research and data collection efforts.

Both the available literature and development discourses acknowledge the complexity of the problem of VAW. It is viewed as both a social and an economic problem, and one that affects all South Africans, irrespective of race, gender or social class.¹⁹ South Africa's violent history of oppression and the struggle for liberation are also believed to have left a legacy that legitimises violence as means of resolving social, political and even domestic conflicts at family and community levels.²⁰ There is recognition of the deep-cutting consequences of VAW for the rights and lives of women and for national development. Though recognised as a health issue, it is also seen as a wider problem of development, including education and socialisation, economic and political security as well as the general well-being of women.²¹ In terms of the economic toll on South Africa, VAW is estimated to cost the economy between R28.4 and R42.4 billion annually.²² Most significantly, the consequences on the lives of women who experience VAW are long term, far reaching and sometimes fatal.

Researchers and practitioners have identified various manifestations of VAW in South Africa based on who the victims and/or perpetrators are; the relationships between them; the sociocultural, institutional and environmental contexts of violence; the type and extent of violence; the consequences and other factors. Victims of VAW include both girls and women, with perpetrators being mainly male.²³ VAW more often than not occurs in the interstices of the social institutions of marriage, family, neighbourhoods and schools. Although all women are at risk of VAW, some are more vulnerable than others. They include women who are already vulnerable and disadvantaged, including irregular migrant women, victims of displacements and trafficking, sexual minorities, economically dependent women, women with disabilities, informal settlement dwellers and sex workers. This points to the intersectionality of other forms of discrimination and vulnerability in the experience of VAW. Generally, however, younger women and coloured/black women are at higher risk than others in South Africa of experiencing VAW.²⁴

Despite acknowledging various forms of VAW – emotional, economic, physical and sexual abuse, murder, exploitation and discrimination – the literature predominantly focuses on sexual and domestic violence. This is understandable given that sexual and domestic violence in South Africa are the most apparent forms of violence and have specific laws stipulating procedures for redress. Sexual harassment and a combination of sexual, physical and other forms of VAW have also been reported in relation to sociocultural practices specific to South Africa. A contemporary form of a cultural practice, ukuthwala, is reported to involve abduction, kidnapping, assault and the rape of girls and women to coerce them into marriage.²⁵

The most common kind of VAW in South Africa is sexual violence, which remained consistently high in the national crime statistics from 2012–2015.²⁶ The forms that sexual violence takes are generally grouped into IPV and non-partner violence, which may include gang rape, rape homicide, school- and workplace-related violence, etc. These forms of VAW occur in the spaces and environments within which women's general life experiences occur, including their homes, schools, workplaces, neighbourhoods and communities. The 2012 Demographic and Health Survey, surveying women aged 15–49, indicated that 38% of rape victims identified a teacher or principal as the rapist.²⁷

17. Carey, G., Dickinson, H., & Olney, S. (2017). What can feminist theory offer policy implementation challenges? *Evidence & Policy: A Journal of Research, Debate and Practice*.

18. Sonke Gender Justice, *No Word from the National Council*.

19. DSD (Department of Social Development, South Africa). (2013). *Media Statement by the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Violence against Women and Children*.

20. HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur*.

21. Sonke Gender Justice. (n.d.). *Stop Gender Violence: A National Campaign*.

22. <http://www.genderjustice.org.za/policy-development-advocacy/stop-gender-violence-national-campaign/>

23. CSVR, *Mapping Local Gender-Based Violence Prevention*.

24. Ibid.

25. HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur*.

26. Kaber, N. (2014). *Violence against Women as 'Relational' Vulnerability: Engendering the Sustainable Human Development Agenda*. UNDP Human Development Report Office.

27. Ibid.



The 2011 Human Rights Commission report on VAW in South Africa also points to sexual violence in schools by both educators and classmates.

The 2012 Demographic and Health Survey, surveying women aged 15–49, indicated that 38% of rape victims identified a teacher or principal as the rapist.

IPV is the most common and lethal kind of domestic violence in South Africa, with married women at highest risk. The severity of South African rates of VAW and IPV becomes apparent when compared, for example, to those of North Carolina (3.5 per 100 000), which has the highest rates in the US – South Africa’s IPV rates are 2.5 times higher. In 2010/2011 statistics from the South African Police Service, the combined figure for all sexual offences, including rape and indecent assault, increased by 2.1%, and femicide by 5.6%, compared to the figures for 2009/2010. Dahlberg and Krug suggest that South Africa’s rates of femicide are significantly higher than the global indications of four per 100 000.²⁸ Half of these acts of femicide are estimated to be perpetrated by intimate partners. Police Service figures for 2010/11 also indicated a 2.6% increase from 2009/2010 in sexual offences against children, totalling 25,862 cases.²⁹

Explanations of VAW in South Africa

With prevalence rates that soar above global rates, VAW in South Africa presents a critical context for the theorisation of VAW in general. Of the explanations given, the most distinctive has been the concept of ‘inherited violence of apartheid’. This notion suggests that the blatant racially discriminatory and violent nature of the apartheid state, in addition to the conflicts that ensued from these, and the eventual transition to democratic governance in South Africa produced an entrenched culture of violence that feeds into, produces and patterns other forms of violence, including VAW. Specifically, it is argued that apartheid policies that encouraged geographical and economic segregation, both racial and gendered, socioculturally disadvantaged women in both the private and public spheres of life, which are intertwined in the experiences of women. In this understanding, the reasons for VAW are argued to be historical and deeply rooted in class, gender and racial discriminations. Colonialism and its disordering of gender relations, which in most cases made women’s relatively disadvantaged position in South African society worse, have also been factored into this argument.³⁰

The ideology of patriarchy also features prominently in the explanations of VAW in South Africa. This central feminist explanation of VAW suggests that the male-dominated power structure throughout institutionalised South Africa and in individual relationships forms the underlying bias that enables VAW. This bias enables the formation and entrenchment of norms and attitudes that disadvantage women and children, as the balance of social power is tilted to the advantage of men, their perspectives and their rights.³¹ In understanding VAW, and not just GBV, the shortcomings of the concept of patriarchy make it insufficient.^{32. 33}

Using patriarchy alone to explain VAW advances the pre-eminence of gender in understanding VAW. This however, should not limit explanations to women’s experiences of violence alone in multicultural South Africa, and in its structural context of inequality. Beyond the category of gender, women in South Africa have had (differential) historical and continuing experiences of other forms of oppression and inequality, including racism, heterosexism and colonialism, which must be accounted for in the understanding of VAW. This report takes a VAW perspective that proceeds from a poststructural feminist approach that acknowledges the diversity of women in South Africa, and thus allows for a multiplicity of women’s experiences and manifestations of violence. This is in line with the domestic violence literature that has ‘challenged the primacy of gender as an explanatory mode and...emphasized

^{28.} Dahlberg & Krug (2002), cited in CVSR. (2016). Brief Overview of Gender-Based Violence Responses.

^{29.} DSD (Department of Social Development, South Africa). (2013). *Opening Address by the Minister of social Development, Ms Bathabile Dlamini, on the Occasion of the South African Conference on orphans, Vulnerable Children and youth Affected by HIV/AIDS, ICC Durban, KZN Province.*

^{30.} Baden, S., Hasim, S., & Meintjes, S. (1998). *Country Gender Profile: South Africa*. Brighton: BRIDGE (development - gender), Institute of Development Studies.

^{31.} Namy, et al. (2017). Towards a feminist understanding of intersecting violence against women and children in the family. *Social Science & Medicine*, 184, 40–48.

^{32.} Patil, V. (2013). From patriarchy to intersectionality: A transnational feminist assessment of how far we’ve really come. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 38(4), 847–867; Sokoloff, N. J., & Dupont, I. (2005). Domestic violence at the intersections of race, class, and gender. *Violence against Women*, 11(1), 38–64.

^{33.}



the need to examine how other forms of inequality and oppression, such as racism, ethnocentrism, class privilege, and heterosexism, intersect with gender oppression' in women's experiences of violence.³⁴

Another explanation offered is linked to the social problems of contemporary South Africa. These problems, which include endemic unemployment, high illiteracy rates, widespread alcohol and drug abuse as well as general socioeconomic insecurity, have been shown to either exacerbate or act as triggers of VAW in South Africa and are closely associated with re/assertions of masculinities. Also cited are the persistent stereotypical portrayal of women in the media, as well as the high incidence of and challenges related to HIV and AIDS.³⁵

There is a general consensus, however, that these explanations do not stand on their own but interact in a complex manner to produce the widespread nature and critical dimensions of VAW in South Africa. Any explanation of VAW, therefore, must foreground the relationships and interlinkages between these explanations. Often, however, these explanations have either been developed independent of women's actual experiences or, at best, may have been informed by limited fragments of such experiences. This research report not only presents explanations informed by women's experiences but, most importantly, puts forth women's own explanations of VAW in South Africa. The dynamics of knowledge production have been shifted in this research to centre on the knowledge and meaning-making power of women who have experienced VAW in South Africa.

^{34.} Sokoloff & Dupont, Domestic violence at the intersections, p.39.

^{35.} HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur*.



Methodological gaps

The review of work already done identifies several data collection issues in the estimations of the prevalence rates of VAW. These notwithstanding, it is generally agreed that the prevalence of VAW in South Africa is high. For some, VAW in South Africa is considered a normalised aspect of society. Bollen et al. point particularly to the tendency of researcher definitions of VAW to negate some experiences of women.³⁶ Additionally, there are shortfalls in data collection by the South African Police Service (SAPS). While mandated to collect and record all crime statistics, VAW is not recorded as a specific crime category in SAPS crime statistics. This is also true for domestic violence which is related to a specific Act of law. Records on domestic violence do not fall under a specific category and are often placed under categories such as assault, damage to property, etc.³⁷ Based on community reporting and small-scale research projects, however, there are available data in which acts of violence are disaggregated enough to point to statistically comprehensive rates of VAW in South Africa.

Regarding methodology, a paucity of qualitative studies in South Africa has been identified, attributed mainly to the sensitivity of VAW experiences, and the potential of psychological damage to study participants, as well as to the possible defensiveness of perpetrators. It is suggested that proper training and necessary supervision of field researchers could allow for the benefits of qualitative research in South Africa. Jewkes et al. point to the desirability of qualitative studies, particularly in light of the limitations surrounding statistics.³⁸

Another issue identified in the literature that is directly related to data collection and available statistics on the prevalence of VAW is the underreporting of acts of VAW. The approximately 50,000 rapes reported annually in South Africa, for instance, are estimated to be about nine times lower than the actual numbers.³⁹ Even within the context of research, data show that there could be a discrepancy between perpetrators' readiness to admit to committing an act of VAW, and survivors' reporting of these acts. This highlights the nexus between power relations and VAW, and the multiple disadvantaged positions occupied by victims of VAW.

The law accords victims the right to report and seek redress, and places a responsibility on witnesses to report crimes. However, several reasons account for the underreporting of VAW. Critical among them is the fear of negative social sanctions and intimidation from neighbours, as well as the families of perpetrators.⁴⁰ The literature also points to attitudes and perceptions of police officers, and even of survivors and their family members. In the case of children with disabilities in informal settlements, for instance, the Human Rights Council asserts that some mothers view their sexual abuse as 'a tragic eventuality', foreclosing the need to report.⁴¹

Other reasons include the quality of support and assistance that reported cases receive. In the case of informal settlements, the perception of rape as a family matter that needs to be settled among families, and the inability of police to intervene owing to various institutional challenges, are disincentives to reporting.⁴² Furthermore, reporting may often involve a financial cost, including but not limited to travelling costs, which some survivors cannot afford.⁴³ Thus, power dynamics and access to information – knowledge that security from VAW is a human right, knowledge of procedures and mechanisms by which reports can be made, as well as the ability to do so – are important elements in the prevalence and underreporting nexus. A critical issue is assuring survivors that reporting will not bring them further victimisation. However, there is also a need to encourage witnesses and the general public, particularly other women, to report VAW cases without fear of being victimised as well. Research must seek to address the following question in order to inform interventions: How are high prevalence rates of VAW related to women's understandings of VAW and their roles in fighting against it?

^{36.} Bollen et al., *Violence against Women*

^{37.} HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur*.

^{38.} Jewkes, R., Levin, J., & Penn-Kekana, L. (2002). Risk factors for domestic violence: Findings from a South African cross-sectional study. *Social Science & Medicine*, 55(9), 1603–1617.

^{39.} Women Demand Dignity (WDD). (2015). *365 Days of Violence Against Women – Because We Can!*

^{40.} Bollen et al., *Violence against Women*.

^{41.} HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur*, p.9.

^{42.} CSVR (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation). (2016). *Mapping Local Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Strategies in South Africa*. Cape Town: CSVR; HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur*.

^{43.} Bollen et al., *Violence against Women*.



BRIEF COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF VAW IN OTHER POSTCONFLICT COUNTRIES

How does the case of VAW in South Africa compare to efforts made in other postconflict democracies in the African context? A barrier to the effectiveness of such a comparison is identified widely in the literature as the non-existent or low numbers of scientific programme or policy evaluations that demonstrate measureable change as a result of particular interventions.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the cases of Liberia and Sierra Leone (discussed below) point to considerations that are relevant in explaining the prevalence of VAW in South Africa. They are informative in terms of mapping out the current types of legislative and policy approaches rolled out in these countries as well as their success potentials and the challenges of the adopted approaches.

The preventive and response approaches adopted by these countries, including the country-specific conceptualisations and/or emphasis of VAW, point to the relationship between postconflict societies and/or those that have entrenched underlying conflict triggers and high numbers of VAW. A significant dimension is the influence of the legacy of conflicts on the life experiences of women even after the end of such conflicts. These are also reflective of what can be broadly called the country-specific expressions of VAW as experienced by women. These suggest that in spite of the similar sociopolitical environments of postconflict contexts and a commonality of widespread VAW, its manifestation is different, and policy and legislation must account for context.

These reviews also conclude that impressive laws, institutions and formal structures, though crucial, are not enough without effective implementation to address VAW in these environments. Challenges faced by the efforts made in these countries include the non-committal of funds and political will, and ineffective coordination among different sectors and agencies of collaboration based on differences in what they are supposed to do. This is very similar to the situation in South Africa, although the latter can boast a relatively progressive policy and institutional environment in addressing VAW. While Liberia's approach to VAW is essentially in terms of sexual and gender-based violence, and sexual exploitation and abuse with a strong emphasis on children, the approach in Sierra Leone hinges on a broader perspective that includes the multifaceted nature of VAW and its interlinkages.⁴⁵ These differences in the legislative and policy approaches of the different postconflict environments are reflective of the differences in the particularities of the manifestations of VAW.



Liberia

The UN Women global database on VAW lists distinctive manifestations of VAW in Liberia. It is recorded that 39% of women aged 15–49 who have ever had partners experience intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime, with lifetime non-partner sexual violence for women within the same age range recorded at 3%. The prevalence of child marriages, measured in terms of women aged 20–24 years who were first married or in a union before age 18, is recorded as 36%, while 50% of girls and women aged 15–49 years have undergone female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C).⁴⁶

The Liberian government's emergent response to and prevention of VAW is principally legal–judicial in character.⁴⁷ This approach, laid out in the country's National Plan of Action for the Prevention and Management of Gender-based Violence in Liberia (2011–2015), involves laws and institutional frameworks that charge the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection with coordination efforts with the ministries of Justice and Internal Affairs, and with other partners including international and national bodies in the work of a GBV interagency taskforce. This taskforce is a multisectoral and multistakeholder body, including international and national organisations, both governmental and non-governmental, that oversee VAW intervention efforts. Laws relating to VAW in Liberia include the Rape Amendment Act (2006), the Anti-Human Trafficking Act (2005), the Inheritance Law (2003) that addresses child

44. Landis, D., & Stark, L. (2014). Examining promising practice: An integrated review of services for young survivors of sexual violence in Liberia. *Intervention*, 12(3), 430–441.

45. United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). (2016). *Addressing Impunity for Rape in Liberia*; Landis & Stark, Examining promising practice; Denney, L., & Ibrahim, A. F. (2012). *Violence against Women in Sierra Leone: How Women Seek Redress*; Gender-based Violence Interagency Taskforce, Republic of Liberia. (2006). *National Plan of Action for the Prevention and Management of Gender-based Violence in Liberia (GBV-POA)*. Monrovia: Republic of Liberia.

46. *UN Women Global Database on Violence against Women: Liberia*, <http://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries/africa/liberia> (accessed 4 August 2017).

47. UNMIL, *Addressing Impunity for Rape in Liberia*.



marriage, sections of the Penal Law, the Judicial Law that allows for the creation of sexual crimes divisions in circuit courts across the country, a draft Domestic Violence Bill (2016) awaiting parliamentary approval, and the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Units of the Ministry of Justice. There are also institutional mechanisms through which these laws and general policies and strategies towards VAW operate.

The government's strategies have involved sensitisation; awareness and training; community participation, which has been evaluated to be very effective; the provision of safe houses and VAW shelters; and the involvement of men and boys, particularly the younger generation, in combating VAW. In 2008, Liberia adopted a health training and sensitisation approach to harmful cultural practices, particularly FGM/C. This involves training FGM/C practitioners to adopt alternative income-generation activities, and community leaders and women's groups to address harmful practices.⁴⁸ There are also efforts towards research and the computation of statistical data on VAW.

The challenges of the Liberian structure of operation have been recorded as limited access to services in rural areas; a lack of sectoral coordination; inefficiencies within the justice sector, including the issue of legal plurality; and the incompatibility of local understanding with the tenets of women's rights on issues such as rape, sex and childhood.⁴⁹ For the purposes of this research, the involvement of younger men and issues of interagency coordination are relevant.



Sierra Leone

According to the UN Women global database on VAW, a staggering 90% of girls and women aged 15–49 years have undergone FGM/C in Sierra Leone.⁵⁰ The prevalence of child marriage for women aged 20–24 is recorded as 39%, while lifetime physical and/or sexual IPV is recorded as 49% for women aged 15–49 years. Official data for lifetime non-partner physical and/or sexual violence for Sierra Leone are unavailable.

A National Action Plan (2008) and a National Committee on Gender-based Violence, set up in 2009, bring together the government, donor, local and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working on VAW to guide efforts made to combat VAW in Sierra Leone. The Domestic Violence Act, the Registration of Customary Marriage Act and the Devolution of Estates Act together address the broad definition of domestic abuse as criminal, as well as women's marriage and inheritance rights, pointing to how VAW in Sierra Leone is conceptualised. The Sexual Offences Act, which criminalises rape, including marital rape, also entitles survivors of sexual offences to free medical treatment, as well as free medical reports as evidence during prosecution. Additionally, women are able to seek redress for forms of violence through different and intersecting 'paths', including the formal justice system, the customary justice system and alternative dispute resolution channels, with varied levels of success.⁵¹ The understanding of the interlinkages is suggested as important for putting forward intervention programmes related to support and services.

The challenge is that these progressive laws and policies run side by side with persistent discriminatory laws and policies in the same policy environment. Thus, Sierra Leone's approach to VAW, including in terms of service delivery, is problematised and characterised by 'policy incoherence'.⁵²

Literature on Sierra Leone's fight against VAW emphasises that the impacts of interventions are as important as the interventions themselves. How do interventions really impact change? Of particular importance here are the unintended results. Denney and Ibrahim assert that

⁴⁸. UN Women Global Database on Violence against Women: Liberia.

⁴⁹. Landis & Stark, Examining promising practice.

⁵⁰. UN Women Global Database on Violence against Women: Sierra Leone,

⁵¹. Denney & Ibrahim, Violence against Women.

⁵². Ibid., 7.



while an increased awareness of rights and access to empowerment opportunities represents an advancement for women's rights, it has also led in some cases to an increase in violence against women, as men seek to reassert their authority in the face of what they perceive to be an attempt to change 'tradition' or the status quo...⁵³

The current research addresses these impacts in its efforts to understand the persistence of VAW in South Africa. Denney and Ibrahim's point that women's experiences of violence do not fit neatly into one category, but rather span a number of interrelated forms, is also given space in the current research. Furthermore, the government of Sierra Leone's broader definition of VAW – incorporating physical, emotional and sexual but also economic and symbolic dimensions – also informs this report.

