

Reflections on Women's Experiences of Lamentation in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Marriages in Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa



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ABSTRACT

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a global crisis, with South Africa emerging as one of the countries most affected by various forms of GBV. This issue transcends social, cultural, racial, and educational boundaries, with women being the most vulnerable victims. For years, GBV has severely infringed on women's rights. The purpose of this study was to explore the reasons why women remain in abusive marriages. The study adopted an exploratory and qualitative approach, using an interview schedule to collect participant data. A combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods was used to select participants. The findings revealed that many women continue to stay in abusive relationships even after enduring prolonged periods of violence. The study recommended empowering women to leave these toxic relationships to rebuild their self-esteem, worth, and confidence. Additionally, the research suggested that raising awareness among men about the impact of GBV could help address and reduce abusive behaviors. Finally, the study proposes that the government consider revising its policies and intervention strategies to combat GBV in South Africa. The study might help the government revise its policies, particularly on intervention strategies, to reduce GBV in South Africa. The study may also help the government and stakeholders determine ways of helping women in GBV relationships effectively. Universities teaching Psychology might gain knowledge about the empirical factors that contribute to GBV against women.

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INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the most pressing social issues worldwide. Approximately, one in three women experiencing physical or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence at some point in their lives.¹ GBV is a global pandemic that impacts individuals' mental health across all areas of life, regardless of their social or economic status or environment.² In South Africa, violence—particularly GBV—has become an increasingly severe issue in the post-apartheid era.³

¹ World Health Organization, "Violence against Women," 2021, accessed June 4, 2022, <https://www.who.int/news-room/factsheets/detail/violence-against-women>.

² Tsoaledi Thobejane, "Effects of Gender-Based Violence Towards Young Females: The Case of Vhufuli Village in Thohoyandou, Limpopo Province-South Africa," *Journal of Reviews on Global Economics* 8 (2019): 53–62.

³ Karen Graaff and Lindy Heinecken, "Masculinities and Gender-Based Violence in South Africa: A Study of a Masculinities-Focused Intervention Programme," *Development Southern Africa* 34, no. 5 (2017): 622–34.

Klazinga and Muller define GBV as physical, sexual, and emotional harm, including spousal rape, sexual violence, threats, coercion, and the arbitrary deprivation of an individual's freedom, regardless of whether it occurs in public or private spaces.⁴ While men can also be victims of GBV, women are disproportionately affected. GBV negatively impacts public health, economic stability, and safety, and it violates human rights, resulting in significant social, political, and civic consequences for victims, communities, and society at large. South Africa is recognized as one of the countries with the highest rates of GBV globally.⁵

The South African Domestic Violence Act (1998) acknowledges domestic violence as a serious social issue, highlighting the high prevalence of this violence within the country.⁶ The victims of GBV are among the most vulnerable members of society, with domestic violence manifesting itself in various forms in different types of domestic relationships. Despite numerous interventions designed to address and eliminate GBV, the available remedies have often been shown to be ineffective. Efforts to combat GBV continue to raise concerns, especially as many women remain trapped in abusive relationships. GBV in South Africa is further compounded by cultural norms and gender-based customs and traditions that condone and perpetuate abusive practices.⁷

According to the South African Police Service (SAPS), GBV encompasses criminal acts, such as rape, sexual assault, incest, bestiality, statutory rape, and the sexual grooming of children.⁸ Women face numerous barriers to reporting GBV, including fear of stigma and shame, financial constraints, lack of awareness of available services, fear of retaliation, inadequate law enforcement response, and societal attitudes that normalize violence as a part of life.⁹ The prevalence of GBV in South Africa is a widespread and deeply entrenched issue that affects nearly every facet of life. Research shows that GBV can severely impact the physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health, of women and may also increase their vulnerability to HIV in certain settings.¹⁰ Although women remain the primary victims of GBV, studies also show that men can experience it as well.¹¹ In general, 30% of women are estimated to have suffered some form of GBV since the age of 15. This study explored why married women continue to remain in abusive marriages. This paper provides a unique perspective on the effects of GBV, even in the face of various interventions. By examining the reasons women stay in abusive relationships despite years of abuse, this narrative aims to deepen understanding of GBV and shed light on the complex factors that contribute to its persistence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Socio-economic Factors

Klassen argues that socioeconomic factors play a significant role in GBV.¹² Unemployed women were found to be at greater risk of emotional and financial abuse because men often lack financial transparency when women do not contribute to household income.¹³ This is supported by Rainer et al. and Ghosh and Ghosh, who stated that unemployment leads to financial dependence on a partner, which

⁴ L. Klazinga, L. Artz, and A. Müller, "Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and HIV in South Africa: An HIV Facility-Based Study," *South African Medical Journal* 110, no. 5 (2020): 377–81.