Gregg argues that one of the factors that has blocked progress in postconflict South Africa's response to VAW is the concept of 'normalisation'.⁵⁴ This describes the phenomenon whereby people in South Africa have become so accustomed to the high rates of VAW in the country that it is no longer shocking. A situation that is shocking and beyond the ordinary has been reduced to a point of discussion only when a prominent case arises, often with little follow up or reproach as a result. This desensitisation is largely fuelled by the continuous media headlines and proclamations that South Africa is the 'rape capital of the world'.⁵⁵ While not disputing the fact that crime rates in South Africa, including rates of VAW, are notably high, the title of 'rape capital' is contestable. This is in light of the high rates of VAW recorded in countries such as India, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Moreover, the many reasons given to explain this label, including underreporting and stigma, are not unique to South Africa. However, the label subconsciously plants the idea that the state is beyond help, which has the consequent effect of diminishing the likelihood of positive change.⁵⁶

SOUTH AFRICAN STATE RESPONSES TO VAW

Theoretically, the South African government's posture towards VAW has been a commitment towards primary prevention through awareness creation and community engagements, as well as holding perpetrators accountable. This stance recognises the complexity of VAW and highlights its deep-rooted nature in relation to the history and socioeconomic realities of South Africa.⁵⁷ In this regard, through legislative/policy changes, specific programmes and, to an extent, coalition building, South Africa has tried to improve women's access to justice through attempts at increasing collaboration between law enforcement, health and social services. Efforts have also been made in the educational sector, particularly to protect adolescent girls.

However, the lack of a comprehensive national strategy that coordinates all efforts, combined with funding issues and organisational isolation, hamper the effectiveness of the goodwill expressed by the South African government in combating VAW. This report presents women's opinions and convictions concerning the challenges with current VAW programmes in South Africa, and outlines respondents' suggested line of attack against VAW in South Africa.

There is also a continuing call that although the government may take leadership and responsibility for combating VAW in South Africa, it is everybody's responsibility if success is to be had. According to the Inter-Ministerial Committee to combat violence against women and children (VAWC),

⁵³. Ibid., 8.

⁵⁴. Gregg, M. R. (2014). *An Incomplete Transition? Explaining the Ongoing Prevalence of Violence against Women in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. Vancouver: School for International Studies, Simon Fraser University.

⁵⁵. For example, see: *The Examiner* (June 2009) – 'South Africa: The rape capital of the world'; Reuters (February 2013) – 'Outcry over India rapes shames some in South Africa'; *The Washington Post* (March 2013) – 'South Africa, once called the world's rape capital...'; *Mail & Guardian* (December 2013) – 'Malema: South Africa's feminism champion'; and *The Independent* (January 2014) – 'Crisis in South Africa'.

⁵⁶. Gregg, *An Incomplete Transition?*

⁵⁷. DSD (Department of Social Development, South Africa). (2013, May 27). *Opening Address by the Minister of Social Development, Ms Bathabile Dlamini, on the Occasion of the South African Conference on Orphans, Vulnerable Children and Youth Affected by HIV/AIDS, ICC Durban, KZN Province.*



everyone has a responsibility to act to stop violence against women and children. We need to work with our communities, especially men and boys to change the culture of violence and initiate prevention activities to support highly vulnerable women and children, including those with disabilities.⁵⁸

The quotation raises a relatively underdeveloped dimension of the fight against VAW in South Africa – the inclusion of men and boys.

National policy and legislative framework on VAW

South African laws are developed in line with international laws and regional jurisprudence, including that related to women's rights. These have translated into provisions in the national constitution that recognise the rights to life, human dignity, freedom and security, including freedom from all forms of violence from public or private sources, as well as bodily and psychological integrity. Specifically, a provision on equality states that

...the state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.

State accountability in South Africa towards securing these rights is critical in itself, but also in relation to South Africa's history of systematic state discrimination and repression. In addition to these provisions, however, there have been specific ones that remain relevant for dealing with VAW. In what follows, the laws are discussed in accordance with the literature – their formulation; subsequent policies and institutional contributions; innovations, challenges, and monitoring and evaluation.

VAW in South Africa has been a long-standing issue of concern for the post-apartheid state, as evidenced in the National Crime Prevention Strategy's prioritisation of VAWC as a national issue, through the core areas of intervention – prevention, protection, prosecution and victim empowerment. Other legislative provisions and interventions towards combating VAW have been advanced over the years, including the Domestic Violence Act (DVA, 1998), which replaced the Prevention of Family Violence Act (PFVA, 1993); the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (2000); the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act (SOA, 2007), including preceding forms; the Protection from Harassment Act (2011); the Employment Equity Amendment Act (2013); and the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act (2013). The existence of several policy frames informed by these laws, including the Strategy for Shelters for Victims of Domestic Violence in South Africa

⁵⁸. DSD (Department of Social Development, South Africa). (2013, February 21). *Media Statement by the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Violence Against Women and Children*.



in 2003, also underscores the recognition of and attempts to deal with VAW in South Africa. It is also recognition of state accountability, as some of these laws were initiated by the state as well as in collaboration with other actors, including the women's movement in South Africa.

These laws have generated policy directions backed by a specific architecture of institutional environment. The South African government, through the Department of Social Development (DSD), provides an avenue for state-civil society organisations and CBO linkages in combating VAW. These linkages have included the area of funding.

The review here includes the organisational frameworks within which the legislative and policy interventions operate. Before these laws and their consequent policy and institutional frames, apartheid laws existed that limited freedoms, perpetuated structural and symbolic violence and largely neglected VAW of any kind. Thus, these laws, with their innovative contributions, are laudable. In principle, then, VAW in South Africa should not exist. However, recognising the dynamic nature of human society, criticisms have arisen against the legal frames of dealing with VAW in relation to its persistence despite the laws. Consonant with what others have done, this review focuses on the DVA and the SOA, which are directly related to VAW efforts in South Africa. The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) provides a desktop account of governmental and selected non-governmental VAW prevention and response approaches in South Africa, noting their strengths and shortfalls in addressing the persistence of VAW in the country.⁵⁹ This section relies heavily on this work in addition to other documentation about South Africa's policy legislative framework and programmes on VAW.

Domestic Violence Act (DVA, 1998)

The DVA came about through the efforts of the women's movement and the networking of women politicians and bureaucrats in the favourable environment of democracy and an integrated gender framework in the wake of South Africa's transition from apartheid.⁶⁰ Promulgated to deal with domestic violence in South Africa, the law replaced the first legislative attempt to intervene in domestic violence, the PFVA (1993), with innovations in its broad definition of domestic violence, and the introduction of statutory internal and independent oversight of police enforcement of the law. The DVA aims

to afford the victims of domestic violence the maximum protection from domestic abuse that the law can provide; and to introduce measures which seek to ensure that the relevant organs of state give full effect to the provisions of this Act, and thereby to convey that the State is committed to the elimination of domestic violence. (Preamble to the Domestic Violence Act No. 116 of 1998)

Towards this aim, the law outlines what constitutes domestic violence in South Africa; provides avenues for survivors of domestic violence to seek protective services, including access to shelters and protection orders; and outlines the responsibility of the police towards survivors. However, evaluations of the law point to continuous challenges in the attempts by survivors of domestic violence to seek justice.⁶¹ Some of these include non-adherence to the Act by the police and the justice department, resulting from capacity-building and organisational challenges, and the persistence of entrenched views in spite of the law's definitions of VAW.⁶² Issues relating to women's knowledge of what

^{59.} CSVR, *Mapping Local Gender-Based Violence Prevention*.

^{60.} Vetten, L. (2005). *Addressing Domestic Violence in South Africa: Reflections on Strategy and Practice*. Cape Town: CSVR.

^{61.} CSVR, *Mapping Local Gender-Based Violence Prevention*; Gadinabokao, K. V. (2016). Shortcomings of the South African Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 in comparative perspective. LLM dissertation. Pretoria: University of Pretoria; HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur*; Vetten, *Addressing Domestic Violence*.

^{62.} Shortcomings of the South African Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 in comparative perspective. LLM dissertation. Pretoria: University of Pretoria; HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur*; Vetten, *Addressing Domestic Violence*.



their rights are with regards to the law, and a lack of coordination among government agencies, have been identified as impacting on the success of the DVA in South Africa.⁶³

The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act (SOA, 2007)

The SOA brings together, codifies and revises South Africa's laws dealing with sexual offences. This amended Act, in addition to qualifying sexual offences in line with the South African constitution, has also created new offences, including those of child pornography.⁶⁴ A critical contribution in combating VAW has been the Act's 'redefinition of rape, which is defined as intentionally committing an act of sexual penetration without consent, irrespective of gender'.⁶⁵ This definition acknowledges the diversity of women, in that rape can be committed against not 'only heterosexual women, but also against other women and transgendered people, whether straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual or asexual'.⁶⁶ This also captures sexual offences against children and persons with disabilities, including sexual exploitation.

The Act also empowers courts to provide specialised victim-support services in order to militate against secondary victimisation or traumatisation, reduce case handling time and improve conviction rates. These are carried out through the Sexual Offences Courts re-established in 2013 by the Department of Justice and Correctional Services. Their services include trained officials and equipment, private waiting rooms for witnesses, and room for survivors to testify. Efforts are being made to get supplementary regulations that will improve the efficiency of these courts including being sensitive to persons with disability.⁶⁷ These courts have been characterised as 'a game changer' as their establishment has been attributed with a high rise in conviction rates for sexual offences cases. The Act works in conjunction with SAPS National Instructions on Sexual Offences, and the National Directives and Instructions on Conducting a Forensic Examination on Survivors of Sexual Offence.⁶⁸

365 Days National Action Plan against VAW

In response to the call by the UN, and as an extended version of the international 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children (25 November–10 December) awareness campaign, the government of South Africa runs an annual campaign to combat VAWC.⁶⁹ Though South Africa adopted the 16 Days of Activism campaign in 1998, the government and multiple partners adopted a 365 Day National Action Plan to End Violence against Women and Children in what is known as the Kopanong Declaration in 2006. This Action Plan, which is multisectoral and involves several stakeholders, is also in accordance with the uppermost priority of the Declaration – to 'strengthen and place far greater emphasis on prevention'.⁷⁰ It is comprehensive and addresses the need for stronger resolve and a practical approach to end VAWC in South Africa. Efforts put into this led to a finalised framework of operation, the 365 Day National Action Plan to End Gender Violence, 2007. This Action Plan puts out specific programme interventions accompanied by tasks to be performed by particular stakeholders, as well as targets, indicators and timeframes to enhance the monitoring of impacts.⁷¹ This is done through 10 thematic areas of legislation and policy; the criminal justice system; specialised facilities; comprehensive treatment and care; infrastructure and places of safety; public education and awareness; media communications; economic empowerment; children; and coordination.⁷² The Plan also emphasises gender relations in problematising VAW, thus focusing on men and boys as partners in combating VAW. Additionally, the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) is charged with the responsibility to monitor the implementation of this Action Plan and move towards all the other commitments made in the Kopanong Declaration.

63. Gadinabokao, Shortcomings of the South African Domestic Violence Act; Vetten, *Addressing Domestic Violence*.

64. Pithey, B., & Smythe, D. (2011). *Sexual Offences Commentary*. Juta.

65. CSV, *Mapping Local Gender-Based Violence Prevention*, p.8.

66. Ibid.

67. HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur*.

68. Pithey & Smythe, *Sexual Offences Commentary*.

69. The South African Government. (2016). 16 Days of Activism 2017, <http://www.gov.za/speeches/16-days-activism-2017-23-nov-2016-1319>.

70. Gender Links. (n.d.). *South Africa Violence Prevention Model and Action Plan*, p.25; Government of South Africa. (2007). *365 Day National Action Plan to End Gender Violence*, pp.10–11.

71. Government of South Africa, *365 Day National Action Plan*.

72. CGE (Commission for Gender Equality). (2012). *365 Days of Action to End Violence against Women and Children*.



In addition to its comprehensive and inclusive nature, which accounts for international best practice in the combat of VAWC, South Africa's 365 Day National Action Plan to End Gender Violence has received several positive reviews. A 2014 evaluation of its implementation as pertaining to its five targeted pillars (prevention, response, support, advocacy and awareness raising, and coordination and communication), as well as one conducted by the CGE in 2012, suggest that progress has been made in achieving the objectives of the Action Plan.⁷³ However, weaknesses in its focus on men and boys as partners, issues of funding, and a lack of cooperation among stakeholders have been identified as plaguing its implementation.⁷⁴ Despite the following statement attributed to one of the reviews, the persistence of VAWC cannot be ignored: 'The reviews of the 365 Days NAP [National Action Plan to End Gender Violence] pillars highlight among others that GBV has largely been addressed and understood through responding to the aftermath of such violence.'⁷⁵

Victim Empowerment Programme (VEP)

In reaction to South Africa's high rates of violent crime in general, and the unproductive focus of earlier strategies on retributive justice, a new national crime prevention strategy inaugurated in 1998 focused on restorative justice, a victim-centred approach to criminal justice. In addition to punishing perpetrators of violent crimes, the strategy enables survivors to recover from their traumatic experiences. Thus, a national VEP was eventually rolled out as a criminal justice programme to support survivors of violence, as well as their families, in dealing with the impact of the experience of violence. Principally, VEP is aimed at developing a victim-friendly criminal justice system, providing quality services to survivors and promoting intersectoral and departmental collaboration in victim-centred interventions. The current version of VEP is viewed as an improvement on earlier versions. However, it is seen as still lacking the legislative clout of enforceability and answerability.

The VEP is guided by policy and guidelines that define who a victim is based on the Victims' Charter, and the kinds of support, services and principles that constitute victim empowerment.⁷⁶ The programme operates as an intersectoral collaboration led by the DSD and run through several departments, including the South African Correctional Services, Justice and Constitutional Development, Police Services, National Prosecuting Authority and the Department of Health. NGOs and CBOs are also incorporated. These different players have diverse roles in the provision of services, varying from aiding in the registration and investigation of a case by first respondents, to offering medical, legal and health services by professionals, and eventually prosecuting the case through the courts. Thus, the collaborative character of the VEP is principled on strengthening easier access for survivors to a continuum of services from the different departments and agencies that play different roles in providing support and services to survivors of crime and violence. The model of collaboration is, however, criticised as a challenge to attaining the aims of the VEP. An implementer of the VEP is reported to have advocated for a change in the framing of the collaboration, as it challenges the ability 'to get a significant level of engagement from other departments'.⁷⁷ As a national programme, the government of South Africa has set up forums at national and provincial levels where the different departments involved can collaboratively plan, monitor and evaluate the delivery of services to victims on a regular basis. Not only is this unable to happen but issues of untrained frontline responders and a lack of funding for NGOs and CBOs operating at the local levels have also been raised as challenging the implementation of the VEP.⁷⁸

In the particular circumstances of VAW, the VEP is expected to be additionally guided by the provisions made in the DVA (1998), including the obligations of the police and the criminal justice system and those in the SOA (2007). However, the criticism has been that while the laws require specific actions from the police, except for policy guidelines, there are no corresponding legal obligations on the part of other departments.⁷⁹ Since 2009, efforts have been towards a Victims' Empowerment Legislative Act that can make the obligations of the different role players legally binding and perhaps suggest a new model of collaboration for the VEP.⁸⁰ This notwithstanding, the potential

⁷³. Nduna, M., & Nene, N. (2014). *Review and Analysis of South Africa's Implementation of 365 days National Action Plan*. Johannesburg: Department of Psychology, University of the Witwatersrand and Ifalezwe Learning Express; CGE, *365 Days of Action*.

⁷⁴. CSVR, *Mapping Local Gender-Based Violence Prevention*.

⁷⁵. <http://www.genderjustice.org.za/publication/review-and-analysis-of-south-africas-implementation-of-365-days-national-action-plan/>

⁷⁶. DSD (Department of Social Development). (2007). *Integrated Victim Empowerment Policy (Fourth Draft)*, Pretoria; DSD (Department of Social Development). (n.d.) *National Policy Guidelines for Victim Empowerment*; SAPS (South African Police Service). (n.d.). *Victim Empowerment Service in the South African Police Service*.

⁷⁷. Dey, K., Thorpe, J., Tilley, A., & Williams, J. (2011). *The Road to Justice: Victim Empowerment Legislation in South Africa*. Road Map Report, p.20.

⁷⁸. CSVR, *Mapping Local Gender-Based Violence Prevention*.

⁷⁹. Dey, et al., *The Road to Justice; Vetten, Addressing Domestic Violence*.

⁸⁰. Dey, et al., *The Road to Justice*. The UNDP commissioned a research project into the feasibility of creating legislation for victim empowerment in South Africa in May 2009.



of the VEP to provide relief is highly influenced by concerns of implementation, the adherence of the different role players to its principles as well as close and regular monitoring. These are some of the issues affecting the persistent rise of VAW in South Africa.

Thuthuzela Care Centres (TCCs)

In the spirit of the VEP and in accord with the SOA (2007), TCCs were established under the leadership of the National Prosecuting Authority's Sexual Offences and Community Affairs Unit, as one-stop facilities to provide services to survivors of sexual offences. They operate from public hospitals and are linked with the sexual offences courts. As an essential part of an anti-rape strategy, they enable rape survivors to lodge a case with the police and receive counselling and medical care in one place.

Although praised as a best practice for the provision of services under one roof to survivors of sexual offences, their numbers are recorded as insufficient, and lack of funding from the state is a matter of concern. Given their recorded effectiveness in reducing secondary victimisation and trauma, and their professional forensics that have increased conviction rates, their non-existence in rural areas and the limited numbers of trained officials are problematic. It has also been observed that the quality of psychosocial care services delivered is uneven across different centres.⁸¹

Other related models are Khuseleka or One-Stop Crisis Centres operated by the DSD that offer a continuum of services to survivors of all crimes and violence, and the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Units of the SAPS. These, however, are plagued by access, capacity and funding limitations.

National Council against GBV

To deal with the problems of coordination and funding in the efforts towards prevention and services in the fight against VAWC, the South African government established the National Council Against Gender-Based Violence (NCGBV).⁸² First announced in 2010, the Council was established in December 2012 as 'a high level, multi-sectoral national response to the scourge of gender-based violence' to 'lead and monitor the implementation of a 365 Days Plan of Action against gender-based violence for Children and People with Disabilities'.⁸³ More specifically, the objectives of the NCGBV were

to provide strategic and political guidance to eliminate gender-based violence by 2030; conceptualize and coordinate strategies for the development of coherent national plans and strategies to address gender-based violence; create strategic partnerships to address gender based-violence; create a platform for sharing information and best practices; monitor and evaluate the implementation of coherent national plans and strategies; ensure that all government departments commit sufficient resources to the fight against gender-based violence; and to engage with business, civil society organizations and other role players to raise additional resources.⁸⁴

^{81.} HRC, *Report of the Special Rapporteur*.

^{82.} Sonke Gender Justice. (n.d.). *Stop Gender Violence: A National Campaign*.

^{83.} South African Government News Agency. (2012). *Gender-Based Violence Council Set for Launch*, 22 August.

^{84.} Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities. (n.d.). National Council Against Gender-Based Violence Secretariat, 1st Quarter Report, 2012/13 (April–June 2012), PPT slide 2.



The most significant of these was drafting and implementing a national strategic plan (NSP) in the fight against VAWC.⁸⁵

The NCGBV was to be headed by the then Minister of Women, Children and People with Disabilities, with a dedicated secretariat and 45 members representative of the diversity of expertise, views and experiences of the various stakeholders.⁸⁶ The membership was to be representative of CSOs dealing with VAWC, religious organisations, traditional leadership, the women's movement, academic and research institutions and government agencies and departments. The Council was also to allow for observers from institutions such as the South African Commission on Gender Equality, and agencies of the United Nations, donor partners and experts.⁸⁷ The NCGBV met a number of times, finalised their vision and mission statement, developed their framework for operation, made plans towards the mapping of GBV hotspots and developed an NSP for GBV (2014–2019).⁸⁸ However, this is what they remained – plans only.

Sonke Gender Justice summarises the present state of the NCGBV as '[u]nfunded and unwanted...no word on the NCGBV – a Council ordered and created within the Presidency'.⁸⁹ This is the case, even in the face of increased activism across the country to demand an NSP for GBV, as the Council was supposed to formulate and implement – a plan that is argued to be crucial in fighting the menace of persistent VAW in South Africa. Destabilisation caused by political changes, the lack of funding have been cited as major challenges faced by the now non-existent Council⁹⁰

Appallingly, it appears that the Council did more work before it was officially launched than afterwards.

National emergency response unit for victims of GBV

In 2013 the DSD rolled out and now operates a technologically innovative 24-hour Gender-based Violence Command Centre.⁹¹ The Centre operates as a support and counselling unit for survivors of GBV through a toll-free number, and enables social workers to assist survivors via telephone, as well as refer them to social workers in their proximity. Additionally, the service allows survivors to request social workers to call them through a free specified mobile phone short code. The establishment of the Centre is in line with the DSD's strategic emphasis on prevention and protection, response, and care and support,⁹² and as a response to the inadequacy of access to social support services by GBV survivors.⁹³ It tackles the problem of widespread underreporting because of victims' fears and shame in dealing with face-to-face reporting. According to the DSD, the Centre is 'premised on the belief that this service model offers help, hope and the chance of a better life to victims of gender-based abuse, even in the remotest and most underdeveloped areas of South Africa'.⁹⁴ It is also framed as an empowering model that enables women who experience violence to obtain the psychosocial support needed to rebuild their lives. The Centre has the capacity to handle over 1,500 calls per day.⁹⁵

Two years on, in 2016, the DSD expanded the Centre to include the National Emergency Response Team (NERT) unit as an additional service commanded from the DSD national office.⁹⁶ This involves a mobile support service for VAW survivors, including children, and consists of social workers and psychologists specialised in trauma counselling, who provide services in the private spaces of survivors, including their homes where possible. As of November 2016, the team had 48 social workers and eight others specifically targeting hearing-impaired survivors of VAW. This enhanced Centre enables women and children with hearing impairments to access the services provided. It also addresses some of the vulnerability risk factors of VAW, for instance, by equipping elderly women and women who commute alone with panic buttons to use in the case of emergency situations. Through the NERT, the Centre not only provides telephone services but is able to instantly deploy a specialised team to offer psychological and social support to 'all

⁸⁵. Sonke Gender Justice. (2015). *No Word from the National Council on Gender-Based Violence*.

⁸⁶. South African Government News Agency, *Gender-Based Violence Council*.

⁸⁷. Ibid.

⁸⁸. Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities. 2013. *Progress Report on the National Council against Gender-Based Violence*. Presentation to the Portfolio Committee by Minister Lulu Xingwana.

⁸⁹. South African Government News Agency, *Gender-Based Violence Council*.

⁹⁰. Sonke Gender Justice, *Stop Gender Violence*.

⁹¹. DSD (Department of Social Development). (2014). *Media Statement: Department of Social Development Gender-Based Violence Command Centre Wins Another Award*; Mabena, S. (2016). *Government Unveils National Emergency Response Unit for Victims of Gender-Based Violence*.

⁹². DSD (Department of Social Development). (n.d.). *South African Integrated Programme of Action: Addressing Violence against Women and Children (2013–2018)*.

⁹³. DSD, *Media Statement*.

⁹⁴. Ibid.

⁹⁵. Mabena, *Government Unveils National Emergency Response Unit*.

⁹⁶. Ibid.



affected, debrief the trauma teams, follow up and manage cases towards finalisation'.⁹⁷ The team's work also includes facilitating community dialogues and monitoring VAW cases reported in the media to ensure speedy intervention. The principles of the NERT are laudable, and there is hope that its proper implementation will yield positive results.

Overview of non-state responses to VAW

Non-state responses to VAW in South Africa have essentially been premised on service provision, advocacy in the areas of legislation and policy, organisational dimensions of the fight against VAW, training, sensitisation and awareness creation, as well as research. Non-state actors, including both international and local organisations, have been at the frontline in grassroots mobilisations and the promotion of human rights generally. There is a strong presence of local CSOs in the fight against VAW. As a collective front, these organisations, together with the women's movement in South Africa and other like-minded groups, brought about the realisation of the DVA.⁹⁸ Other areas of action have included the tabling of the place of men and boys in approaches to VAW, and ongoing advocacy for an NSP on GBV. Civil society has advocated for the revival of the NCGBV, and thus also its work on an NSP which, despite acknowledgement of the latter's potentially crucial role, remains non-existent. The 2014 and 2016 national campaigns, which involved a conglomeration of CSOs and CBOs, are cases in point.⁹⁹ In effect, CSOs are advocating for unity in the uncoordinated and scattered nature of the work being done to prevent and reduce the rates of VAW in particular, but also in other dimensions. These efforts have included signing petitions and mobilising other efforts across the board.¹⁰⁰

As individualised organisations, several programmes with a diversity of approaches have been rolled out. The CSVR points to efforts made by different NGOs and CBOs, including the CSVR itself, Gender Links, the Women's Legal Centre and Sonke Gender Justice.¹⁰¹ These organisations, as well as many others, have over the years been significant in complementing state interventions against VAW, and have also initiated their own programmes to deal with VAW and its practical implications for women and children in South Africa. However, they have also had their challenges and limitations, particularly with regards to funding and the sustainability of programmes, and in relation to their specific intervention programmes in effectively combating VAW in South Africa. The 2016 report of the Human Rights Council on the state of VAW in South Africa noted as a challenge the inadequacy of government funding for CSOs, and the government's overprioritisation of prevention to the neglect of service delivery. Fragmentation of the women's rights movement along race, class and ideological lines has also contributed to weakening its voice and compromising its impact.

^{97.} Ibid.

^{98.} Vetten, *Addressing Domestic Violence*.

^{100.} Sonke Gender Justice, *No Word from the National Council*.

^{101.} CSVR, *Mapping Local Gender-Based Violence Prevention*.



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative and feminist methodology. In line with the basic ideals of feminist methodologies, the data construction and analytic approach were critical, aimed at bringing about social change, emphasising the diversity of experiences, and acknowledging the position of the researcher as part of the power hierarchies, meaning making, and differences being observed. The research process emphasised reflexivity, and acknowledged that the researcher's interests might be in conflict with those of other actors in relation to VAW in South Africa. The research method involved reviewing data from documentary sources, and field research that employed qualitative sampling and data collection techniques. The data generated were analysed in a cluster of narrative and thematic examinations.

VAW: APPLYING A FEMINIST FRAMEWORK

This study is situated within a feminist analytical framework. This theoretical framework seeks to redress the marginalisation and suppression of women's lives by 'bringing women in' and focusing on their distinctive experiences.¹⁰² The framework is thus concerned with research questions derived from women's experiences, and incorporates reflexive research practices. This is informed by poststructural feminist ideas on the centrality and diversity of women's experiences as a basis for understanding VAW, and the power dynamics involved in research.

While there is no single explanation for why males perpetrate VAW, feminist theories are unified in the attention accorded to gender and power.¹⁰³ A feminist understanding of VAW stresses that violence is gender specific and directed at women in particular. Further, VAW cannot be theorised without acknowledging male privilege and historically and socially institutionalised relations of power.¹⁰⁴ Theorists also recognise that VAW stems from a patriarchal culture that maintains men's domination both within the family and in society at large.¹⁰⁵ This study is therefore premised on the understanding that the answer to the question of why men abuse women lies in the interrogation of social dynamics and ideology, particularly patriarchy, but also other mitigating systems of belief.

The theoretical framework for the research can be summarised as one that sees the prevalence of VAW as a process and a conflict that oppresses women, as well as expresses the ills of society. Moving away from normative interpretations that explain the existence of VAW as behavioural and rooted in patriarchy, or even in South Africa's violent past, this research offers a more integrated perspective that emphasises a multiplicity of interpretations of VAW in order to analyse what informs them, what power relations they produce or reduce, and where there could be opportunities for positive transformation. Disassembling the notion of 'inherited violence of apartheid', this research discerns how the particularity of VAW manifestations and experiences, and their persistence in South Africa, constitutes a problem informed by the relationship between structural factors and women's experiences. The framework also acknowledges that women's experiences of violence do not fit neatly into one category, but rather span a number of interrelated forms.¹⁰⁶ The major lens of analysis suggests the problem emerges from misunderstandings of the different positions and interpretations of VAW in South Africa, as well as the lack of analysis thereof, of all actors involved in VAW.

A limitation of feminist theory for this research was found in the explanation of violence in same-sex relationships, where the concept of gendered power is not enough. It is apparent that IPV in the context of same-sex relationships calls for more comprehensive analysis and conceptual reasoning. The opportunity to investigate this was lost when the only respondent who offered such a context withdrew from the study. This limitation has also been observed by both Lawson and Renzetti, who explore violence in lesbian relationships.¹⁰⁷ Another challenge of this feminist

¹⁰² DeVault, M. L. (1999). *Liberating Method: Feminism and Social Research*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

¹⁰³ Bograd, M. (1990). Why we need gender to understand human violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 5(1), 132–135.

¹⁰⁴ Angless, T., & Maconachie, M. (1996). Battered women: Problems and proposals. In L. Glanz, & A. Spiegel, *Violence and Family Life in Contemporary South Africa: Research and Policy Issues* (pp.151–166). Pretoria, South Africa: Human Sciences Research Council.

¹⁰⁵ Ferraro, K. J., Pleck, E., Y. K., Bograd, M., & Caputi, J. (1990). Review essay: Culture, feminism, and male violence. *Social Justice*, 17(3), 41.

¹⁰⁶ Denney & Ibrahim, *Violence against Women*.

¹⁰⁷ Lawson, D. M. (2003). Incidence, explanations, and treatment of partner violence. *Journal of Counselling and Development*, 81, 19–32; Renzetti, C. M. (1992). *Violent Betrayal: Partner Abuse in Lesbian Relationships*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage. Both cited in Amaral, R. (2011). Explaining Domestic Violence using Feminist Theory.



theorisation of violence is observed in understanding violence perpetrated by women outside the context of intimate relationships, for instance at work, with peers or with children.¹⁰⁸ Notwithstanding these limitations, explaining from women's perspectives, and in their voices, remains effective not only for understanding but also for intervening in the phenomenon of VAW.

RESEARCH METHODS

The methods used in the study included a desk review of the literature on VAW in South Africa, with attention to how the problem has been understood, the prevention and response strategies employed, how they compare with those in two other postconflict African contexts – Liberia and Sierra Leone – and the work that is yet to be done in combating VAW in South Africa. Primary data were sourced from field research conducted from May to June 2017, with follow-up and feedback on narratives in July 2017. The techniques for data collection included in-depth interviews for life histories, observations and FGDs.

The population of interest from which data were generated for the study was constituted of women and self-identified survivors of VAW. Research data were sourced from individualised experiences and interpretations of women survivors' narratives of their life stories in the context of VAW in South Africa, as well as from collective experiences through FGDs. Respondents' perceptions on what they think needs to be done to address VAW and its consequences in South Africa were emphasised in the generation of data.

Life history interviews

The study employed life history narratives to capture women's experiences of VAW, and their own perceptions of the meanings of these experiences. This involved in-depth interviews with women to find out about their experiences generally and in particular the VAW experiences throughout their lives. This was done because telling stories is a fundamental part of how people communicate.¹⁰⁹ More important for this study is the ability of stories to show how storytellers make sense of their world. In line with the feminist postmodern approach, life history methods are less concerned with uncovering a universal 'truth' represented in people's storytelling. Rather, they are interested in the manner in which people tell their stories and represent particular truths at particular historical moments. Individuals make sense of and understand their experiences through narrative.¹¹⁰ In an attempt to explore how women talk about their experiences of violence and how they understand and construct meanings out of their experiences, a narrative analytic approach is deemed most appropriate. Moreover, a narrative approach acknowledges that women's stories are not simply aimed at conveying meaning but also at constructing identities, relationships and emotions. Women therefore not only tell stories about violence – they construct themselves in these stories.

Another key strength of life story interviews is the strong emphasis on holism. Lives are seen as whole, the public and private cannot be separated, and the contextual lives of respondents are studied and understood this way.¹¹¹ The value of this for the study is in how it allows for the grounding of reflections and analyses of VAW as experienced within the contexts of women's lives. This moves us away from contextualising VAW as a series of unconnected events that women randomly experience. Through this technique of data generation, incidents and experiences of VAW told by respondents are perceived and captured within contexts of wider life experiences. Often when people tell their story, it is linear, rational and coherent – it becomes 'one' life. But we live many lives and, by using the life histories method, we make room for these different lives, for the different stories and their contexts.

In the collection and construction of women's life stories, the field researchers made use of the timeline scheme of life history. Timelines provide a useful start for life history interviews and interviewees were invited to construct a timeline of key events. This provided visual representations of main events in their lives and facilitated engaging interviewees in constructing their stories.¹¹²

^{108.} Amaral, *Explaining Domestic Violence*.

^{109.} Goodson, I. F., & Sikes, P. J. (2001). *Life History Research in Educational Settings: Learning from Lives*. Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.

^{110.} Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons.

^{111.} Ibid.

^{112.} Goodson & Sikes, *Life History Research*.



Focus group discussions

Effective FGDs have been described as essentially informal discussions, usually consisting of a moderator and participants with shared social and cultural experiences and characteristics, such as age, social class, gender, etc., or topics of concern, such as VAW. They also provide accommodating and non-threatening environments within which participants are comfortable to discuss their opinions and experiences without fear of judgement or ridicule.¹¹³ FGDs usefulness 'in exploring and examining what people think, how they think, and why they think the way they do about the issues of importance to them without pressuring them into making decisions or reaching a consensus' was a particular asset for this research.¹¹⁴ As appropriate platforms for collective and informal conversations, the FGDs in this study offered avenues for sourcing women's perceptions, perspectives and convictions concerning their knowledge of VAW, its causes and extent in their communities, as well as their opinions on current and future strategies to combat it.

The study also used FGDs to attend to feminist concerns about power and the imposition of meanings.¹¹⁵ FGDs minimise the potential imbalance of power that gives authoritative voice to the researcher to the disadvantage of the participant. Furthermore, in view of this study's feminist-inspired objective to bring about positive transformation, the advantage of FGDs serving as spaces for information dissemination and un/learning made them appropriate for this study. FGDs offer spaces for the co-construction of meaning and knowledge. Given the nature of a topic such as VAW, the FGDs for this study had the added advantage of empowering survivors of VAW with the knowledge that they are not alone in their fight against VAW, and also gave them the opportunity to draw solace from other survivors.

As a method that produces data from multiple voices, FGDs allow for group dynamics and the capturing of aspects of understanding that conventional interview methods are often unable to show. The interactive processes in FGDs enable respondents to explore and clarify their perspectives.¹¹⁶ In employing the FGDs in sourcing women's perspectives on VAW in South Africa, discussion moderators played the role of guiding the conversations. They ensured that specific individuals did not hijack the discussions, and asked follow-up questions to counteract some of the identified criticisms of the FGD method. This was to ensure the maximisation of their benefits for exploring women's perceptions on VAW in South Africa. All the discussions during the study were highly engaging, particularly in the groups of young adults. Almost all of them were willing to give their input concerning VAW.

Data analysis

Interviews and FGDs were digitally recorded and transcribed for analysis. Observations were also recorded in notebooks for analysis. Data generated were analysed using two different perspectives in a cluster – narrative for life histories, and thematic for both in-depth interviews and FGDs – through the lenses of the outlined framework of analysis.

Data from the in-depth interviews for women's life histories were treated as stories. Thus, women's experiences of VAW were viewed as having a structure – a beginning, middle and end. The core stories – the main meanings that respondents wished to convey as well as subplots within their narratives – were determined and analysed individually and collectively to understand the dynamics of VAW in South Africa, and to identify opportunities for change. The collective analysis involved the identification and analysis of thematic patterns in the different stories told by the women interviewed.

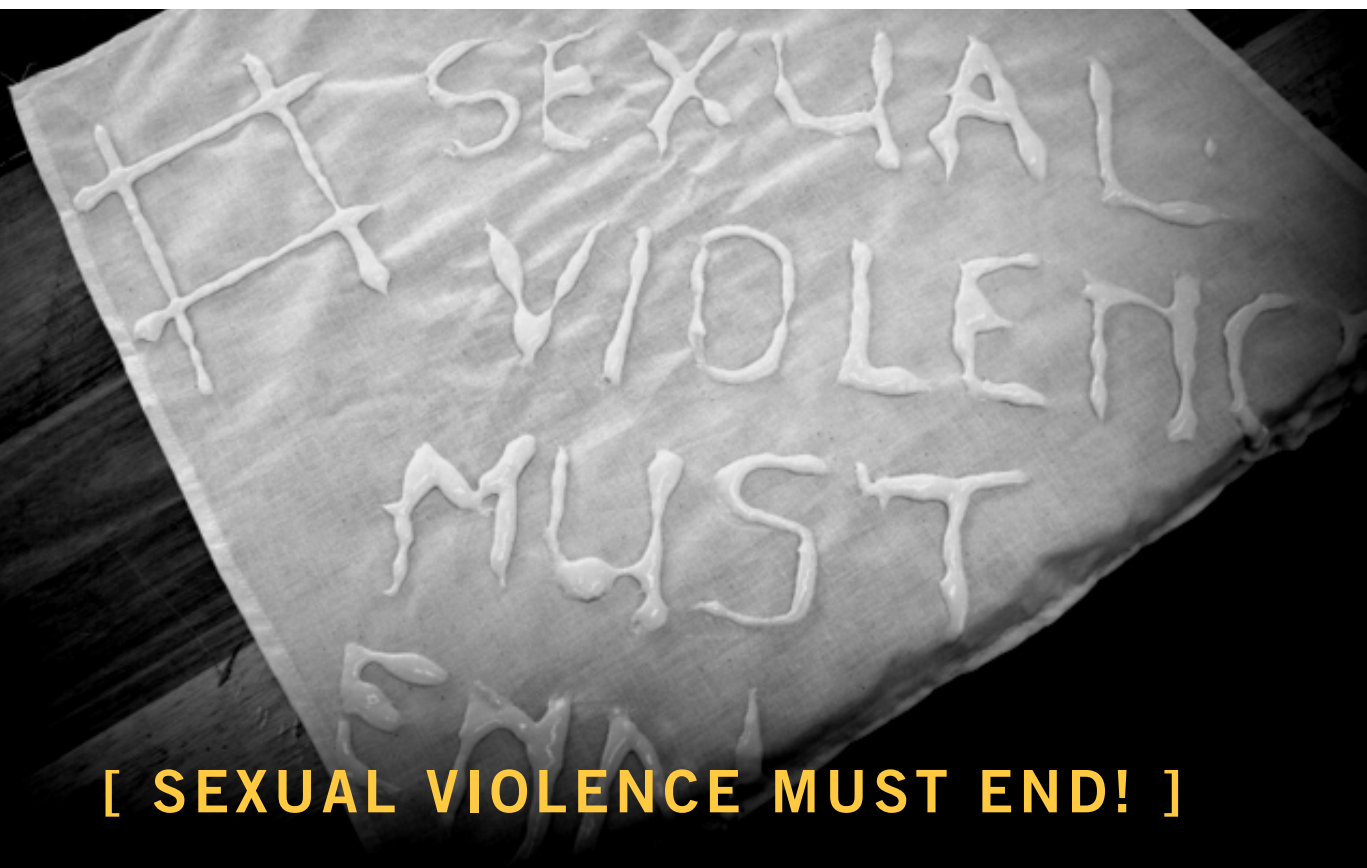
Analysis of the data from FGDs adopted a thematic approach. This involved identifying patterned meanings of VAW experiences, and perspectives of study respondents within and across different FGDs. Attention was only given to themes that were identified as important in relation to the framework adopted to answer the research question.