⁵ Folasayo Enoch Olalere, "Gender-Based Violence: An Exploration of Its Forms, Concepts and Causes in South Africa," *Proceedings–Kuala Lumpur International Communication, Education, Language and Social Sciences*, 2022, 75–84.

⁶ Siyabonga Sibisi, "The Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998: Offences, Defences, Economic Abuse, Imminent Harm and the Crime of Domestic Abuse - What Is New?," *Obiter* 44, no. 2 (July 5, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.17159/obiter.v44i2.14322>.

⁷ Olalere, "Gender-Based Violence: An Exploration of Its Forms, Concepts and Causes in South Africa."

⁸ Given Mutinta, "Gender-Based Violence among Female Students and Implications for Health Intervention Programmes in Public Universities in Eastern Cape, South Africa," *Cogent Social Sciences* 8, no. 1 (2022): 2079212.

⁹ Muluken Dessalegn Muluneh et al., "Gender Based Violence against Women in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Cross-Sectional Studies," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 17, no. 3 (2020): 903.

¹⁰ Andrew Enaifoghe et al., "The Prevalence of Gender-Based Violence against Women in South Africa: A Call for Action," *African Journal of Gender, Society & Development* 10, no. 1 (2021): 117.

¹¹ Olalere, "Gender-Based Violence: An Exploration of Its Forms, Concepts and Causes in South Africa."

¹² Robert M Klassen and Ming Ming Chiu, "Effects on Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Job Satisfaction: Teacher Gender, Years of Experience, and Job Stress.," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 102, no. 3 (2010): 741.

¹³ Muluken Dessalegn Muluneh et al., "A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Associated Factors of Gender-Based Violence against Women in Sub-Saharan Africa," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, no. 9 (2021): 4407.

may trigger abusive behavior from husbands with violent tendencies.¹⁴ Furthermore, Masiko and Xinwa suggest that women's economic vulnerability is both a cause and a catalyst for GBV.¹⁵

Culture

Pillay highlights that culture becomes a significant risk factor for GBV, as beliefs, norms, and customs can create an environment that facilitates violence.¹⁶ This aligns with research by Sarfraz, Sarfraz, Sarfraz, & Qarnain, who confirmed that 70% to 90% of married women have experienced abuse from their spouses at some point in their lives.¹⁷ Women's subordinate status places them in vulnerable positions, making them more susceptible to emotional and sexual abuse. As the head of the family, a man's authority often dominates, leading to the insult and undermining of women. This is supported by Wood, Wilson, & Jacobs and Cornelius, who assert that cultural hierarchies have historically granted men greater cultural status, reinforcing the notion that men have the right to punish their wives.¹⁸ Muguti and Mlambo confirmed that the payment of bride price is a contextual factor associated with gender-based violence.¹⁹ Moono further supports this, revealing that paying lobola is viewed as purchasing a wife, making her the husband's property. Lobola grants the man the power to treat his wife as he pleases, including subjecting her to sexual and other forms of abuse.²⁰ The practice of bride price has also been linked to an increase in intimate partner violence.²¹

Alcohol Abuse

Ostadtaghizadeh, Azarei, Saniee, and Rasouli and Shiva, Shukla, and Chandra state that acute alcohol intoxication and heavy alcohol consumption are strong predictors of intimate partner violence (IPV) in any society.²² This is further supported by Zinyemba and Hlongwana.²³ Additionally, poverty and unemployment were identified as factors contributing to the frustration men experience. This can lead to an increase in GBV, particularly when men are unable to provide for their families. Kaithuru supports this, noting that alcohol-related violence tends to be more verbal initially, followed by physical abuse directed at women.²⁴ These findings are consistent with a rapid review by Akamike, Uneke, Uro-Chukwu., Okedo-Alex, and Chukwu, which confirms that substance abuse by a partner and lower socioeconomic status are key predictors of GBV.²⁵