¹¹³. Liamputtong, P. (2010). *Focus Group Methodology: Introduction and History*: Sage Publications.

¹¹⁴. Ibid., 5.

¹¹⁵. Wilkinson, S. (1998). Focus groups in feminist research: Power, interaction, and the co-construction of meaning. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 21(1), 111–125.

¹¹⁶. Liamputtong, *Focus Group Methodology*.



[SEXUAL VIOLENCE MUST END!]

SAMPLING: WHO TO STUDY?

In contrast to quantitative research approaches, which typically require large samples from which generalisations can be drawn, in qualitative designs researchers search for small groups of people who have experiences of the research topic. Qualitative research is less concerned with universalisations and more concerned with generating meaning.

The fieldwork was conducted in four provinces: Gauteng, Limpopo, Kwazulu-Natal (KZN) and the Free State. Given the vastness of the provinces, the study selected four community district localities, two urban (Gauteng and KZN) and two rural (Limpopo and Free State). The selection of both the provinces and the target communities was based on the decision and judgement of the researcher (non-probability sampling), with the main determining factor being convenience and ease of access. Target communities were selected by the CBOs we partnered with in the four provinces. The communities included; Phokwane(Limpopo),¹¹⁷ Dewetsdorp (Free State),¹¹⁸ Diepsloot (Gauteng),¹¹⁹ and Ingonyameni (KZN).¹²⁰

Given the above, the study does not claim any generalisability, but rather seeks to make a contribution to a nuanced understanding of the endemic levels of VAW in postconflict South Africa.

^{117.} Phokwane in Limpopo (region) is a rural community located in South Africa about 178 km North-East of Pretoria, the country's capital place. It is situated in Nebo, within Sekhukhune District Municipality in the Limpopo province of South Africa. Nebo is made up of 94 rural villages. Within the only police station of the village, Nebo Community Victim Empowerment and support centre is housed with a staff of 24 including volunteers.

^{118.} Dewetsdorp is a small town within the Free State Province with a population of 9498 (91.9% black and 6.4% white). Despite the many improvements in the lives of the people in South Africa, poverty and unemployment are still the largest challenges facing the Free State Province.

^{119.} Diepsloot is a densely populated peri-urban township in the north of Johannesburg. The township has a population estimate of 350 000. The area is characterized by extremely high levels of violence against women, such as rape and domestic violence. And it is said to be the highest in South Africa. The racial composition is Diepsloot is mostly black African and colored. The average household size is 3.4 members per household. Most people live below the poverty line surviving on less than 1 USD per day. (Development programme for Diepsloot, 2007). The rate of unemployment is extremely high.

^{120.} The Engonyameni Tribal Authority, a rural area on the outskirts of uMlazi has no clinics access to health services is only through Mobile Services from Emaweleni.



Selecting participants for life story interviews

Three women per province were selected, based on their willingness to participate in the study and share their life experiences and viewpoints as they relate to the study. In addition, the study endeavoured to select a mix of participants from diverse social demographic groups such as age, sexual orientation, marital status, and religious or cultural grouping. This allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of VAW in South Africa. Twelve life histories constituted the data for this report.

Selecting participants for focus groups discussions

Two FGDs were conducted per province, one with young women (18–34 years) and the other with women over 35 years of age. In total, eight FGDs were conducted. Each groups had 8–10 participants.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Language was challenging, particularly with regards to translating VAW concepts to and from English, thus requiring the use of translators who were not directly related to the research. To overcome this, the research allowed for a broader definition of VAW, and asked overlapping questions at different points in the interview processes and discussions to minimise the cost of this limitation to the validity of the study's findings.

As a result of time and access constraints, a desktop research technique was employed to review the literature on VAW in South Africa. This approach limited the number of documents reviewed, and also excluded discussions that are not easily accessible online. Consequently, unpublished reports of reviews of programmes conducted by government agencies or CSOs/CBOs, for instance, were left out of the discussions that guided this study.

Another limitation was in the selection of participants. The study is not fully representative of the diversity of women in South Africa. All participants interviewed were black women living in relatively poor communities and most had moderate to low levels of education. For example, no disabled women, migrant women or (self-identified) transwomen were interviewed. Hence, the study represents a particular lived reality. This constitutes a demographic limitation to the study and it is hoped that future research studies will focus on getting insights from these groups.

Ethical considerations

All the respondents involved in the study were given full disclosure concerning the objectives of the study. Their permission was sought to digitally record their responses. They were also given the liberty to opt out of the study at any time if they considered the study intrusive. Two of the respondents declined to continue with the study during a follow-up data collection round. The confidentiality of the respondents has been ensured and all the names in this report are pseudonyms.

With respondents mostly being self-identified survivors of VAW, they had access to psychosocial support in cases where it might be needed as a result of their recounting of traumatic experiences. However, none of the respondents made use of this access, including those who showed physical manifestations of trauma, including crying.

Research instruments

Two different sets of interview guides were used as research instruments in this study, one to guide FGDs and another for in-depth life history interviews.



FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This study found that women and female children in South Africa experience an array of violence at all the different stages of their lives, including the deliberate exposure of children to violence, neglect and deprivation; discrimination based on sexuality, race, economic status; and violence in the context of their social positions as conjugal partners, daughters, sisters, students, workers, neighbours, etc. These incidents occur outside of their comfort zones as well as in the spaces considered secure, such as their homes and at government institutions charged with their protection. These experiences of violence are strongly related to their identities as women and the experiences and expectations connected to these identities.

The women's conceptualisations of VAW place the problem in the context of the relationship between men and women and not outside of it, whether within the spaces of their private or public lives. It is this understanding that grounds their suggestions on how to successfully intervene in the problem. Explanations offered for the persistence of VAW in South Africa are the merging dynamics of structural problems with contemporary social issues, and the inability of the state to deal with them.

Their suggestions on how to deal with the problem focus on what must be done, by whom and at what pace. Their opinions encourage a political dimension to intervention efforts, the inclusion of men, and cover what women in particular must do as well as what state and non-state actors should do.

Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents

VAW literature on South Africa suggests the high susceptibility of young black women to VAW. They are thus considered the 'lowest common denominator' of VAW experiences in South Africa. Kabeer posits that considering the position and experiences of the 'lowest common denominator' in development challenges – that is, taking a bottom-up approach – results in a high possibility of yielding more effective strategies to overcome problems. The demographic data for this report originate from such a position. They are principally representative of the life history respondents of the study. All the respondents fell within the age range of 18–56 years.¹²¹ A majority fell within the age range of 20–35 years. With regards to the life history respondents, all described themselves as Christian. Eight described themselves as heterosexual, three as lesbians and one as bisexual. Half described themselves as single, a quarter as divorced, a sixth as being in a partnership and one-twelfth as separated. One young homosexual woman who described herself as single also said that she was in a partnership. A third of these life history respondents did not have children; the remainder had between one and four children.

The highest educational level recorded in the sample was a university education attained by two of the respondents. One had a Bachelor's degree and another was in the process of acquiring one. A third person who had entered university to pursue a degree in law had dropped out within the first year because of pregnancy. Apart from one who had very little education, the majority of the respondents had at least grade school education, with a number attaining matric or at least reaching Grade 12. Additionally, some of these women had out-of-school training, including care work certification and ambulance assistant courses.

¹²¹. Kabeer, N. (1994). *Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought*. London: Verso.



Over half the respondents described themselves as unemployed, including one who said she sometimes did other people's laundry for pay. Of the five that described themselves as employed, two were engaged in informal work. The three who reported being formally employed included the two respondents with university education (education and marketing), and another with matric (banking/finance).

In terms of their family backgrounds and upbringing, over half were raised by persons other than their parents – a grandmother (in the case of two respondents), an aunt or another family member. The death of at least one parent and divorce/broken homes were characteristic of the family and socialisation backgrounds of many of the respondents.

Forms of VAW experienced and reported by respondents

Respondents were asked to respond to questions that sought to explore what constituted VAW, types of VAW, the most common manifestations of VAW, and perceptions of how widespread it is in the communities involved in the study. Furthermore, the causes of VAW and its interlinkages with sociocultural structures and why most women seem to endure VAW were also examined. The findings of this research show that VAW in South Africa is wide ranging and includes cases of neglect; emotional, physical, sexual and economic abuse; exploitation and discrimination. These different forms of abuse occur at different points throughout women's lives.

Firstly, the women in the study recognised and used the word 'abuse' mostly in relation to VAW. However, they also acknowledged that VAW went beyond 'abuse'. Among other things, research respondents believed the following to constitute VAW: any form of coercion or physical abuse; the 'infantilisation of women', especially in the context of money and/or resource management; withholding remuneration for work done; deliberate exposure to danger, especially HIV and AIDS; constantly referring to and reminding women of any unfortunate or negative details of their past, childhood or background, and using it against them (emotional abuse); and men's marital infidelity. Interestingly, a significant number of respondents also spoke of the failure of government institutions and systems to address VAW as constituting another form of violence. For example, when government officials, including the police, fail in their duty to protect women or revictimise women survivors of VAW, this undermines women's security, and is complicit with crime and violence. In this way, VAW is not only committed but also becomes positively sanctioned in society.

The most apparent forms of VAW observed in the study were sexual and domestic violence, with intimate partners being the most likely perpetrators. This is in line with the literature, including the prevalence of these experiences among women aged 18–35. The particularities of the manifestations of these experiences with regards to the perpetrators and contexts are, however, as varied as the different kinds of women who experience these forms of violence.

Also consistent with the literature is the fact that victims of VAW are girls and women, with the perpetrators of these acts being mainly male. However, during both FGDs and in-depth interviews, although perpetrators of VAW were mostly given as males, there was also evidence of women being the perpetrators of violence against other women. In terms of economic abuse and exploitation, women who refused to pay salaries to other women who worked for them were identified.¹²² Furthermore, women were identified in the varied forms of sexual exploitation and human trafficking, sometimes as sole perpetrators or as co-perpetrators with men, even against minors.

One participant who went to live with her aunt at age 14 on the death of her mother was exposed to incestual rape (by the aunt's husband of their own daughter), supervised by the aunt, who later coerced her to undergo a similar experience.

¹²² FGD, Diepsloot 2, 20–27-year-old women.



The day I will never forget...I witness my aunt's husband raping his own daughter...I saw it when it happen and my aunt was also there...she just kept quiet. Their father slept with her daughter in the couch...[She] asked me if I saw what happened yesterday...if I was 14 years...if I were in my periods as yet and I said no. She said she wants me to play that game that her daughter played with her father and I said I don't know how to play this game because I never played it before. She said she would teach me...That evening, their father raped me...¹²³

Sexual offences against girl children were also commonly reported during the study, particularly against children with disabilities. Two of the respondents in life history recollections reported being survivors of paedophiles during their early childhood development years. While one was repeatedly defiled by a family friend, the other was made to touch the genitalia of a family member she remembers as either an older cousin or an uncle.

Gang-related VAW, often in the form of physical violence, was also reported.

Violence in the community...here in Dewesdorp there is a gang that is very harsh to people, especially young ladies. The boys or men of that group lure young girls to join their group; when the young girls have joined, they rape them and say that having sex with them is welcoming them to the group. They also say that they will not beg women to have sex with them whereas they have women in the group they can have sex with. So as the community we know about these gangster groups, we are just afraid to stand together against these gangs, we fear for our lives because we have heard and seen how violent the people of those gangs are.¹²⁴

The matter of IPV as indicated in the VAW literature cannot be overstated. The high numbers and severe brutalities recorded in this study are outrageous. In IPV experiences, the nexus between VAW and social power identified in the literature becomes more distinct. Two-thirds of the life history respondents had experienced different forms of violence perpetrated by intimate partners over their lives, while countless others in the FGDs had either experienced it themselves or knew someone who had, including some who died as a result of such violence. Notably, IPV was also

^{123.} Participant 2, life history, 35-year-old divorcee with a son.

^{124.} FGD Diepsloot 1, 18–30-year-old women.



She said she wants me to play that game that her daughter played with her father and I said I don't know how to play this game because I never played it before. She said she would teach me...That evening, their father raped me...

recorded within the context of same-sex relationships, pointing to the possibility that the male–female social power asymmetry works even in favour of men over women.¹²⁵

In these IPV experiences, it was believed by respondents and observed by researchers that VAW was often used as a means of revenge and retribution; to demand respect and compliance; to instil fear; to exert control over female sexuality; and to assert notions of masculinity. In other contexts, often connected with emotional issues like jealousy, anger and fear on the part of VAW perpetrators, IPV was presented as an expression of love.

From the eight different FGDs conducted across seven communities in the study, rape and sexual abuse were the most common forms of VAW reported in respondents' communities. These, like all the other reported forms of VAW, were reported as occurring in the contexts of intimate partner relationships, in families and by strangers, including gangs. But the numbers occurring in the context of intimate relationships and families were higher. The economic exploitation of elderly women in relation to their pensions was mentioned. Emotional abuse also ranked very high, either in combination with other forms of violence or as the sole form of abuse suffered.

The two case studies that follow engage with the qualitative nature of the experiences of violence in the lives of two of the study respondents.

¹²⁵. This particular case was seen as promising in order to explore the dynamics of IPV across sexual orientations, for a better understanding. Unfortunately, the respondent withdrew from this part of the investigation.



Case 1: Meredith

Meredith is a 43-year-old woman with three children – a 24 year old, a 17 year old and a five year old, with whom she lives. She hopes to visit the older two when she is financially sound. She is unemployed, separated from her husband and HIV positive. She has two estranged half-siblings. She dreamt of going to school to become a nurse when she was younger. After the death of her grandmother, who meant a lot to her, Meredith says that she quit school because she was not ‘doing well’. She worked as a cleaner at a casino where she met her ex-husband, Zen. Through hard work, Meredith was promoted to the ‘machine department’. Thereafter, she and Zen got married, undergoing all the customary requirements except a ‘white wedding’; Meredith was 16 years old.

After Meredith’s employment was terminated, a discussion on what she wanted to do led her to obtain a driver’s licence, which her husband supported and paid for. When she decided to transport children to school, Zen not only supported the idea but also bought her a car to do so. Between them, they each purchased different items that they used to furnish their home. Though Zen’s infidelity was a feature of their marriage, Meredith explains that it was something she cried over and then moved on from.

However, after three years of working in the transportation industry, Meredith’s driving became the very reason why she experienced IPV. Upon being questioned by his family about why his wife did the driving instead of him, Zen crafted notions about Meredith’s lack of respect and misbehaviour as a result of her having a licence and driving. According to his arguments, Meredith was disrespectful and misbehaved because of her access to financial resources and labour. In the heat of one such argument, Zen stabbed Meredith with a teaspoon next to her ear. Meredith immediately ran to the police to make a report. Despite the questionable attitude of the police officers on duty, undisputed evidence in the form of the weapon led to Zen’s arrest.

He push me and tries to hold me [but] I run away to...police station. When I arrived they [the police] say to me where are you from? Who accompany you? Then I respond[ed] that I was alone from [place name]...[they told me that they did] take statement [but they only wanted my address and Zen’s name].



Zen came to the police station insisting that he had not done anything to harm Meredith.

When he arrived and police ask him who be this lady, he respond by saying I don't beat her. Unfortunately, as he was drunk he didn't saw that teaspoon and the police ask him then what happen with this spoon. They arrest him. After two days I feel sorry for him and ask myself, as I am a prayerful woman, what am I going to say to my followers? And I go straight to police station and cancel my case. Unaware his family heard the story and they have plan to separate us as they have proposed another lady for him.

Meredith was visibly hurt, to the point that even her children noticed the change in her behaviour. Eventually the woman Zen's family had chosen for him became pregnant with Zen's child. Often Zen's sisters would come to his and Meredith's home, demanding why he had neglected to care for this other woman, meanwhile treating Meredith as though she did not exist.

Eventually, they [Zen and this other woman] had had two children. Zen was having [a persistent] flu problem, [medicines she bought for him were to no avail]...and I did not have information on tuberculosis. I told his mom [who] told me to go straight to his workplace and when I arrive there his boss ask me if we ever tested [for HIV] and...advises us to go and test. After the test, Zen was HIV positive and I was unaware if [I was] positive or maybe [the virus] is still circulating...So when we make our things [have intercourse], I try to tell him about how at clinic [we were] advised to use condoms...so that's when he refuse to use condom. Most of the time I try to ignore him...It was when I was pregnant that I discovered that I was positive but my child...is negative because of the pills [to prevent] mother to child [transmission].

In spite of her experiences with Zen, Meredith says this about Zen and his new wife:

Zen is bright, you cannot associate him with this story. He does not need more his wife to suffer. He will ask you what do you like? He is so responsible. [He] is an orphan, he stay with his sister. As of now we are separated. He loves computer and work at [place].

The fact that he is HIV positive, has another wife and continues to call Meredith raises concerns. Yet, she says the following about getting back together with him:

I won't because of what he did to me...I am not ready, my wounds are still painful and this won't make me happy and it lowers my love for him. Even now he is trying to call me...



Case 2: Lerato

Lerato is a 20 year old whose highest educational attainment is Grade 10. As young as she is, Lerato's case is a classic example of how multiple vulnerabilities (in her case HIV and AIDS stigmatisation, victim blaming and family neglect, emotional susceptibility to VAW in her search for acceptance, sex work, sexual exploitation, exposure to gang and street violence) interact with VAW, and also speaks to women's life experiences of VAW. According to Lerato,

As long as I can remember, I have always experienced abuse. My first experience of abuse was when I was at crèche, the person that abused me was my mother's friend's son. He was never aggressive or threatening to me but he always had sex with me. I never told anyone about it because I have always been a quiet child so I decided to keep it to myself...When I was 12 years old I became sick, I went to the doctor with my stepmother and the doctor thought I had flu. I went back home and after three weeks the flu [did] not get better. I went back to the doctor and after few blood tests, [he] discovered that I was HIV positive. Everyone at home was shocked. They couldn't understand how I got HIV, wondering what had happened because when I was a child I was always quiet and most of the time I was always home and I never said anything to them...The reason [I] quit school was that I was no longer performing well and most of my peers always judged me. I think the reason for them to judge me was because I was HIV positive. I don't have kids and I don't ever want to have kids. I am currently unemployed but I'm still looking for a job.

With regards to her experiences of VAW, Lerato cites her being defiled as 'the significant memory' of her early childhood. To her, the perpetrator 'was so kind' she 'never realised that [she] was actually being sexually abused'. She says of this experience, 'I am still angry at that guy because he made me a fool and took away my innocence. If I could see him right now, I would beat him really hard.' At another stage in her life, Lerato encountered other experiences of VAW:

When I was 16, I got a boyfriend, the boyfriend was part of a gang. He never had time for me because he was always with his gang. In his gang there were also girls, so I got jealous about him spending time with the gang and the girls in that gang. I had a friend and told her that we should also be part of the gang, maybe my boyfriend will love me even more and give me all the attention I need. We then told the leader of the gang that we wanted to join their gang, so we went to a shack and in the shack there were only boys. My boyfriend wasn't there when we arrived; I also didn't tell him about my plan of joining his gang. The leader of the gang told me and my friend that we had to get marked to show that we were part of the gang; they marked us with a razor on our thighs and after marking us they raped us. We were raped by nine guys. My boyfriend then arrived while these nine boys were raping me and my friend, then he told me that he's also going to hurt me because I didn't tell him that I was joining the gang; he hurt me by raping me anally. The next door neighbour of the shack we were at heard screams and cries and decided to call the



police. I was then sent by the police home and they told my stepmother and my biological father what had happened. My father didn't feel sorry for me; all he said was 'yes you are a useless child, you deserved to be raped by those boys, you wanted to get raped'. It hurt me really bad when my father said that because he was a deep Christian, I didn't expect such words to come from him. After the whole fight with my father, I decided to go stay with my aunt...for some few weeks and came back to Dewesdorp. When I came back I had already given in to the gang that I joined, the same gang in which 10 men raped me. I wanted to make sure that I bring more people into the gang to make sure that I wasn't going to be the only one who experiences all the pain and that would give me an opportunity to have more friends. At home things were very different. My father verbally abused me, he didn't support me and at times I would sleep without eating and he rejected me most of the time. I then decided to move out and hike to Bloemfontein. I moved to Bloemfontein with the friend I joined the gang with. We got to Bloemfontein, stayed on the streets and became prostitutes to make money. Unfortunately the friend passed on; she was stabbed by some men on the streets. I continued with the prostitution.

My father didn't feel sorry for me; all he said was 'yes you are a useless child, you deserved to be raped by those boys, you wanted to get raped'

Discussing her latest experience of violence and the perpetrator, Lerato says,

...we met in May 2016, when we first met, he was a really cool guy and he never had a lot of friends. I was happy that he didn't have too much friends because that meant that the relationship wouldn't have a lot of drama. The relationship was great in the beginning; he used to buy me gifts and we would go out. I even moved to [name of town] with him. Things started changing when we got to [name of town] and I realised that he had a lot of friends there. There were times where I would make him angry and he would act in such weird scary way. When I was a sex worker, it taught me to see how most men react to anger, so when my boyfriend got angry, it reminded me of the men I have once had sex with. Even though I saw his anger issues, I took it very lightly and thought that maybe I was being paranoid because of my past experiences.

He worked for [the military], I don't know which rank and I didn't know his salary. We never actually sat down and talked about our lives. I have never heard him talk about his family and every time I would ask about his family, he either ignored me or told me that I was asking questions that don't concern me.

The problem started when we moved to [name of town], we moved to [name of town] in August, the reason for us to move...was because he got retrenched, he never told me why. As we settled in..., I was introduced to his friends and the friends' girlfriends. I got happy and saw that now I have a family and I'm not rejected. When I got used to the friends, I realised that most of his



friends, if not all, were drug dealers and they were men that abused their women.

When I questioned him about the drug issue, he asked me where I thought all the expensive gifts he bought for me were from – the salary he made...That's when his true colours came out. So I guess he was selling drugs when he was still working at the [military] which I think was the reason for him to be retrenched. The abuse started in November.

He started getting broke and forced me to have sex with other men so that those men could pay him and he could have money to buy the drugs. The abuse always happened when he was either broke or didn't have drugs. When there was money and drugs, everything was fine; he treated me like his queen.

The scariest thing that he did to me was bite me in my back and hit me with a gun on my head... He would have sex with me anally and tell me that all these other men were having vaginal sex with me so he won't put his penis in there. The cause of the abuse was when he was broke or wanted drugs.

The only freedom I had during the time of abuse was just to listen to him and allow him to do whatever he wanted to do because whenever I would try to fight him back, he would hit me harder or hurt me during sex. He was very controlling and never wanted me to be out; the only time I was allowed to be out was when I had to be a prostitute so I can give him the money and he would buy drugs.

He never knew that I was on birth control and he didn't bother asking about birth control. When we first met we always used a condom but when the abuse started he never used a condom with me. I never told him about my status because I was afraid that if I did, he would kill me...Yes I have discussed my problem with my stepmother because she is the first person I called when I was in hospital in...The reason for me to be in hospital was that I was found lying on the ground around town. I had run away from him. I told him that I was heading to the shop; when he agreed, I took my chance and ran away. I left my phone and all the clothes I had at the flat we were staying at. By the grace of God none of his friends ever tried stopping me when they noticed I wasn't going to the shop...When I woke up in the hospital, I asked one of the nurses to borrow me their phone so I can make a quick phone call; that's when I called my stepmother who helped me get money so I can come back to [name of town].

Concerning available VAW survivor care and support in South Africa, Lerato says,

I personally know Tshireletsong against Women Abuse [TAWU]. They are helping me to overcome the experiences that I have had and they are giving me hope to make a change in my life and become a better human being. TAWU have also organised a social worker for me but every time I have to meet her, I get scared and feel like I'm not ready...



Gathering from what Lerato had to say about her, her stepmother has also been supportive:

The name I have I was given by my stepmother. When I asked why she gave me that name, she said that she was happy to see me, she saw me as her everything. I remember my stepmother telling me of the changes that are going to happen to my body and that I shouldn't be embarrassed about those changes, it was God's will that there had to be changes in a female's body.

Concerning her emotional state, she says,

I honestly don't know what makes me happy, I don't have friends and I always prefer being home alone. Nothing makes me happy, yes, life has changed now and I'm still trying to find myself...I like writing. At the moment I'm not writing anything because I just don't have any motivation to write...My happiest memory while growing up is the memory of me and my friend, the friend that I joined the group with. We clicked and she understood me most of the time, so being with her always made me happy...I remember the bad things that were always said to me, especially by my father; he always said I am useless and I [will] always be useless. I guess that's why I went to do bad things and made bad decisions about my life...There is nothing special I remember of me and my family; all I remember is the rejection I got from my family...it's not long ago that I have experienced abuse, everything is still fresh, there are some of the things I'm trying to forget about but it's still difficult. I'm even scared to walk alone in the street. I just always feel like my ex will come out of nowhere. My experiences of being a kid in Dewesdorp sometimes haunt me because there I still meet with some of the boys who raped me when I joined their gang. So life is difficult but I'm taking it slow.

He started getting broke and forced me to have sex with other men so that those men could pay him and he could have money to buy the drugs.

Explaining why VAW is persistent in South Africa:

Men will always have power and no matter how we women try to be equal with them we will never be equal. I also think that being financially dependent on a man will give the man so much control over your life because they automatically think they are in charge of you...I think all of that is caused by women who don't want to talk about the abuse they have experience because they are scared that they will be judged by the community or they will get killed by the person who is abusing them. I think [if] I had talked that my mother's friend's son was raping [me], maybe things would have worked out very differently.



UNDERSTANDING THE PERSISTENCE OF VAW IN SOUTH AFRICA: SOCIALISATION, OPPORTUNITY COSTS AND INSTITUTIONAL INADEQUACIES

While the perspectives given by the research respondents to explain why VAW occurs tended to overlap, they diverged at some points with those articulated in the literature. Notably, the women’s understandings of the factors driving VAW were very practical. For example, none of the respondents mentioned the legacy of apartheid as being a key driver of VAW in the country. However, reference was made to a ‘culture of violence’ and the ‘normalisation of VAW’. Though this report agrees with the perspective that the legacy of apartheid plays a significant role in perpetuating this culture of violence, the women involved in the study did not explicitly make reference to the notion of inherited violence from apartheid as a pressing explanation of their experiences of VAW.

The discussion that follows provides detail on the key explanations given by women for why VAW persists in the country. These include, inter alia, the complexities around defining VAW; the distribution and complex interconnectedness of different forms of power relations that disadvantage women, based on their distinctive identities; the problems in sociocultural learnings of what is acceptable in society; gaps in the implementation of VAW laws and policies; and psychosocial explanations. Looking at these closely from the perspectives of women, and from an analytic view on these perspectives, this report identifies some of the issues that point to why VAW persists in South Africa despite the efforts made to combat it over two decades.

Women’s understandings of, and the downplaying of what constitutes VAW

I remember there was blood all over the floor; she used all kind of objects on me. I was confused as to why this person was so rough on me. Yes we had our fights at times but it had never gotten out of hand...We used to hit each other at times but we would apologise to one another and solve our issues.¹²⁶

Previous literature¹²⁷ has suggested that violence in South Africa, and VAW in particular, is a norm reflecting a culture of violence/abuse. Evidence from women’s experiences of enduring abuse and restoring their lives has shown that women’s acceptance of certain forms and degrees of VAW may partly account for its apparent normalisation in South Africa. It was found that allowance is made for some level of violence in intimate partner relationships. This endorsing of violence, no matter how insignificant, is very worrisome. There is also an apparent general downplaying of violence that is not physical or sexual. One study respondent mentioned the risk her partner’s behaviour placed her in, in terms of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV and AIDS. Despite this, she still categorised him as ‘not abusive’. Perhaps having experienced community violence or ‘war’, during which many people either died or lived in fear for their lives, women’s exposure to HIV and AIDS paled in comparison for this respondent.

I remember there was blood all over the floor; she used all kind of objects on me.

When I started dating I met some other guy that made me to be pregnant with my first child. He was just a very quiet guy and he was not abusive. The only thing that he was doing that I didn’t like is that he liked women a lot and he was impregnating each and every woman that he fell in love with, so I decide that I had to move out from that relationship before I get any diseases from him.¹²⁸

^{126.} Participant 4, life history, 30 years old. Respondent declined to grant an interview into the discussion on the distinction between one form of battery as ‘violent’ and the other as usual.

^{127.} CSV. (2016). *Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in South Africa: A Brief Review*. Retrieved August 2017, <http://www.csvr.org.za/pdf/Gender%20Based%20Violence%20in%20South%20Africa%20-%20A%20Brief%20Review.pdf>

^{128.} Participant 5, life history, 30 years old.



Another respondent told of her partner throwing a milk container at her, which she viewed as her partner communicating frustration. She also downplayed verbal abuse.

When it started he was cheating but it started with just taking a milk container and throwing it at me, but yah you know it was just frustration. It started after I gave birth. Fine he was verbally abusive when I was pregnant but he never touched me, but when I gave birth that's when he started throwing things at me, this went on... ¹²⁹

Even with regard to the most common abuse identified, sexual and physical, some of the women downplayed the significance of such incidents. Sexual abuse was often limited to rape, and sometimes women categorised some form of violence as the normal way in which they and their partners interacted. Similarly, some women overlooked their experiences of VAW until, in their opinion, the incidents escalated or became unbearable. As long as it was bearable, the definitions of these acts as VAW were downplayed, even in the case of sexual abuse.

...rape happened a lot of times. At first I didn't think that it was rape. That was early in the marriage. I just thought that maybe he wanted sex more often than me [laughs]. Then it started to feel like he is forcing me. I would be upset at him and then he would just want sex and he forces himself on me. Then when I was pregnant with my daughter, around six months, he did the same things. But that night it felt different... ¹³⁰

Additionally, most of the women admitted to having thought of certain violent acts and abuses against them as 'normal' or as not constituting VAW before their encounters with social workers. Many of the reported cases of emotional abuse, particularly within the context of intimate partner relationships, including marriages, were endured for a long time, until the women got information that it was a form of VAW for which they could seek help. This apparent deficit in knowledge must be addressed through targeted awareness-raising and information drives.

At first I didn't think that it was rape. That was early in the marriage. I just thought that maybe he wanted sex more often than me.

On the issue of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual and intersex (LGBTI) rights, it was observed that there is not only a deficit of knowledge but also a resistance to attempts to shed light on it. Some respondents' family members engineered interventions to change their sexual orientation, including church, ultimatums related to financial support and taking on of boyfriends. In the case of one lesbian respondent, who was raped and beaten up to get her to see that 'she was a woman and not a man'. When concessions are made, as in the case of two study respondents (cited below), women are 'allowed' to hold on to their sexual orientations, considered 'anomalies', but

¹²⁹. Participant 12, life history, 22 years old (emphasis added).

¹³⁰. Participant 3, life history, 41 years old (emphasis added).



have to stay in the closet. This is not only indicative of a refusal to recognise the rights of women to their choice of sexual orientation and identity, but also a resistance to such issues being in the open for discussion.

According to one of the study respondents, a young bisexual woman, discrimination and a general reduction in her quality of life were employed as forms of resistance to accepting her identity.

[Falling in love with what society says we shouldn't be falling in love with] That [is] the worst thing ever. I lost friends, had to be friends with lesbians now...my mum told me shit... Asked me 'what's wrong...I thought you had a boyfriend...are you aware that what you are doing is wrong...you can't fall in love with someone who is like you...you should do something about it...' I agreed [to her position and assertions] because I didn't want to make her angry/sad. I told my mum that I would stop but...until my mum realised that nothing changed. My mum is a church person, [she] told me that we gave you an option to change but then you didn't. I said I [could not but she insisted that I] should learn to change, so they took me back to Zimbabwe, stayed there for like two months and they were praying for me, but then I didn't know whether it helped or not...when I came back I fell in love with girls again, but there was a certain point where I'm now confused with my feelings, [I decided to] date them both [females and males] and find out where I belong, I dated them both but I loved girls...I decided to stick to guys even though I still wanted girls; my mum told me to ignore those feelings, so [I] took a decision that I'm done with girls. ¹³¹

Some respondents advanced the necessity for more educational programmes to ensure the rights of LGBTI communities and a reduction in LGBTI-related VAW.

I think it [the solution] is education. I am not saying the LGBT [community] is not doing much. They are trying but they don't reach everywhere. It would be best if we

¹³¹. Participant 3, life history, 41 years



have more programmes that would educate people about this kind of thing [lesbian identities], things could be better if people are educated.¹³²

Myths and biases around VAW

Tied to the above, women identified that understandings of VAW are often plagued by social myths and biases that further disadvantage survivors of VAW. Chief among these biases are issues related to victim blaming, for instance, the policing of how women dress, the masculinisation of the nightscape, the masculinisation of gangs, as well as sexual work. All of these are often used as justification for abuses against women, where victims are told that they asked for the violations done to them, creating an enabling environment for the perpetration of a rape culture that contributes significantly to the high levels of VAW in South Africa. One of the respondents (Case 1 above) was told by her father that she deserved to be gang-raped because she sought to join a gang. Without questioning the act of violence itself, the women who experience violence encounter secondary victimisation and, thereby, VAW is enabled to continue. It was also interesting to note the varying views and shifts in perceptions among research respondents, particularly in the FGDs. Some FGD participants were challenged to evaluate some of the biases they had taken for granted and not examined. At least two such debates were recorded in the eight FGDs held during this study. These debates emerged when some of the participants pointed out that ‘at times women are to blame for being abused’, either by being too outspoken, talking back at partners or ‘doing things that their partners did not like’. The following is a lens into one such debate:

- When a man is being questioned for his behaviour by their partner it makes them feel like they are being put under pressure and they become angry and will abuse women.
- At times as women we push guys to abuse us by cheating on them and making them feel like fools (uyangitshithela ungenza isilima).
- You are giving men an excuse to abuse women by saying women are pushing men to abuse them; if someone is doing something you don’t like, leave them, there is no need for you to abuse them.
- You are abusing the men emotionally by cheating on them; when he beats you, it’s like he is now in the wrong yet you the one who started it.
- Are you guys saying the solution is to beat that person? Aren’t you suppose to sit down with that person and talk about the matter; why do you have to beat her?

Some other participants stated in response that there is no excuse for men to abuse women. Yet others noted that such justifications for abuse come from a male bias in society, which is in itself (structural) VAW.¹³³

^{132.} Participant 6, life history, 27 years old.

^{133.} FGD 8, Diepsloot, 20–27 years old.



Entrenched notions of masculinities and femininities

Central to the conceptualisations of VAW, and thus its persistence, are the inherent beliefs that people hold around masculinities and femininities, especially within the context of intimate relationships. The place of some of these beliefs in contributing to the persistence of VAW in South Africa became very apparent in this study.

I think women that are suffering the most are married women because they are being told that even if they are suffering they don't have to go outside and talk about their issues to other people.¹³⁴

I think it is because the upbringing of the women was, he [is the] one that was saying you are a women, you don't have a say. Even if there is something wrong that you see, just keep quiet; only the men is allowed to say something and women were not allowed to talk about their family issues to others, they have to keep it as a secret. So we grew up as women telling ourselves that it is okay if you are abuse[d] and not to be able to voice out whatever that is bothering you.¹³⁵

An influential factor in the culture of violence and which also influences the underreporting of VAW, is related to the socialisation of women as people who can and should endure terrible experiences. Social perceptions suggesting that every woman must endure challenges in conjugal relationships, and that individual woman should not complain but cope, came up constantly in this study. Women who endeavoured to share issues of IPV with family members, or even church members, were 'encouraged to endure'. In some instances, they were even characterised as being ungrateful for what they already have. There was a general notion of marriage, particularly for the woman, as a space of endurance no matter what.

Some they don't see they just accept that's how life should go on because of how our mothers teach us that a woman use to pretend as if nothing happen.¹³⁶

I married early and married...an old man. So I manage and cope as my mother like this kind of thing I stay with him for some years and he get employed. He was someone who like liquor, and we don't live accordingly because when he comes

^{134.} FGD 7, Ingonyameni, ages 35 +

^{135.} Ibid.

^{136.} FGD 1, Phokwane, 20 -27 year olds



home he start by paying his debts and he is left with nothing and...nothing to give them [our children]. As my mother loves him, when I try to saying anything she stands for him and even his family take [his] side.¹³⁷

When I told my sisters about what I was facing...they would say I have to keep quiet and not argue with him when we fight until the end...They could say I have to keep quiet because men are all the same and that if I leave this one I will also find the worse man, more than the one that I have...and then I say to myself maybe they are right, if I leave this one I could get someone that could cut me into pieces and bury me somewhere without anyone knowing so I have to stay with this one.¹³⁸

Some women don't share their experiences with family because family usually tells them to dump that person but after that they do not help in supporting your kids. That is why some women chose to keep quiet and just endure the abuse.¹³⁹

Another dimension of enduring was linked to the notion of a 'good Christian woman'.

After two days I feel sorry for him and ask myself, as I am a prayerful woman, what am I going to say to my followers? And I go straight to police station and cancel my case.¹⁴⁰

Masculinities and dominant masculinities

...he wouldn't do it [assist wife] in front of all people who visited but sometimes he will do it in front of his family who would visit us but he wouldn't do it in front of everyone because he had a reputation that he wanted to maintain...he was a soldier...a guy who left South Africa and went into exile for years and years and comes back and be soft that would be something else, even much weird.¹⁴¹

^{137.} Ibid.

^{138.} Participant 5, life history, 30 years old.

^{139.} FGD 8, Diepsloot, 20–27 year olds.

^{140.} Participant 1, life history, 43 years old.

^{141.} Participant 6, life history, 27-year-old lesbian.



Also important to note is the context within which VAW occurs, that is, a patriarchal system that exerts men's domination and control over women. This occurs directly through cultural and social norms that emphasise power and controlling relationships, social norms that condone wife beating, and structural and economic barriers that keep women trapped in abusive relationships.

...they [men] do need workshops, but in my area there was a workshop that was done there that talks about VAW, I think it was Sinani [local CBO] that did that workshop, what got me worried is that after the workshop men went out shaking their heads saying now we are being told on how to handle our wives and not to have sex with our wives...they don't want to listen...¹⁴²

The study also found that the social backlash faced by some men with competing notions of masculinity pushes them to assert an assumed lost power through committing VAW. For example, Case 1 reports that her husband paid for her to attain a driver's licence. After years of driving on a commercial basis, she reports that a visit to her in-laws sparked a conversation that not only destroyed their marriage but also exposed her to abusive behaviour from her husband, including an incident in which she was stabbed. She reports:

When we left Daveyton coming back home, I was driving. They said to [him], oh you disrespect the...family: woman driving a car...¹⁴³

She reports that in a conversation that led to her abusive experience, the issue of her driving and her driver's licence became a motive. His actions are understood as evidence to erase indications of her economic independence, as it was perceived to be taking away from him.

One day he goes somewhere without informing me...He said you think you are better than me since you get that licence. And I respond, no...I ask him to forgive me and [he] says, 'since you have licence, you misbehave'. He then take teaspoon and stabbed me next to my ear...[and] he says [that] he is going to break my things and he will buy the new ones and he will sell that [car] or find someone to drive it.¹⁴⁴

This narrative points to how women's greater access to economic opportunities may sometimes disrupt sociocultural norms and expectations of men as breadwinners, leading to greater levels of VAW by male partners attempting to reassert control in the relationship. These multiple constraints stemming from women's positions in the socioeconomic structure affect women's control over their lives, making them dependent on their male partners and raising the probability of abuse.

^{142.} FGD 7, Ingonyameni, 35+ year olds.

^{143.} Participant 1, life history, 43 years old.

^{144.} Ibid.