Men's Infidelity

An important aspect of relational conflict is men's infidelity and verbal disagreements, which often contribute to physical and emotional abuse, particularly when women question their husbands about

¹⁴ Ross Anderson et al., "Measuring the Cost of Cybercrime," *The Economics of Information Security and Privacy*, 2013, 265–300; Asmita Ghosh and Ranjini Ghosh, "The Shadow Pandemic: Gender Violence Surges as Unemployment Peaks," *Jogamaya Devi College Interdisciplinary Journal* 2 (2022): 1–12.

¹⁵ Nomathamsanqa Masiko and Selby Xinwa, "Substance Abuse in South Africa, Its Linkages with Gender Based Violence and Urban Violence," 2017.

¹⁶ Miranda N Pillay, "The Church, Gender and AIDS-What's Wrong with Patriarchy?," *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 43, no. 3 (2015): 558–67.

¹⁷ Azza Sarfraz et al., "Gender-Based Violence in Pakistan and Public Health Measures: A Call to Action," *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 100, no. 7 (2022): 462.

¹⁸ Elizabeth A Wood, Karina E Wilson, and K D Jacobs, "Exploring the Differences between Men's and Women's Perceptions of Gender-Based Violence in Rural Tajikistan: A Qualitative Study," *BMC Women's Health* 21 (2021): 1–15; Elma Cornelius, "Only Real Men Respect Women: The Use of Scripture in the Violence against Women Pandemic," *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 95, no. 1 (2013): 173–90.

¹⁹ Tasara Muguti and Nyasha Mlambo, "'I Paid Lobola!' The Interface between Bride Price and Domestic Violence," *Negotiating Patriarchy and Gender in Africa: Discourses, Practices, and Policies*, 2021, 57–72.

²⁰ Patience Muumba Moono, "Lobola and Gender Based Violence: A Case of Married Women in Lusaka's Kamanga Compound" (The University of Zambia, 2019).

²¹ Eve M Brank, Lori A Hoetger, and Katherine P Hazen, "Bullying," *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 8, no. 1 (2012): 213–30; Rebecca Eve Rolfé, "On the World Bank as an Agent of Economic Imperialism" (Halifax, NS: Saint Mary's University, 2008).

²² Abbas Ostadtaghizadeh et al., "Gender-Based Violence against Women during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Recommendations for Future," *BMC Women's Health* 23, no. 1 (2023): 219; Lakshmi Shiva, Lekhansh Shukla, and Prabha S Chandra, "Alcohol Use and Gender-Based Violence," *Current Addiction Reports* 8 (2021): 71–80.

²³ Kudakwashe Gracious Zinyemba and Khumbulani Hlongwana, "Men's Conceptualization of Gender-Based Violence Directed to Women in Alexandra Township, Johannesburg, South Africa," *BMC Public Health* 22, no. 1 (2022): 2235.

²⁴ Pamela R N Kaithuru, "Alcoholism Fuels Gender-Based Violence in the Family," *Psychology* 5, no. 10 (2015): 604–11.

²⁵ Ifeyinwa C Akamike et al., "Predictors and Facilitators of Gender-Based Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Rapid Review," *Journal of Global Health Reports* 3 (2019): e2019076.

their extramarital affairs. This aligns with a rapid review by Akamike, Uneke, Uro-Chukwu, Okedo-Alex, and Chukwu, which confirms that promiscuous behavior by a partner perpetuates GBV.²⁶ Additionally, DeRose, Johnson, Wang, and Salazar-Arango found that the belief that a man is the head of the household increases the risk of intimate partner violence (IPV) and infidelity within relationships.²⁷

Fear of Stigma

Thomas et al., Murvartian, Saavedra-Macías and Infanti, who indicated that stigma among women in GBV is amplified by cultural norms.²⁸ The decision to stay is strongly influenced by the stigma surrounding the act of leaving a matrimonial home.

Another critical issue is that South Africa remains a patriarchal society with a history marked by inequality in all areas of life. The exclusion and subordination of women in all sectors and households have resulted in deeply entrenched abuses. For example, the belief that “*nwanuna I nhloko ya muti*” (a man is the head of the family) has subjected many women to various forms of abuse. Nyawo concurred that GBV among women is incubated by patriarchy.²⁹ However, Refikal, indicated that patriarchy, which is the oppression of women and should not be used as a culture to be inherited, still exists and is justified in society, so that there is a gender gap between men and women.³⁰ On the other hand, Setyorini, S., Rahayu, Septiana, & Rahayu, support that these barriers to patriarchy exacerbate injustice and undermine efforts to improve women’s quality of life.³¹ As a result, despite the violence women face in their marriages, they often struggle to leave or divorce their husbands.

Fear of Family Disintegration

Mutambo and Perez-Vazquez & Bonilla-Campos indicate that while women seek help for GBV, they often hesitate to leave their husbands and families due to the fear of disrupting and breaking up their families.³² Women often stay in abusive marriages because they fear disappointing their family members by leaving. Furthermore, many women remain in these marriages for the sake of their children, concerned that their departure may harm them. They worry that a new partner may not love their children as their biological father does, or that their children may not receive proper care. In toxic relationships, women frequently endure abuse for the sake of their children, particularly when custody battles are at stake.³³

Fear of the Unknown

Moussion-Esteve and McCole noted that women often stay in abusive relationships due to fear of change and the unknown.³⁴ They are anxious about what life would be like without their spouses and feel a sense of obligation to their partners, making it difficult to determine whether leaving is the right decision. Additionally, many women stay because they love their husbands and remember times when their

²⁶ Akamike et al., “Predictors and Facilitators of Gender-Based Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Rapid Review.”

²⁷ Laurie F DeRose et al., “Couple Religiosity, Male Headship, Intimate Partner Violence, and Infidelity,” *Review of Religious Research* 63, no. 4 (2021): 607–27.

²⁸ Dorothy Thomas et al., “‘Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and HIV, They Are like Sister and Brother’: Barriers and Facilitators to GBV Screening and Referral in Public HIV Treatment Settings in Uganda,” *BMC Health Services Research* 23, no. 1 (2023): 1383; Lara Murvartian, Francisco Javier Saavedra-Macias, and Jennifer J Infanti, “Public Stigma toward Women Victims of Intimate Partner Violence: A Systematic Review,” *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 73 (2023): 101877.

²⁹ S. Nyawo, “‘Women’s Sexuality Captured’: Another Form of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in the Swati Patriarchal Space,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Violence in Africa* (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024), 893–908.

³⁰ Fanny Refikal, “Influences of Patriarchal Culture and Femicide as a Form of Gender-Based Violence against Women from Human Rights Perspective,” *Salasika* 7, no. 1 (2024): 63–78.

³¹ Setyorini Setyorini et al., “Defying the Odds: Can Women Truly Thrive in a Patriarchal World?,” *Journal of Public Health* 46, no. 4 (2024): e711–12.

³² Muchinga Mutambo, “Investigating Social-Cultural Factors Contributing to Low Reporting Levels of Gender-Based Violence Cases,” *Journal of Preventive and Rehabilitative Medicine* 5, no. 2 (2023): 94–109; Susana Perez-Vazquez and Amparo Bonilla-Campos, “Women Refugee’s Perceptions, Experiences and Coping Mechanisms in Situations of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV): A Metasynthesis,” *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 24, no. 5 (2023): 3313–27.

³³ Mutambo, “Investigating Social-Cultural Factors Contributing to Low Reporting Levels of Gender-Based Violence Cases.”

³⁴ Adeline Moussion-Esteve, “Domestic Fear beyond Traumatic Terror: Understanding Mothers’ Everyday Experiences of Recurring Fear in the Context of Domestic Violence,” *Emotions and Society* 4, no. 3 (2022): 341–57; T. McCole, “3 Reasons Why We Stay in Unhappy Marriages,” 2021, <https://www.divorce.mag.com>.

husbands treated them well. They also fear that leaving would result in personal suffering, as they feel unable to care for themselves independently. Over time, women become accustomed to their husbands' behavior, even accepting the abuse. Their desire to maintain love and affection may be so strong that they endure the mistreatment in hopes of showing or receiving love.³⁵

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This study employed a qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive design, which Burns and Grove describe as a systematic, subjective approach to research.³⁶ The researcher utilised this method to gain in-depth insights into the factors that contribute to women's decision to remain in GBV marriages. As outlined by Polit and Beck this approach is particularly useful for exploring complex, nuanced experiences and understanding the underlying reasons behind specific behaviors or phenomena.³⁷ Using this design, the study aimed to uncover the various personal, social, and cultural factors that influence women's choices in the context of abusive relationships.