Multiple social vulnerabilities

While noting that VAW cuts across all social and class divisions, existing literature points to the fact that it is women who are already vulnerable and disadvantaged in society who experience and/or are at the highest risk of being victims of VAW. This was very much the case according to the findings of this study, particularly for sexual minorities. The experiences of the women in this study point to this fact, and the women themselves also understand this to be the case in the various dimensions that VAW takes. These women are at higher risk of experiencing VAW and also have lower chances of getting redress due to lack of resources, lack of knowledge/education, further victimisation and discrimination or delays for various reasons.

What I have observed in my community, most women who are suffering are lesbians; they have high rate, because they become so discriminated [against]; they are called by bad, insulting names, even in front of the children, and you find that even in churches [they] are not allowed, because people from church would say being a lesbian is a sin and end up judging them.¹⁴⁵

Another significant part of the multiple-vulnerabilities dimension of VAW is repeated/repetitive victimisation of the same woman over different periods in her life. Cases 1 and 2 above typify this dimension of VAW. Further, in spite of South Africa's inclusive and progressive constitution, the rights of lesbians and bisexual females as provided for in the constitution are yet to garner full social acceptance. Experiences of discrimination, family neglect, and emotional and verbal abuse were common VAW manifestations reported or experienced by lesbians and bisexual females in South Africa. The perpetrators of these crimes included both family members and strangers. Discrimination has also been reported from institutions like the police and churches, as well as the courts.

¹⁴⁵ FGD 7, Ingonyameni, 35+ year olds.



Case 3: Lindiwe¹⁴⁶

Though Lindiwe traces her sexual identity to early on in her life, age 13 and high school were most significant. At age 13, she had a partner seven years older than herself, who taught her a lot. This went further when she was introduced to the LGBTI community during her high school education, which helped her feel comfortable with her identity and sexuality.

After enduring discriminatory comments from strangers, Lindiwe's mother eventually kicked her out of home when she had confirmation that Lindiwe was a lesbian. After six months, Lindiwe's mother accepted her back home on condition that she remained a closeted lesbian and did not 'flaunt' her identity as a lesbian. This condition dictated her general appearance – she had to dress 'like a female'. In spite of her in-the-closet lifestyle, Lindiwe was sexually abused as a result of her sexuality. She says about the experience,

I am just going to give you a highlight of it, I am not going to get into details about it because I am still hurting about it. I haven't really healed...Apparently I was sexually harassed due to the fact of me being like this [a 'fuge' lesbian], so apparently somebody decided that he wanted to show me that I was not a man. I almost died though, luckily I survived it and today I am here to talk about it...

Lindiwe refuses to explore this part of her life and buries herself in work and school as coping mechanisms. What she describes as 'apparent sexual harassment' was actually rape and severe physical abuse. In defiance, she decided to 'come out of the closet'. Lindiwe believes the police and judicial system, as well as the counselling support available to her at the hospital, discriminated against her because of her sexuality. Almost a year and a half after the incident, the perpetrator remains a free man and Lindiwe sometimes still sees him in her neighbourhood. Concerning her experience of psychosocial support services, she says,

I went for counselling at the hospital close by. I was not comfortable with questions the woman was asking me...The things that she was saying, it made me go crazy because of her approach, the way she was asking me questions...She said there is a woman in this area who was like me, so there are a lot of people like me; she kept on talking and I felt offended when she said people 'like me' because at that time I still had a lot of anger...I was very sensitive at that time because of what happened. She should have listened and I should be the one who was talking, it would have been better [laughing]. Instead of listening, she was talking and the things she said to me

¹⁴⁶. Participant 6, life history, 27-year-old lesbian.



made me angry and uncomfortable. And then I decided that let me just leave this counselling because it doesn't help me...

According to Lindiwe, the police and courts did not do any better. She says,

Ap! Apparently in court they said I was to stand in court that what they have been telling me all along, so it been a year and a few months and he is never arrested. And I wouldn't even know that he is going to court because the person supposed to give me that information always change my number the last two digits and they don't do the right thing to correct my number so whenever I am need[ed] there I don't go because they don't call me, so even if I am summoned to court I don't get a letter because they always drop my letter at the wrong house. And the case has been going on without my knowledge, so I don't know what is going on.

Lindiwe believes that educating people about LGBTI rights is important in curbing sexual identity-related VAW in particular.



The effects of family background and socialisation

The family background of perpetrators was frequently mentioned by respondents as relevant in explaining the persistence of VAW. These explanations ranged from the issue of socialisation, where boys learned a culture of violence and disrespect for women from their environment, to expressions of pent-up emotions owing to unhappy childhoods. At the centre of these explanations was the social problem of 'broken homes' or a breakdown in family structures, a situation prevalent in South African society. It was significant that some of these women continuously referred to the difference between themselves and the perpetrators of VAW in terms of whether they were born out of wedlock, grew up with their parents or had happy childhoods.

Consistent with the characteristics of the perpetrators described by the life history participants, family background appeared as a key factor in attempts to explain the vicious cycle of VAW that is resistant to transformations made elsewhere.

Because the way parents [bring] up their children plays a huge role in the children's future. For example, maybe if the father beats up the mother the child would think that violence is the only way to solve problems. Or maybe others grew up without having parents because they are dead, so maybe he had to go and stay with relatives, maybe those relatives abused him when he was young, so all of that would make the perpetrator do the same thing to other people because he also went through it so it becomes a norm to him.¹⁴⁷

...maybe it [is] because of his background, because he was born out of wedlock and his mother got married to [another man] and she left him behind with his father and also his father passed away and everyone that was close to him died, so he was left with no one and he had to go and stay with his relatives. Maybe something happened there. Maybe he is still angry...he's got an anger that is still boiling and maybe he wants to take it out to someone...Maybe it could be better if the children that are facing the same problem that my fiancé faced when he was still young needs to be taught maybe the ways on how to deal with this kind [of] childhood and be taught on how to handle the challenges that someone can face by the time they grow up, maybe that could be better.¹⁴⁸

^{147.} FGD7, Ingonyameni, 35+ year olds

^{148.} Participant 5, life history, 30 years old



The above perspectives are consistent with social learning theory, which posits that children observe the consequences of the behaviour of family and learn which behaviours (even socially inappropriate ones) achieve desired results without drawing negative sanctions. Important to note, however, is the reality that social learning does not only happen within the context of family. For example, men also receive information from the larger society that it is appropriate to control your intimate partner and to enforce such control through violence. Consequently, when such inappropriate behaviours are modelled and reinforced through other mediums (such as the media), these patterns of interaction can become entrenched and replicated in other social interactions.

Socioeconomic power imbalances

Socioeconomic imbalances between women and men were also identified as important to explain the occurrences of VAW. Most respondents were of the view that socioeconomic challenges such as unemployment, lack of material resources, social and emotional insecurities in addition to alcohol and drug abuse were significant drivers of VAW. In their narratives, a number of respondents described the relationship between VAW and the social power imbalances identified in the literature. This related mainly to women's subservience to men in access to and control of material and non-material resources in society. The VAW–power nexus takes the form of economic power, cultural and symbolic power, and institutional power, including structural violence. However, the particular expression of economic power was unanimously identified by the women in the individual interviews and across FGDs as a strong determinant in a women's experience of VAW, especially in the cases of IPV.

...they can abuse you because they know that you have no say because they are the ones who are providing everything for you, so it won't be easy for you to report because if you do so you will suffer when he is arrested, so we end up tolerating the abuse. Independency is important.¹⁴⁹

The following are some excerpts from FGDs:

- I think abuse affects women who are economically dependent on people for survival. You depend on people for food, clothes and other basic needs.
- I also agree...when you are not economically dependent on someone and you can make your own money, I don't think that a person easily abuse you because there's nothing to actually beg from that person.
- I think women who are affected [by] abuse are women who usually go to taverns at night because that's where most young ladies are raped.
- I also think that women who are economically dependent on someone are at a high risk of experiencing abuse.

¹⁴⁹. FGD7, Ingonyameni, 35+ year olds



...they can abuse you because they know that you have no say because they are the ones who are providing everything for you

If a man is not financially stable...stressed, that can cause him to be abusive towards his wife; they take out their stress on women, and women become their stress relievers.

- When you come from a poor background and you get a boyfriend who does everything for you, they buy food and clothes for you, that boyfriend feels like they are in control of you because you are fully dependent on them.
- I also think the most women affected by abuse is women who [are] economically dependent on a man; women who are economically dependent on a man don't have anyone or anywhere to go to, to get support especially financial support.
- I think women who are affected by abuse are women who are financially dependent on a man and women who are want[ing] to be loved. Women who want to be loved end up staying in abusive relationships because they think abuse...[is] a form of being loved.

Also,

- If a man is not financially stable...stressed, that can cause him to be abusive towards his wife; they take out their stress on women, and women become their stress relievers.¹⁵⁰
- When a man is unemployed and the woman in his life is working, he becomes insecure, which makes him angry and his insecurities and anger lead him into abusing his partner.¹⁵¹

^{150.} FGD 8, Diepsloot, 20–27 year olds.

^{151.} Ibid.



The narratives above support the suggestion that VAW occurs as a reaction to ‘socially constructed stressors’, such as unemployment, low income and the institutionalised inequalities in socioeconomic, racial and gender divides.¹⁵² Fox explains this as ‘the outcome of a pileup of stressors associated with a perceived excess of demands over resources’.¹⁵³ Consequently, women’s subordinate role and unequal power are enforced, maintained and reinforced by inequitable economic arrangements, and political and cultural institutions. In patriarchal societies such as South Africa, these imbalances exist at a societal level where structural factors prevent equal participation of women in the social, economic and political systems. Thus, societal-level imbalances are reproduced when men exercise power and control over women, one form of which is violence.

Psychosocial explanations

A number of the women either directly or indirectly located the causes of VAW in psychological problems. They attributed VAW to ‘mental disorders’ experienced by perpetrators.

I don’t know what was happening in his head for him to start behaving like that...

Apparently he grew up with a lot of anger so maybe that causes him to be abusive.¹⁵⁴

...we have psychotic people [out there – laughing], really, they’re psychotic. I really don’t know, things like these happen all the time, like seriously I don’t know. I don’t even understand it...I don’t know what goes on in the person’s mind whenever they do whatever they do, end up killing whoever they’re killing, but it is not right. There is something wrong in their heads and they really need medical help.¹⁵⁵

The explanations above seem to suggest that women at times attribute IPV to individual mental disorders. While these explanations are important, they must be considered within the context of structural and systemic realities around gender relations. The researchers of this study are of the view that explanations for understanding VAW that do not address the context within which it happens, run the risk of minimising the degree of responsibility of the perpetrator and also neglect the reality that behaviours are inherently gendered and have fundamentally different consequences for women and men. Moreover, the significant power imbalances that typically exist in violent relationships may be ignored or trivialised. Psychological explanations of VAW must be considered within the context of seeing male violence as a power and control technique reinforced by society. Doing so will ensure that interventions to address VAW remain focused on dealing with the deeply entrenched patriarchal and structural challenges that continue to subjugate women.

The concept of ‘blessers’ and the trap of insecurity

An interesting phenomenon associated with the economic dependency of women on men in South Africa and its relationship with abuse was the concept of ‘blessers’, as described by the young women in one of the FGDs. This entails women deliberately seeking out financially sound men in order to benefit financially from them, as well as older men deliberately ‘touting’ at young women. The trend was said to have started on social media, where unemployed young women posted about their exotic lifestyles, claiming they had been ‘blessed’. Social media users then started asking the girls who their ‘blessers’ were. The term ‘blesser’ in South Africa has therefore become synonymous with someone who blesses a partner with money, holidays and other material gifts. The ‘blesser’ is in many ways similar to the traditional sugar daddy. These gifts from sugar-daddy types have created a culture of

¹⁵². Gelles, R. J. (1985). Family violence. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 11, 347–367.

¹⁵³. Fox, G. L. (2002). Economic distress and intimate violence: Testing family stress and resources theories. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64(3), 794.

¹⁵⁴. Participant 12, life history, 22 years old.

¹⁵⁵. Participant 6, life history, 27 year old.



'blessers' and 'blessees', mostly older men providing for younger women in exchange for sex. These materialise as socioeconomic transactions that denote approaches to sexual relationships as either a direct means of support or as a means of gaining access to capital by young women in environments of economic decline.

Some of the respondents suggested that this was the principal issue putting women's security from VAW in jeopardy. These relationships are sought after as a means to overcome poverty and insecurity, yet they become the very avenues through which women's security is curtailed.

Dewesdorp is a small town and we don't get many opportunities to actually develop ourselves, so we young women actually seek boyfriends who have money that will be able to support us and when we get abused it becomes hard to actually leave the relationship because you have nowhere to go and there's no one from your family that will support you and your child/children.¹⁵⁶

I think the one thing that actually messes us young women is [t]his concept of wanting to have 'blessers'. These 'blessers' usually don't come with good intentions; they feel in control of your body since they give you money. As a young woman you end up having sex with this man even though you don't want to but because you know that you are going to receive money from this man, you will end up having sex with him. Some 'blessers' don't want to use protection and they also treat you like dirt at times.¹⁵⁷

In many ways, the 'blesser' phenomenon plays directly to bigger structural issues of inequitable access to economic opportunities for women and men. Thus, interventions that seek to effectively address VAW must take this into consideration.

Consequences of VAW

Emotionally I felt worthless, because at first it started off with words, him cheating and saying what do you expect because of you not doing this or giving me this, etc.... Physically I felt drained, depressed; when I started working I didn't mind staying at work till late, just so that I don't have to go back there, you know.¹⁵⁸

^{156.} FGD 2, Dewesdorp, 18–30 year olds.

^{157.} Ibid.

^{158.} Participant 12, life history, 22 years



The consequences of VAW were identified as being mainly psychosocially and economically detrimental, particularly to the survivors and their children but also to local communities and the wider South African environment. It was thus agreed that the consequences of VAW affect all, irrespective of gender and social class, both directly and indirectly. In view of the objectives of the study, there was an emphasis on how VAW affects the quality of women's life experiences.

It was also observed that VAW is detrimental to women's general well-being, having long-term, far-reaching and sometimes fatal consequences. One study respondent has been living with physical and psychological trauma since she was 14 years old, linked to her exposure to the rape of another minor, her own subsequent rape and the fear of being blamed for it. The experience cost her the success of her marriage to a man she describes as 'supportive' and 'respectful'. The following quote highlights the immediate trauma as well as the long-term effects of VAW, not only for the women themselves, but also for their families and those around them.

I was very stressed after that [moment of silence]...I was much stressed I couldn't concentrate on my studies. I was very scared. I have never been so scared like that in my life. I missed home, I wanted to go home. I wanted to be with my father... When I arrived home, I didn't tell my father what happened because I was afraid he would beat me...I couldn't sleep at night. I had a lot of flashbacks. Even when I'm alone all the things that happened in the past came back...¹⁵⁹

Over a decade later, her arranged marriage to a friend of her father felt the effects of her harrowing experience:

Our problem started when he wanted us to sleep together. Then I would refuse to sleep with him. He would ask me what is going on and I would say there is nothing wrong. On the other days, I would blame myself, saying that I have to sleep with him because this man paid for me...In that painful experience, I got pregnant...He sat down with me, he told me that there is nothing that I am not doing. I cook and clean for him. We only experience problems when it comes to us being sexually intimate, I always refuse. I didn't like being touched by him. He started to call the family and this thing was discussed. He asked me what I think about our marriage, should we

¹⁵⁹. Participant 2, life history, 35 years old.



just get divorced or we must give it time to breathe because he's a man and he got feelings which need to be satisfied. We then decided to divorce.¹⁶⁰

Culture of silence' and underreporting

...we do get help...but the problem is that we tend to hide bruises when [we] are beaten...And [we] hide [them. We do] not even go to the hospital to get some help, because women become so scared to report it.¹⁶¹

I feel that the government is not to be blamed; instead, the women who are making domestic violence a secret contributes more to the increasing rate of abuse against women. Because if they reported [to] the police and social workers, [they] would have made more awareness campaigns to avoid abuse against women.¹⁶²

In addition to the reasons established in the literature accounting for underreporting, there also exists a general feeling of helplessness, frustration and constant fear among some women, who seem to think that there is no way out of VAW, particularly within the context of intimate partnerships. Paramount among the reasons for underreporting established in the literature reviewed for this study is mistrust of the police service, and a sense of fear linked to the repercussions of reporting an offender. The attitudes of police officers and the perceived inefficiency of the police service were the most frequently reported reasons why people did not report occurrences of VAW.

Additionally, it was noted in this study that notions of seniority that suggest younger people know very little compared to older people also discouraged older women from reporting VAW or seeking support services, particularly from social workers who were deemed young and inexperienced. Issues around confidentiality and familiarity with support service providers also came up as reasons why people may not report or at least seek support in dealing with VAW experiences.

As today some of our social workers look younger so some women cannot tell their problem...that lady is too little for my problem then she remain[s] silent. Some say '[she is] so childish; what can she tell me?'¹⁶³

According to my understanding I was born in Mokababa. I grew up and [I am] do[ing] social work. Just because they know me, they don't want to share...¹⁶⁴

^{160.} Ibid.

^{161.} Participant 2, life history, 35 years old

^{162.} Participant 4, life history, 30 years old.

^{163.} FGD 1, Phokwane, 20 – 27 year olds

^{164.} Ibid.



The women acknowledged that underreporting of VAW is a major contributor to its persistence in South Africa, as this serves as a positive reinforcement for perpetrators. However, they considered it far more serious when women report cases and then withdraw them on the basis of pity or for other reasons that prevent justice from being served. Knowing that a victim will not or cannot report a crime and see it through to the attainment of justice, perpetrators of VAW are further legitimised. For their part, survivors sink further down into the fear and weight of this growing power that ultimately leads to the normalisation of violence against them. Some women also expressed a sense of defeat. For them, women not reporting means that very little can be achieved.

Even the grannies that are suffering from the abuse they don't want to talk about it; if you ask them about it they just say, 'Hayi! [No!] Everything is perfectly fine, there is nothing wrong', even if you tell the granny that you heard that she is experiencing abuse, she could just say everything is fine. So we end up getting confused really about what can be done to resolve this situation.¹⁶⁵

Of the two-thirds of life history respondents who had suffered various forms of IPV, a quarter never mentioned their experience to anyone until it was over and they sought some sort of professional help or simply left. Another quarter spoke to family members after they had left the relationships. A quarter spoke to persons from local organisations – women neighbourhood and church leaders – during the period of the violence. The remaining quarter reported the abuse to the police, with one woman withdrawing the case. In spite of the harm suffered, the respondent reported withdrawing the case because she felt sorry for her partner, the perpetrator of her abuse.

In sum, a contributor in a FGD stated that not reporting VAW and not seeing reported cases through, for whatever reason, facilitated its continuation:

It is because we do not report, and another thing, we report and withdraw cases and that makes the [police] not to take us serious as women. The mentality that the police will not do anything [should not prevent us from reporting]...you would rather go there and see whether they will assist you or not; at times it is because girls give out too much love...Abuse will not stop as long as women continue withdrawing cases...¹⁶⁶

^{165.} FGD 7, Ingonyameni, 35+ year olds.

^{166.} FGD 8, Diepsloot, 20–27 year olds.



Opportunity costs of breaking the silence about VAW

There are many calls for women to speak out and to break the silence when confronted with abuse/VAW. While this is good and significantly aids the fight against VAW, the question that women use to evaluate and decide whether to keep silent or report cases hinges on the aftermath of speaking out. As established in the literature, issues of inadequate services in many areas, particularly rural areas, and funding for CSOs suggest that women do not get the help they need.

Further, regarding responses to calls to participate in awareness campaigns and VAW information sessions, women often have to weigh this against the more pressing issue of economics. In FGDs that sought to assess how well the women themselves got information, and their views on how people in their communities were informed about VAW, it came out strongly that taking part in activities of apparent economic importance were viewed as more important than attending VAW awareness information sessions.