Study Setting

The study was conducted in Munghonghoma village, located in the Mopani District of Limpopo Province, South Africa. This village was chosen because it was expected that the women in this community would provide a range of perspectives on the topic, given their varying ages and lengths of marriage. The target population consisted of married women who had experienced abuse within their marriages but chose to remain in those relationships.

Study Participants

A total of eight women, all married for over five years and having experienced or endured GBV in their marriages, were selected for the study. Purposive sampling was employed to specifically choose women currently in abusive relationships. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews, which aimed to obtain detailed insights into the experiences of GBV among married women. Participants were selected based on their willingness to participate in the study and their ability to provide informed consent. Participation was entirely voluntary and no individual was coerced into participating in the research.

Eligibility

Women were eligible to participate if they were 18 years or older, married, and had experienced abuse within their marriages. Women who had abusive relationships but were not married excluded from the study.

Data Collection

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used to obtain in-depth insights from the participants. To facilitate open and comfortable communication, the interviews were conducted in Xitsonga, the participants' native language.³⁸ Additionally, field notes were taken during the interviews to record non-verbal cues, such as gestures, facial expressions, and body language, which are crucial for understanding the complete context of participants' responses.³⁹ The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The informed consent to participate has been obtained. Written consent was signed by the participants. Following transcription, a language expert translated the data into English to ensure accuracy. Data saturation was achieved after the sixth interview, but two more participants were interviewed to confirm saturation and validate the consistency of the findings.

³⁵ Mccole, "3 Reasons Why We Stay in Unhappy Marriages."

³⁶ N. Burns and S. Grove, *The Practice of Nursing Research: Conduct, Critique and Utilization* (Philadelphia: WB Saunders, 1997).

³⁷ D. F. Polit and C. T. Beck, *Nursing Research*, 10th ed. (Wolters Kluwer, 2017).

³⁸ Emily Weyant, "Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches: By John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell" (Taylor & Francis, 2022).

³⁹ Julia Phillippi and Jana Lauderdale, "A Guide to Field Notes for Qualitative Research: Context and Conversation," *Qualitative Health Research* 28, no. 3 (2018): 381–88.

Measures to ensure Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness criteria established by Polit and Beck were applied to ensure the study's reliability and validity.⁴⁰ Credibility was established through member check and prolonged engagement with the participants.⁴¹ The researcher dedicated considerable time during the interviews to thoroughly understand the setting and context, verify the accuracy of the information provided, establish trust, and collect rich, meaningful data. Extended interactions with participants were maintained until data saturation was achieved, ensuring that the findings accurately reflected the participants' experiences. To further enhance credibility, member checking and peer debriefing were incorporated.⁴²

Confirmability was ensured through the use of an audit trail, in which the entire data collection, analysis, and interpretation process was carefully documented to preserve authenticity.⁴³ The researcher's approach was transparent, allowing an objective evaluation of the data and its interpretations. The reliability was established by providing a comprehensive account of the study procedures.⁴⁴ A detailed description of the study's methods was included to clarify the research approach. To further ensure dependability, an inquiry audit was conducted, where supporting materials such as transcripts and audio recordings were reviewed by an independent qualitative research expert. The use of a voice recorder also helped ensure the authenticity of the data. Finally, transferability was facilitated by providing detailed descriptions of the research methodology, enabling readers to assess the potential applicability of the findings to other contexts or populations.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic data analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke, was used as the primary method for analyzing the data.⁴⁵ This approach offered a structured framework for examining qualitative data, with an emphasis on identifying and understanding key themes and their interconnections. The analysis aimed to produce reliable and consistent findings. The data analysis process was designed to bring clarity to a large volume of information, enabling the development of general conclusions that could be presented in the research report. Coding was conducted following the steps of thematic analysis.⁴⁶ The process began with reading and re-reading the transcripts to familiarize the researcher with the data. The study then compared, discussed, and integrated the coding frameworks into a cohesive structure. Finally, all relevant data were coded according to the framework and organized into main themes and subthemes.