[There are advertisements concerning] meetings but instead of attending some will [rather go] to others...relating to seeds, food parcel may you please send me message in catering time.¹⁶⁷

Inadequacies in and mistrust of support systems

There exists a perception that very little justice is ever gained when cases are reported to the police and to the courts. The police were particularly noted as the problem in such perceptions, with allegations of corruption, discrimination and slothfulness. The inadequacies of support systems and intervention programmes in general, including the operation of shelters and the enforcement of protective orders, are well documented in the VAW literature relating to South Africa.

And the other thing is that government officials have a problems of having...pride. First they just look at who you are, what you are wearing, [whether] you have money or not, [whether you are] educated or not and your social status, before they can help you.¹⁶⁸

...even the Community Police Forum in Diepsloot are not doing anything. It's like they are not present at all, it doesn't exist. *Ukuhlupheka* [suffering] is another cause women are scared to be left in the open without anyone to support them if they report their partners...¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷. FGD 1, Phokwane, 35+ year olds

¹⁶⁸. FGD 8, Diepsloot, 20–27 year olds.

¹⁶⁹. Ibid.



Issues raised concerning psychosocial and health support offered to survivors of VAW were related to the number of professional frontliners. Reliance on a volunteer workforce may be serving as a disincentive to some women attaining VAW care and support. Lindiwe's narrative (Case 3) of how a volunteer counsellor's attitude dissuaded her from undertaking the necessary support, thus slowing her recovery process, has already been noted. Additionally, VAW sensitisation programmes are frequently inadequate and sometimes people do not know where to go to seek help.

STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME THE PERSISTENCE OF VAW

Based on their understandings of VAW, this section focuses on women's perspectives and on strategies to tackle VAW in South Africa. The women's opinions about what needs to be done were largely informed by their understanding of VAW in the context of gender relations. Although they emphasised the state's and state agencies' responsibility to ensure the eradication of VAW from society, they also acknowledged their own responsibility as well as that of non-state actors in the efforts to eradicate VAW.

Address structural barriers to women's access to economic opportunities

Women reported lack of financial resources as a central barrier to leaving an abusive partner. Separation from an abusive partner requires women to have access to adequate financial resources and support. Women who are economically dependent on their abusive partners find it difficult to end the relationship and instead are more likely to tolerate abuse for longer. It therefore follows that women's increased access to economic opportunities, as well as maintaining employment, are crucially important for women seeking to establish their independence from abusive partners.

Revamp public education and VAW campaigns

Debates and misunderstandings over the conceptualisations of VAW highlight how critical a nuanced understanding of this phenomenon is for developing effective strategies to address it. The women in this study recognised that awareness creation and sensitisation efforts are crucial in the efforts against VAW in South Africa. The importance of awareness-raising efforts is understood in the sense that these efforts enhance further understanding of the dynamics of VAW and the intervention programmes available, but they also serve as rallying point for action against VAW. Though the women acknowledged the already existing state and non-state campaigns, they suggested that these campaigns should be given facelifts to include dialogues; workshops to educate both men and women; multiple media engagements, including billboards, television, radio and print media; and the distribution of pamphlets and charts in public spaces, including taverns and schools. There were also suggestions, particularly from the younger women's groups, to employ frequent marches.

In other words, they suggest a 'militarisation of VAW campaigns' – a constant bombardment of the public with sensitisation spectacles that are not only limited to when there is sensational VAW news in the media. In this regard, the women expressed more hope in the agency of non-state actors and organisations to ensure this.

Get a loudspeaker and just spread the message about VAW, hire a stage and send the message, take the message to the people...sing and march...¹⁷⁰

We must promote 16 days of activism, make it a daily thing – let's have marches in communities to educate everyone about violence, show it on television every day. We

¹⁷⁰. FGD 8, Diepsloot, 20–27 year olds.



need more organisations like Sonke Gender Justice that teaches men to view women as their equal counterparts.¹⁷¹

...there is nothing more that can be done to resolve this issue of VAW, only the workshops and meetings that will bring awareness to the community. Even bring the counsellors to counsel those who have such problems and initiate a programmes that would run each and every month for women, something like support groups. So that even those who are not aware that they are suffering from VAW would be taught on how do you see that you are being abused...in those workshops something positive could come out...women can initiate some programmes that would empower others.¹⁷²

In sum, the women pointed to advocacy and awareness campaigns as practical strategies to get information on VAW across and to encourage social re/learning. In this regard, they advocated targeting the general public, women particularly, as well as children and adolescents, with information about what VAW is, the support services available and the need to combat it.

LGBTI dimension

Efforts against VAW require a holistic approach to succeed. All the various dimensions, including other development-related issues like HIV and AIDS, must be accounted for. Of particular interest to this study is the LGBTI aspect of VAW sensitisation efforts.

...education plays a very vital role in a person's life, so if you [are] not educated there are some things that you wouldn't understand and we [are] very stubborn, people who are uneducated are very stubborn about something if they don't want to understand, they don't understand, so education plays a very vital role in a person's life...Because people are very naïve about gayism, trans gender...¹⁷³

Engaging men and boys in VAW interventions

Some of the women, particularly the younger women, had knowledge of contemporary discourses of VAW that point to the inclusion of men in the fight against VAW. They echoed that neglecting men in the fight against VAW in South Africa could explain its persistence. However, the women stressed not just including men, but also how this inclusion must be carried out – not only in awareness campaigns but also in terms of support services and in research into VAW. Educational and rehabilitation workshops were suggested to help men, particularly perpetrators of VAW, to deal

¹⁷¹. Ibid.

¹⁷². FGD 7, Ingonyameni, 35+ year olds.

¹⁷³. Participant 6, life history, 27 year old.



Rehabilitation and support services

Respondents highlighted the need to have support groups for both men and women, decrying the tendency for VAW support/help services to focus on women only. They thought the men needed to be given information on what they need to do to stop violating women, be educated on the rights of women as well as obtain help for their own psychosocial issues that encourage VAW. This was recognised as a means to curb the vicious cycle of VAW in South Africa. They felt that even the smallest progress in this regard should not be overlooked. In targeting men generally, and perpetrators of VAW in particular, the women suggested counselling and encouraging men to speak about anger issues, their insecurities and why they abuse women, and to deliberate on how these insecurities can be overcome.

...the perpetrators...men...need to be called and given awareness about the issue of VAW because it won't help us if we call women alone for these things. As we are Community Care Givers we already know the places that are affected by the issue of VAW that could be very easy for us to collect them together. But the biggest problem, even though these men and women are called for the awareness, they go back home and start from the beginning again do this VAW .But what I think is most important is that even the perpetrators themselves need to have some workshops like these and be given awareness, so that they will know where they go wrong. Even if only one person from them get the message and change his ways, at least that could make a difference...it shows that the message has found a place in the heart of a person. So by doing so, there is something that can change.¹⁷⁴

I think the government and many other institutions are always focused on helping the victims of abuse but never help the abusers because I think the abusers are the ones with the deepest problems and they are the ones that need to be really focused on.¹⁷⁵

Most of the times we focus on the problem not the solution; we have so many groups where women talk about violence but we hardly do that with men. We need to educate them as well. People are scared to get involved and help women because they think they will be injured or something.¹⁷⁶

^{174.} FGD 7, Ingonyameni, 35+ year olds.

^{175.} Participant 4, life history, 30 years old

^{176.} FGD 8, Diepsloot, 20–27 year olds.



Although such a strategy is deemed useful, it needs to be handled carefully because women and children are overwhelmingly the victims of violence and men are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of that violence, which is embedded in relations of social power whose balance still remains in favour of men. In a context where funding towards the VAW agenda appears to be dwindling, integrated sensitisation and awareness-creation efforts that see men as partners, rather than attempting to hand over the reins of the fight against VAW to them, are laudable. A focus on the younger generation of men must be considered.

Harsher punishments for perpetrators of VAW

Some of the suggestions that exemplified the anger and frustrations of some of these women came through as they suggested punishments ranging from full-term prison sentences, no parole, to the death penalty and castration.

In my view I think as a nation we must bring back the death penalty for all the men that rape and murder women...castrate them, in that way men will fear doing such an act if they know there are severe consequences for their actions/such a horrible act. (Researcher view)

Women: Undoing the culture of silence, and economic independence

...there are those women who stay under the abuse because they are depending on the perpetrator and they see [that] if they report them they will face a problem of who is going to continue providing for them, that is why they end up tolerating the abuse. And that gives the power to the perpetrator to continue with abuse because he sees that the victims have no power to report him because he is their breadwinner. What I think is that we as women have to learn to be independent, not to depend a lot on a man, there are a lot of things that a woman can do that can give her money to provide for her and her children; maybe they can make some beads and maybe cut woods and sell them in order for her to get money. So that even the man would see that we as women are independent, we don't want anything from them.¹⁷⁷

Pointing to resource control and its related power dynamics, the women suggested encouraging women's development of skills to further their financial independence or at least interdependence with men. Women are also to access available support services and help make these services better by giving feedback.

¹⁷⁷ Participant 5, life history, 30 years old



Breaking the silence

Respondents felt that survivors of VAW must speak out and stand up. They must report to the police, tribal authorities, area and block committees, etc. to be heard. However, the expectation of speaking out and reporting cases of VAW must be done within the context of available and competent support services accessible to women in all communities.

Opportunities in the socialisation of the next generation of women and men

The socialisation of children usually falls to women. The respondents suggested that women take advantage of this role to shape the minds of the younger generation. They also suggested focusing on raising their own confidence rather than seeking it from the outside through misguided expressions such as violence or dependencies.

Focus on relationships, and the LGBTI community

Identifying the problem of VAW as an issue occurring in gender relations, and as evident in the high prevalence of IPV against women, some of the women suggested creating family support groups within which couples can engage with organisations working against VAW, citing organisations such as People Opposing Women Abuse. Topping this agenda was the view that avenues need to be created to enable couples to go for counselling together.

As per the heteronormativity that usually characterises discussions on VAW, many of the strategies suggesting couple counselling and education focused on heterosexual relations. As data in this study indicate, however, VAW experiences occur within the LGBTI community as well, and need to be addressed. Efforts against VAW require a holistic approach to succeed.

Laws/policies, implementation and justice services

Some women suggested that new laws and policies were needed to fight against VAW as old ones appeared to be redundant and obsolete. In view of the literature and some of the findings established in this report, there is a grave need for a comprehensive plan that integrates all the different parts that work together in advancing efforts against VAW. In this regard, this report joins the voices calling for an NSP.

Lifecycle approach to addressing VAW

The various accounts by the women in this study point to the reality that VAW takes on many forms and can occur throughout a person's life. A number of the life history respondents recounted experiences of multiple episodes of violence that (in some instances) started from prenatal periods and continued through childhood to adulthood and old age. Interventions therefore need to be framed in ways that take this into account. VAW prevention agendas need to begin from childhood through to adulthood and beyond.

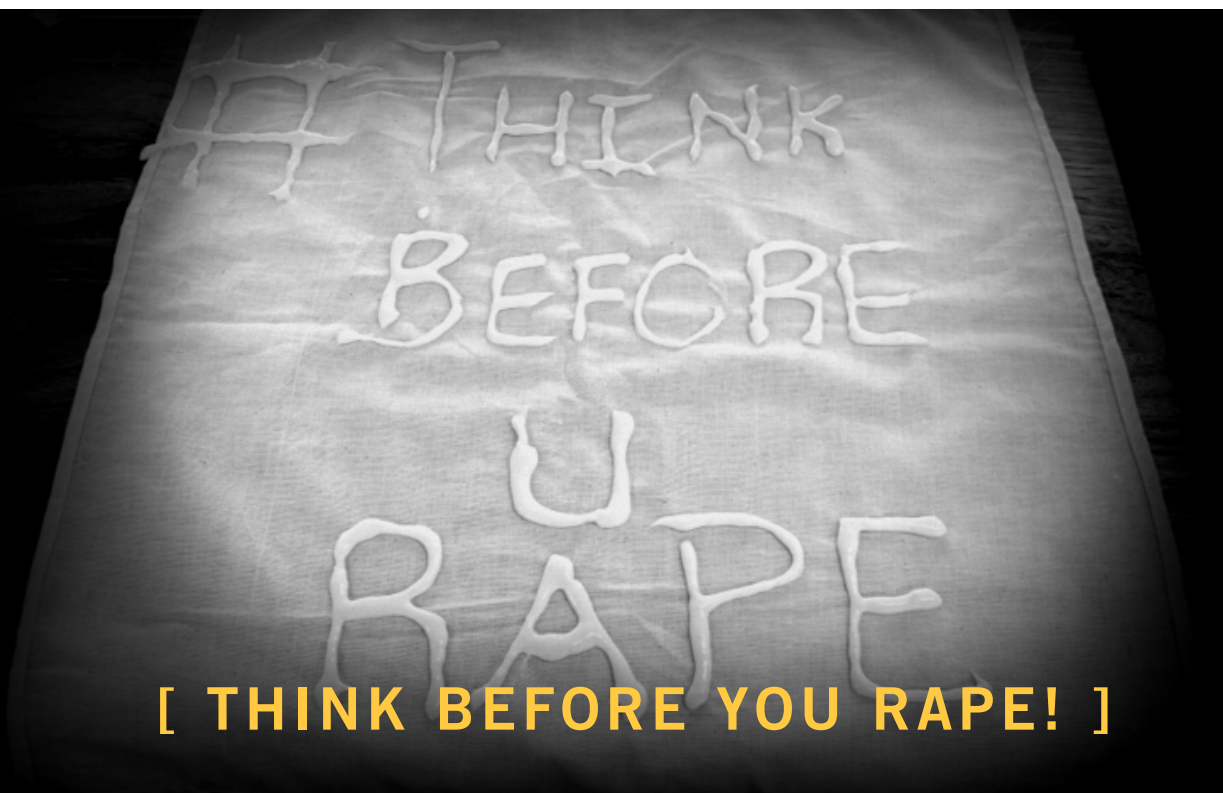
Awareness campaigns and VAW information and sensitisation efforts must therefore target specific social groups with campaigns tailored to them. Particularly, interventions need to be rooted in efforts to prevent the exposure of children and adolescents to negative role models and to promote skills development in those who have been exposed. This child and adolescent focus must go hand in hand with self-esteem-building objectives, and the humanity of all people. Additionally, these efforts must be creative and innovative. They must be promoted at the level of schools but also in communities and neighbourhoods. This strategy follows from concerns raised by some of the respondents of the study.

The other thing is that you cannot teach a child when he or she is old about how they supposed to behave or live their life. This needs to be done from the beginning of their early childhood so that they will know even they grow up. They need to love

^{174.} FGD 7, Ingonyameni, 35+ year olds.

^{175.} Participant 4, life history, 30 years old

^{176.} FGD 8, Diepsloot, 20–27 year olds.



and respect other people because everyone is reflecting an image of God, everyone deserves to be loved... ¹⁷⁸

Maybe if the parents would be advised that when you are raising a child you don't have to tell the child that he is stupid or ugly because that alone builds up something bad and negative into a child's mind and end up killing the child's pride and joy and builds up anger that would last for a long time...The small things we do or say to our children do have an impact in VAW. ¹⁷⁹

By making community meetings, and [the] Victim Empowerment must visit the schools to talk about VAW. ¹⁸⁰

^{178.} FGD 2, Dewesdorp, 18–30 year olds.

^{179.} Ibid.

^{180.} FGD 6, Phokwane, 35+ year old



RECOMMENDATIONS

VAW is a complex phenomenon with a web of associated and mediating factors which all contribute to its persistence in South Africa. As this study has shown, VAW should be understood as occurring due to an interaction of multiple factors at the individual, family, community and societal levels. Addressing it thus requires a multidimensional response that takes into account this complexity. The sociological explanations of VAW hint at the necessity of taking an approach that starts at the individual and works to the macro level. This includes taking into account the individual-level factors of women's socioeconomic realities (such as education, income and employment) as well as societal factors (e.g., patriarchal structures, social and economic policies) shaping the structure of women's lives. This section expounds on recommendations to government, policy makers and other relevant players in the VAW sector.

Need for a targeted focus on VAW:

Given the specific experiences and realities represented by the women we interviewed, this study is of the view that there needs to be a focused approach on VAW. While cognisant of the fact that gender violence affects different genders, statistics show that women are the ones most affected. Also, women's unique experiences of the intersecting dynamics of race, sexual orientation, class and gender make their experiences of harm that much more distinctive. A targeted and focused approach on VAW will allow us to understand the specific gendered harms and challenges women face, as well as to further unpack the diversities that exist within women and to develop relevant interventions. The ability to name a problem for what it is means being able to define how we view the problem and how it is experienced by different people within specific categories, and ultimately how it impacts on them. Also, by naming VAW for what it is, this opens up opportunities for the development of specific and relevant strategies and interventions to effectively address it.

Ensure an effective multisectoral model

The case studies of Liberia and Sierra Leone remind us of the value of national multisectoral strategies towards addressing VAW. The value of a national coordinated multisectoral response would be to minimise duplication and strengthen the effectiveness of interventions. This would also ensure the ring-fencing of funding within different sectors and across government departments, ensuring that funds intended to address VAW are used as such and not reallocated for other purposes.

Further questions need to be asked on whether the NCGBV needs to be revamped. Any reports related to reviews done to assess its potential utility need to be made public and discussed openly. Perhaps critical lessons also need to be learned from South Africa's national HIV and AIDS response, where strengthened collaboration and unity between the government, CSOs and the funding community resulted in notable positive outcomes. The urgent need to address the fragmentation and divisions within the women's rights movement cannot be stressed enough.

Strengthen implementation of existing laws

As indicated above, South Africa boasts a largely progressive national legislative framework to address VAW and thus does not necessarily need new laws. What needs to be strengthened is implementation and accountability for those laws already in existence. This will require financing and adequate resourcing of relevant laws and policies. Funding also needs to be committed towards the development and implementation of accountability mechanisms required to realise success. Further, the decriminalisation of sex work needs to be accelerated, as criminalisation puts sex workers (the majority of whom are women) in increased vulnerability.



Address challenges in the criminal justice system

One of the main reasons for the persistence of VAW in South Africa was attributed to challenges within the criminal justice system, particularly the police services. It is therefore crucial to address the systemic challenges within the police services in order to restore trust and confidence in the justice system.

Promote gender equality to prevent VAW

Given that VAW is largely based on gender-based power inequalities, it follows that strategies to address it must also be intrinsically linked to efforts towards achieving gender equality more generally. Prevention must start early in life, by educating and working with girls and boys to promote respectful relationships and gender equality. While public policies and interventions often overlook this stage of life, it is a critical time when values and norms around gender equality are forged. Arguably, it also appears to be easier to change the attitudes and behaviours of boys and younger men than of older adults, highlighting the need to target young people.

Improve social services for survivors of VAW

Government needs to expand investment in and institutionalisation of survivor services, including psychosocial care and safe housing facilities. These need to be provided in all communities, including rural and other remote areas. While the state holds the principal responsibility for the safety of survivors, women's organisations also play an important role in this regard. Women's rights organisations often have deep knowledge and extensive experience of offering support and services to survivors of VAW, and need to be provided with the necessary resources to sustain these efforts. Further, services must be based on survivors' needs and safety.

Increased women's economic empowerment

Women in this study reported the lack of financial resources as a central barrier to leaving an abusive partner. Separation from an abusive partner requires women to have access to adequate financial resources and support. Efforts to increase women's economic empowerment, and thus their bargaining power and ability to leave abusive relationships, must be accelerated. These include strengthening women's entrepreneurship and employment opportunities, promoting equal sharing of unpaid care work, encouraging universal access to education, ownership and control of land and other productive resources, and increased access to financing.

Improving services for intimate partner violence

Improving access to services for abused women is still a critical measure to prevent future violence. For example, declining rates of intimate femicide in the United States have been associated with an improvement in service provision, with virtually every community having access to emergency shelters for women and their children and domestic violence hotlines. This is coupled with survivor and perpetrator intervention programmes.¹⁸¹ Given the limited access to services in many rural communities and other remote areas, South Africa needs to work towards ensuring that such community-based resources are available in all communities.