Ethical Considerations

The study obtained ethical clearance from the University of Venda Ethics Committee (**ethics number FHS/22/PSYCH/11/2209**) and received permission to conduct research from the community Induna. All participants gave their informed consent to participate in the study. They were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without consequence. Participants were also assured that their data would be kept confidential.

Given the sensitive nature of the topic, a social worker was available for referrals should any participant experience emotional distress during the study. Additionally, acknowledging the delicate subject matter, the researcher worked to build rapport with the participants, ensuring they felt comfortable and supported while sharing their experiences of abusive marriages.

⁴⁰ Polit and Beck, *Nursing Research* .

⁴¹ Irene Korstjens and Albine Moser, "Series: Practical Guidance to Qualitative Research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and Publishing," *European Journal of General Practice* 24, no. 1 (2018): 120–24.

⁴² Polit and Beck, *Nursing Research* .

⁴³ Janice Aurini, Melanie Heath, and Stephanie Howells, *The How To of Qualitative Research Second Edition*, 2022.

⁴⁴ John W. Marshall, "Pseudepigraphy, Early Christian," in *Biblical Studies* (Oxford University Press, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780195393361-0219>.

⁴⁵ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, *Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners* (London: Sage, 2019).

⁴⁶ Timothy C. Guetterman et al., "Process Evaluation of a Retreat for Scholars in the First Cohort: The NIH Mixed Methods Research Training Program for the Health Sciences," *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 13, no. 1 (January 26, 2019): 52–68, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689816674564>.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Demographic Information of Participants

The participants in this study were eight women who had been married for over 10 years, selected from the Mopani District in Limpopo Province, South Africa, using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Of the eight women, two were employed at the time of the study. One was self-employed while the other five were unemployed. Regarding education, three participants were university graduates, two had completed grade 12, and the remaining participants had education beyond secondary school. The women's ages ranged from 35 to 69 years. All participants were mothers, with each having between two and eight children. All women interviewed were married and had experienced abuse in their marriages.

Results Five themes were generated from this study.

Themes	Sub-Themes
Financial dependency by women in abusive marriages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of conditional love - Staying in an abusive marriage because of children - Lack of unemployment
The societal stigma attached to divorced women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women afraid of being called return soldiers (Xivuya) - Feeling of obligation
Harmful cultural practices and norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Payment of the bride prices (lobola) to own a woman - Male dominance associated with patriarchy - Destructive forced marriages
Man's extramarital affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of commitment/Infidelity - Lack of intimacy
Usage of substances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Escape from being unemployed - Destructive major to cause abuse

Theme 1. Financial Dependency

The study found that women experience abuse due to their lack of financial contribution to the household. It also highlighted that gender-based violence is exacerbated by women's financial dependency. The research further revealed that women's unemployment status forces them to remain in abusive marriages due to their financial reliance on their husbands. Their lack of employment makes them particularly vulnerable to both financial and emotional abuse, as their husbands often do not share information about household finances. Participants reported that men frequently withheld money, especially for personal use, and it was difficult for them to receive sufficient funds to cover basic needs on their own. This was supported by the following statements:

"If I were working, the story would have been different. I think he would be able to respect me. Even his family realized that I may be burdening him to such an extent that they made the situation worse by telling him that he should not give me money". (Participant 8, Female, 33 years).