Enhancing parenting practices

Childhood experiences such as neglectful and violent parenting practices influence the formation of violent masculinities. In addition, structural environmental factors like poverty influence parents' ability to be emotionally and physically available to their children. Changing parenting practices and strengthening families as a prevention strategy needs to be central in mediating the effects of adverse childhood experiences. The Children's Act and the Children's Amendment Bill of 2007 provide a framework aimed at strengthening families and communities to care for and protect children. It is within this framework that strategies to strengthen parenting practices need to be framed.

¹⁸¹. Cavanaugh, C. E., Messing, J. T., Petras, H., Fowler, B., La Flair, L., Kub, J., & Campbell, J. C. (2012). Patterns of violence against women: A latent class analysis. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 4(2), 169.



It is also critical, when thinking through parenting to recognize the wide network of influences on the rearing of children. Communities and institutions such as schools, faith communities and the media are critical in the parenting processes.

The role of the Media

Women's accounts and perceptions of VAW point out that violence is a learned behaviour. This learning takes place through various mediums. At present, the South African media is identified as being instrumental in shaping perceptions of VAW. Messages conveyed through the media often determine whether or not survivors speak out about their abuse, and the nature of support and assistance women receive from the public and the criminal justice system. Therefore, while the media may be influential in promoting negative ideas about VAW, it also has the power to be part of the solution. The media has the ability to distribute information more rapidly than any other entity in society, and the potential to drastically shape both individual and societal understandings. Hence, the South African media could use its position of prominence and influence to provide the public with more comprehensive accounts of VAW and positive messaging that seeks to alter individuals' perceptions of social norms and encourage desirable attitudes and behaviours.

The value of using an intersectional analysis

Given that no single factor can sufficiently explain the violence experienced by women in South Africa, it follows that it is in the intersections of oppression that violence occurs. This study highlights the added vulnerability of lesbians (or those assumed to be) and women in poor and less resourced communities as being particularly at risk. Thus, approaches and interventions to address VAW need to use an intersectional analysis in order to ensure that those who are most marginalised are reached. While different cultures define, perceive and approach VAW in a multitude of ways, the intersecting structural inequalities (as a result of class, race, sexual orientation, etc.) mean that entire groups of women may 'slip through the cracks' of law and norms.

VAW research and policy recommendations should account for the lived experiences of women

There is a critical need for VAW research to account for the lived experiences of women. Policy recommendations must reflect what women say they live, rather than the ideological perspectives that researchers think are accurate. There is a need for the continued centring of women's voices and experiences in order to improve the implementation methods and results experienced by the women themselves.

¹⁸². Usdin, S., Christofides, N., Malepe, L., & Maker, A. (2000). The value of advocacy in promoting social change: Implementing the new Domestic Violence Act in South Africa. *Reproductive Health Matters*, 8(16), 55–65.

¹⁸³. Ibid.

¹⁸⁴. Surette, R. (2007). *Media, Crime and Criminal Justice: Images, Realities and Policies*. Wadsworth, NY: Wadsworth Publishing.

¹⁸⁵. Sokoloff & Dupont, Domestic violence at the intersections.

¹⁸⁶. McCall, L. (2005). The complexity of intersectionality. *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society*, 30(3), 1771-1800, p. 1773).



CONCLUSION

Literature has established that significant gaps exist in the impact and effectiveness of VAW interventions in South Africa. This report has contributed to the filling of these gaps by adopting a research agenda that directly addresses the apparent impasse reached in the combat of VAW in South Africa, and centres women's perspectives and knowledge. Furthermore, the report has addressed methodological concerns raised in the literature. Uniquely, this research report has addressed a viewpoint on how high prevalence rates of VAW are related to women's understandings of VAW and women's roles in fighting against it. Apart from its potential towards theoretical development, this unique contribution to the literature holds promise for VAW intervention programmes. Additionally, the report responds to the literature gap identified in the paucity of VAW qualitative studies in South Africa.

The feminist methodology employed by the research allows for the construction of new knowledge as well as enables the production of social change. This study's perspective of VAW as a phenomenon beyond gender-based violence, and women's everyday experience, allows for a nuanced representation of women's experiences of VAW. Its focus on women as knowers and expert authorities of their own experiences brings to the fore voices and standpoints that are often excluded from knowledge production and policy making. Furthermore, the framing of women's narratives of VAW experiences as the object of analysis, not only exposes women's experiences of VAW but also helps us understand what they think is happening to them rather than what we think is happening to them. Survivors of VAW, generally have informed understandings of VAW. In spite of this, however, the perspective that there seems to be a very little way out of the VAW menace in South Africa, limits women's views on how they can contribute to making interventions effective and impactful as well as limits their imaginative capacity towards a world of no VAW.

By shifting the dynamics of knowledge production to centre the knowledge and meaning-making power of women who have experienced VAW in South Africa, this study, through its methodology, uncovers that gaps in implementation of VAW interventions relate to the capacity of policy targets to include women, and particularly survivors of VAW, to act independently of established social orders and expectations. The study confirms that women, as seemingly oppressed people, cannot afford to be powerless, and that this is both a challenge to and an opportunity for the effectiveness of VAW intervention programmes. The insight gained into why women may or may not particularly pay attention to VAW awareness campaigns, for instance, is significant for preventive and treatment interventions. This research thus, brings to the forefront another aspect of the implementation gap: the agency of policy targets, to inform policy makers, practitioners, activists and to be factored in intervention planning and implementation. Intervention strategies must recognise the active participation of women, and survivors of VAW particularly in addressing the problem of VAW, and encourage them to firmly define their roles in fighting VAW in South Africa.

Further, the study has shown that there are no quick and easy ways to explain the persistence of VAW in South Africa. In fact, no one explanation emerged as having unequivocal support from the women interviewed for this study. Instead, calls were made for integrative approaches that incorporated aspects of each. Again, each explanation contributed a valuable perspective, underlining the complexity of VAW and the absence of easy solutions. A combination of societal, structural and situational factors, as well as individual stressors, all work to fuel VAW.

Women's quality of life the world over and particularly in South Africa has long been observed to be curtailed by the balance of social power that is tilted in favour of males. The literature reviewed confirms that VAW is a significant



aspect of women's experiences where this can be felt. VAW is, in this case, an outcome of relationships of dominance and inequality – relationships shaped not simply by the personal choices of some men but by how we, as a society, construct social and economic relationships between women and men.

Socioeconomic uncertainties, often exacerbated by women's limited access to education, capital and resource control, as well as limited labour opportunities, compound this further. The persistence of VAW is a process and a conflict that oppresses women, and also expresses the ills of society. The evidence suggests that most survivors of VAW experience violence throughout their lives. VAW is closely interlinked with relations of power and feeds on and induces multiple vulnerabilities, including disability, economic dependence, identity-based inequalities, and the personal circumstances of women's and children's lives. Thus, attempts at tackling VAW in South Africa must consider these complexities. This suggests that the fight against VAW should not be looked at in isolation from other structural and social problems.

Furthermore, the richness of different perspectives underscores the need to avoid simplistic responses and to address VAW on many fronts, starting with individuals at risk, empowerment and advocacy with women survivors, preventative work with children as part of parenting and in schools, as well as on a broader level with public education. This should be coupled with the effective implementation of laws and policies, efforts to control the promotion of violence in the media and measures to overcome the structural barriers that prevent the participation of women as equal players in the economy and society in general.

South Africa does not necessarily need to propagate new laws and policies to address VAW, but rather needs to work towards ensuring the effective implementation of existing ones. A country's priorities are largely demonstrated through its budget, hence adequate investments needs to be made towards combating VAW. Further, a well-coordinated multisectoral national strategy bringing together the government, CSOs and the private sector is crucial to the development and implementation of a clear roadmap towards combating VAW in the country. The value of applying an intersectional analysis and a lifecycle approach to addressing VAW cannot be overstated.

Finally, it is important to recognise that the struggle to combat VAW is everyone's struggle. While cognisant of its primary role and responsibility, the government needs to work in collaboration with other key sectors and stakeholders in society. The country must address gender stereotypes around power that perpetuate and fuel a culture of violence in which discrimination and suppression of women are normalised and continue to flourish. Solutions towards addressing VAW must also take into account women's experiences and perspectives, as done in this study.



REFERENCES

- Abrahams, N., Mathews, S., Martin, L., Lombard, C., & Jewkes, R. (2013). Intimate partner femicide in South Africa in 1999 and 2009. *PLoS Med*, 10(4), e1001412. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1001412>
- Amaral, R. (2011, March 21). *Explaining Domestic Violence Using Feminist Theory*. Retrieved July 31, 2017, <https://knowledgeforgrowth.wordpress.com/2011/03/21/explaining-domestic-violence-using-feminist-theory/>
- Amnesty International. (n.d.). *Gender, Sexuality, & Identity*. Retrieved August 14, 2017, <http://www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/issues/women-s-rights/violence-against-women/violence-against-women-information>
- Angless, T., & Maconachie, M. (1996). Battered women: Problems and proposals. In L. Glanz, & A. Spiegel, *Violence and Family Life in Contemporary South Africa: Research and policy Issues* (pp.151–166). Pretoria, South Africa: Human Sciences Research Council.
- Baden, S., Hasim, S., & Meintjes, S. (1998). *Country Gender Profile: South Africa*. Brighton: BRIDGE (development - gender), Institute of Development Studies.
- Bograd, M. (1990). Why we need gender to understand human violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 5(1), 132–135.
- Bollen, S., Artz, L., Vetten, L., & Louw, A. (1999). *Violence against Women in Metropolitan South Africa: A Study on Impact and Service Delivery*. Monograph 41. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies.
- Cavanaugh, C. E., Messing, J. T., Petras, H., Fowler, B., La Flair, L., Kub, J., & Campbell, J. C. (2012). Patterns of violence against women: A latent class analysis. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 4(2), 169.
- CSVr (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation). (2016). *Mapping Local Gender-Based Violence Prevention and response Strategies in South Africa*. Cape Town: CSVr.
- CSVr. (2016). *Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in South Africa: A Brief Review*. Retrieved August 2017, <http://www.csvr.org.za/pdf/Gender%20Based%20Violence%20in%20South%20Africa%20-%20A%20Brief%20Review.pdf>
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in qualitative Research*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons.
- CGE (Commission for Gender Equality). (2012). *365 Days of Action to end Violence against Women and Children*. Commission for Gender Equality. Retrieved from http://pmg-assets.s3-website-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/docs/130320layout365_0.pdf
- Denney, L., & Ibrahim, A. F. (2012). *Violence against Women in Sierra Leone: How women Seek Redress*. Retrieved from <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/523ac7a94.pdf>



DSD (Department of Social Development). (2007). *Integrated victim Empowerment Policy (Fourth Draft)*. Pretoria. Retrieved from <http://www.justice.gov.za/VC/docs/policy/VEP%20POLICY%20Draft%20fEB%202005%20edited%20in%20May%202007.pdf>

DSD (Department of Social Development). (2014, November 14). *Media Statement. Department of social Development Gender Based Violence Command Centre Wins Another Award*. Retrieved June 15, 2017, http://www.dsd.gov.za/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=648&Itemid=106

DSD (Department of Social Development). (n.d.). *National Policy Guidelines for victim Empowerment*. Retrieved from <http://www.gautsafety.gpg.gov.za/Documents/vep-policy-guidelines.pdf>

Department of Social Development. (n.d.). *South African Integrated Programme of Action: Addressing Violence against Women and Children (2013–2018)*. DSD, South Africa. Retrieved from http://www.dsd.gov.za/index2.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=607&Itemid=39

DSD (Department of Social Development, South Africa). (2013, February 21). *Media Statement by the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Violence against Women and Children*. Retrieved from http://www.dsd.gov.za/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=457&Itemid=106

DSD (Department of Social Development, South Africa). (2013, May 27). *Opening Address by the Minister of social Development, Ms Bathabile Dlamini, on the Occasion of the South African Conference on orphans, Vulnerable Children and youth Affected by HIV/AIDS, ICC Durban, KZN Province*. Retrieved from http://www.dsd.gov.za/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=492&Itemid=82

Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities. (2013, November 6). *Progress Report on the National Council against Gender-Based Violence. Presentation to the Portfolio Committee by Minister Lulu Xingwana*. Retrieved April 18, 2017, https://www.google.ch/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=9&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwi71NXE9a3TAhULYIAKHdDDBzUQFghVMAG&url=http%3A%2F%2Fpmg-assets.s3-website-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com%2F131106progress.ppt&usg=AFQjCNH7riCeiCwR_6n3liStiUkhluBzxA&sig2=FF3S

Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities. (n.d.). *National Council against Gender-Based Violence Secretariat. 1st Quarter Report, 2012/2013 (April–June, 2012)*. Retrieved April 18, 2017, https://www.google.ch/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=10&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwi71NXE9a3TAhULYIAKHdDDBzUQFghbMAk&url=http%3A%2F%2Fpmg-assets.s3-website-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com%2F130911ncagbv.ppt&usg=AFQjCNEMYIROEQqjYjb1V2qWKe29_9bDJw&sig2=sx1yK

DeVault, M. L. (1999). *Liberating Method: Feminism and social Research*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Dey, K., Thorpe, J., Tilley, A., & Williams, J. (2011). *The Road to Justice: Victim Empowerment Legislation in South Africa*. Road Map Report. Retrieved from <http://media.withtank.com/8c92a4eae3/the-road-to-justice-research-report.pdf>

Ferraro, K. J., Pleck, E., Y. K., Bograd, M., & Caputi, J. (1990). Review essay: Culture, feminism, and male violence. *Social Justice*, 17(3), 41.

Fox, G. L. (2002). Economic distress and intimate violence: Testing family stress and resources theories. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64(3), 793–807. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2002.00793.x



Gadinabokao, K. V. (2016). *Shortcomings of the South African Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 in Comparative Perspective*. LLM dissertation. Pretoria: University of Pretoria. Retrieved from http://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/53127/Gadinabokao_Comparative_2016.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Gelles, R. J. (1985). Family violence. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 11, 347–367. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.11.080185.002023>

Gender Links. (n.d.). *South Africa Violence Prevention Model and Action Plan*. Retrieved May 26, 2017, Unicef.org: https://www.unicef.org/southafrica/SAF_resources_violenceprevmodel.pdf

Gender-Based Violence Interagency Taskforce, Republic of Liberia. (2006). *National Plan of Action for the Prevention and Management of Gender-Based Violence in Liberia (GBV-POA)*. Monrovia: Republic of Liberia.

Gqola, P. D. (2015). *Rape: A South African Nightmare*. Johannesburg: JM Books.

Goodson, I. F., & Sikes, P. J. (2001). *Life History Research in Educational Settings: Learning from Lives*. Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.

Government of South Africa. (2007, March 8). *365 Day National Action Plan to End Gender Violence*, 8 March 2007. Retrieved May 26, 2017, http://www.justice.gov.za/VC/docs/campaigns/2007_365actionplan.pdf

Gregg, M. R. (2014). *An Incomplete Transition? Explaining the Ongoing Prevalence of Violence against Women in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. Vancouver: School for International Studies, Simon Fraser University.

Jewkes, R., Levin, J., & Penn-Kekana, L. (2002). Risk factors for domestic violence: Findings from a South African cross-sectional study. *Social Science & Medicine*, 55(9), 1603–1617.

Kabeer, N. (1994). *Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought*. London: Verso.

Landis, D., & Stark, L. (2014). Examining promising practice: An integrated review of services for young survivors of sexual violence in Liberia. *Intervention*, 12(3), 430–441. Retrieved from http://www.interventionjournal.com/sites/default/files/Examining_promising_practice___an_integrated.11.pdf

Lawson, D. M. (2003). Incidence, explanations, and treatment of partner violence. *Journal of Counselling and Development*, 81, 19–32.

Liamputtong, P. (2010). *Focus Group Methodology: Introduction and History*. Sage Publications. Retrieved from https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/39360_978_1_84787_909_7.pdf

Mabena, S. (2016, November 29). *Government Unveils National Emergency Response Unit for Victims of Gender-Based Violence*. Retrieved June 15, 2017, <http://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2016/11/29/Government-unveils-national-emergency-response-unit-for-victims-of-gender-based-violence>

¹ McCall, L. (2005). The complexity of intersectionality. *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society*, 30(3), 1771-1.



Mukhopadhyay, M. (2004). Mainstreaming gender or 'streaming' gender away: Feminists marooned in the development business. *IDS bulletin*, 35(4), 95–103.

Namy, S., Carlson, C., Kathleen O'Hara, Nakuti, J., Bukuluk, P., Lwanyaaga, J., . . . Michau, L. (2017). Towards a feminist understanding of intersecting violence against women and children in the family. *Social Science & Medicine*, 184, 40–48. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.04.042>

Nduna, M., & Nene, N. (2014). *Review and Analysis of South Africa's Implementation of 365 Days National Action Plan*. Johannesburg: Department of Psychology, University of Witwatersrand and Ifalezwe Learning Express.

Patil, V. (2013). From patriarchy to intersectionality: A transnational feminist assessment of how far we've really come. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 38(4), 847–867.

Pithey, B., & Smythe, D. (2011). *Sexual Offences Commentary*. Juta. Retrieved from <https://juta.co.za/academic/products/sexual-offences-commentary-online>

Renzetti, C. M. (1992). *Violent Betrayal: Partner Abuse in Lesbian Relationships*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Sokoloff, N. J., & Dupont, I. (2005). Domestic violence at the intersections of race, class, and gender. *Violence against Women*, 11(1), 38–64. doi: 10.1177/1077801204271476

Sonke Gender Justice. (2015, November 25). *No Word from the National Council on Gender-Based Violence*. Retrieved from <http://www.genderjustice.org.za/news-item/no-word-from-the-national-council-on-gender-based-violence/>

Sonke Gender Justice. (n.d.). *Stop Gender Violence: A National Campaign*. Retrieved March 24, 2017, <http://www.genderjustice.org.za/policy-development-advocacy/stop-gender-violence-national-campaign/>

South African Government News Agency. (2012, August 22). *Gender-Based Violence Council Set for Launch*. Retrieved August 2017, <http://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/gender-based-violence-council-set-launch>

SAPS (South African Police Service). (n.d.). *Victim Empowerment Service in the South African Police Service*. Retrieved from https://www.saps.gov.za/resource_centre/women_children/amended_victim_empo_service.pdf

Statistics South Africa. (2016). *South Africa Demographic and Health Survey 2016*. Retrieved August 2017, <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report%2003-00-09/Report%2003-00-092016.pdf>

Surette, R. (2007). *Media, Crime and Criminal Justice: Images, Realities and Policies*. Wadsworth, NY: Wadsworth Publishing.

United Nations Mission in Liberia. (2016). *Addressing Impunity for Rape in Liberia*. UNMIL. Retrieved from https://www.google.ch/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwi7IbA2MvVAhUHWxoKHRmhDLwQFggoMAA&url=https%3A52F52Funmil.unmissions.org52Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fimpunity_report_-_binding.pdf&usg=AFQjCNH_JLVaOYOF_Eqj92oRRcESogG

Usdin, S., Christofides, N., Malepe, L., & Maker, A. (2000). The value of advocacy in promoting social change: Implementing the new Domestic Violence Act in South Africa. *Reproductive Health Matters*, 8(16), 55–65



Vetten, L. (2005). *Addressing Domestic Violence in South Africa: Reflections on Strategy and Practice*. Cape Town: CSV. Retrieved from http://www.staidenshomeschool.com/files/addressing_domestic_violence_in_sa.pdf

Wilkinson, S (1998). Focus groups in feminist research: Power, interaction, and the co-construction of meaning, *Women's Studies International Forum*, 21(1), 111–125.

Women Demand Dignity (WDD). (2015, November 9). *365 Days of Violence against Women – Because We Can!* Retrieved from <https://womendemanddignity.wordpress.com/2015/11/09/365-days-of-violence-against-women-because-we-can/#comments>



OXFAM
South Africa



CSV
Centre for the Study of
Violence and Reconciliation