Sub-theme 1: Provision of condition love

Women noted that their husbands treated them differently when they were not working compared to when they were employed. In the absence of employment, the husbands exhibited poor behavior towards their wives, whereas their relationship was better when the wife was working. This sentiment is reflected in the following statement:

"Mmm...yes, the time I was not working my husband was very abusive. I had three children with him while I was not working. I am now working as a community development officer at the Department of Social Development. When I compare the treatment in terms of how he speaks

and considers my opinions, the story is different. What I say matters a lot more now than in those days. He even buys me gifts which I needed the most the time I was unemployed. I now have a voice in many things in the house. It seems the love has increased now that I am working. He now treats me well because he is afraid that even if we divorce, I am not going to struggle. He even involves me in his finances. (Participant 1, Female, 39 years)

Theme 2: Societal Stigma attached to divorced woman

Society expects women to endure marital difficulties to maintain family unity. Women revealed that they remain in abusive marriages due to the societal stigma attached to divorce. They said that leaving an abusive marriage would lead others to view them as failures in life. This is supported by the following quote:

“Ūhu... I have 8 children, what will my children say? My first three children are married and have children. How do you tell your children you want to leave? They have witnessed me being in this situation ever since they were young and now, I tell them I want to leave...what will people say? Church members, community, my family... they will say I’m mad. (participant 4, 69 years)

Sub-theme 1. Return soldier (Xivuya)

The study findings indicated that women stay in abusive marriages due to the fear of being labeled as *xivuya* (a Xitsonga term for a woman who has divorced her husband). The following direct quotes from participants support this:

“I stayed because of fear of being called “xivuya” (failure) and the thought of leaving makes me afraid that who will take care of my children if I leave? Our parents taught us to be strong because we are facing what they have always been facing. And at my age, where will I go?... (Participant 1, 49 years).

“My friends will laugh at me, let alone family members. I can see my cousins laughing at family gatherings that my marriage failed because they are not married. So, the spirit of jealousy is there. They are going to laugh at me...” (participant 5, 33 years old)

Sub-theme 2. Feelings of obligation

The study found that women remain in abusive marriages because they feel indebted to their husbands for supporting their education, whether through school or university. They expressed concern that others would view them as ungrateful for receiving education and then leaving the marriage. The following sentiment supports this statement:

“If I leave him people will say that it is because he took me to the university and now that I am working and leaving him would mean that I am ungrateful. Staying in my marriage is another way of proving people wrong because if I leave my husband because I am fed up with his behaviour people will say it is because I am now a professional person” (Participant 2, 31 years).

Sub-theme 1: Payment of lobola/dowry

The study revealed that cultural norms associated with traditional marriages, such as lobola (bride price), contribute to vulnerability to sexual abuse. When a man pays lobola, he is culturally entitled to demand sexual intercourse, even without his wife’s consent, as women whose husbands have paid lobola are often viewed as their husband's property. This is supported by the following sentiments:

“Mmm...yaa! The payment of lobola contributed a lot towards the abuses I faced because my husband regarded me as property. When you buy a property, you own it, and it has no say or control over itself. To show that what I am saying carries a lot of weight, a lot of women would say; I cannot be abused by a person who did not pay lobola for me. This shows that when lobola is paid, it is when you can be subjected to abuse. (Participant 7, female, 50 years).

Sub-theme 2: Patriarchal practices

Women stated that male dominance, rooted in cultural beliefs, plays a significant role in perpetuating gender-based violence. They emphasized that deeply ingrained cultural norms, such as the belief that a

man is the head of the family, contribute to GBV. For instance, the idea that a man's word is final and that as the head of the family, his authority prevails was highlighted. Participants also expressed those cultural expectations, which position women as subordinate to men, and make women vulnerable to various forms of abuse, including physical, emotional, psychological, and financial abuse. This is confirmed in the following statement:

“Yes, yes for sure, we were raised like that. We subscribe to the notion that a man is the head and whatever he says it goes. I believe that this is what makes us women vulnerable to abuse because we are treated anyhow and nothing we can do about it, because it is our way of living and our culture must be respected. Who are you to talk back to your husband? Even if he insults you, you must keep quiet”. (Participant 3, 54 years).

Culture has a role to play because if you complain about the abuse, they will tell you that even we have passed through that and there is nothing we can do about it. GBV seems like a tradition because men are afforded a superior position than us and even if they insult or financially deprive you when you complain, they will tell you this is the way life is and you cannot just leave your marriage because of that. They will ask you who will take care of your children if you leave your marriage. They would say, if you leave, who will feed your children and take them to school, buy them clothes, and rear them? (Participant 5, 33 years).

Sub-theme 3: Forced Marriages

Women stated that they stay married despite the challenges they face. All participants further mentioned that society expects married women to endure marital difficulties because women are generally viewed as strong. This is supported by the following quotations:

“I was arranged to marry my husband when I was very young, and I told myself that I was going to stay in my marriage no matter what happened. I faced every type of abuse in my marriage, but I could not divorce my husband because I was afraid that people would call me “xivuya” or one who failed in marriage.” (Participant 4, 69 years).

“It is not that easy, haaa haaa haaa! I feel like this is what God chose for me and it is the path of my life. I told myself that if I left, I am still going to face the same things in case I got married again. I told myself to die in this marriage because it is a God s’ given marriage. (Participant 6, 41 years).

Theme 4. Man’s Extra-Marital Affairs

The study revealed that men’s extramarital affairs contribute to gender-based violence. Women noted that such relationships lead to verbal conflicts, which eventually escalate into emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. This is supported by the following sentiments:

“Again, I normally find things that belong to his girlfriends in the car and when I confront him, he quarrels with me, and we spend weeks without talking to each other. In my marriage, extra-marital affairs have bred a lot of conflict between me and my husband” (Participant 8, 35 years).

“Another contributory factor is that my husband has extra-marital affairs where he is drinking the traditional beer (umtlomboti). When I told him that it was not safe to date those women because most of them do not use protection, he would beat me up. Although I try to retaliate sometimes I do not win because he is a man, and he is stronger than me.” Participant 3, 54 years).

Sub-theme 1: Lack of Commitment/Infidelity

The study revealed that men find it offensive when women question their husbands about infidelity, they are often met with offense. Husbands respond with insulting words and physical violence. Additionally, when men are unfaithful, they become distant and no longer intimate with their wives. This sexual deprivation leads to conflict, frustration, and anger between the couple. This is confirmed by the following statement:

“When I got married to my husband in 1971, he worked in Pietersburg (Polokwane) and we rented a place there. I would go there without telling him because in those days there were no

cell phones. Upon my arrival, I used to find his girlfriend's stuff and other belongings and when I confronted him, he would beat me up and insult me. My husband is a glaring infidel, and he never forsook his ways even today" (Participant, 4, 69 years).

Sub-theme 2: Lack of Intimacy

The study found that women in abusive marriages often experience a lack of intimacy. They expressed that their rights are being denied. The following statements reflect these sentiments:

"Girlfriends also contribute a lot because instead of looking at me as his wife, his girlfriends take priority. He is not sleeping with me because he can get sex outside. Every time we have conflicts, he does not sit down with me to resolve them, but he runs to his girlfriends for comfort. Sometimes when I confront him about his girlfriends, he gets very angry and starts saying, "I do not know them, they are only known to you." The question is how they can be known to me when they are on his contact list, you see, he undermines me, eish!" (Participant 7, 50 years).

"...at my age I should be engaging in sexual activities, but nothing is happening. He sometimes goes for three months without being intimate with me. When I raise my concerns, he shouts at me but still continues to deny me conjugal rights. I have even tried to involve my in-laws, but that did not help." (Participant 2, 31 years old)

On the other hand, the study also revealed that some women endure sexual abuse as a form of gender-based violence (GBV). They reported that their husbands sometimes force them into intimacy, even when they are unwilling to engage in sexual intercourse. This lack of respect between married couples was evident, with women indicating that the coercion is rooted in the belief that a woman should not resist sex once the "lobola" (bride price) has been paid.

"When he is drunk, he normally wants to be intimate with me and I do not feel free to sleep with a person who is drunk. He would then force himself into me, saying that I have a right to sleep with you because I paid lobola (bride price) and a woman has no right to deny a man his conjugal rights" (Participants 6, 41 years).

Theme 5. The use of substance

The study found that substance abuse is a major contributor to GBV in marriages. Many women reported that their husbands become abusive when intoxicated. Additionally, the lack of employment among men was identified as a contributing factor to alcohol abuse, which often leads to GBV within the household. The following statement reflects women's perspectives:

"Yoo! I think alcohol is the enemy of households. My husband has low communication skills. When we faced problems, instead of talking it over, he would wait until he got drunk so that he could start insulting me. When he starts insulting me, he does not mind his words; he just says whatever comes to his mind. (Participant 4, 69 years).

Sub-theme 1: The Escape of being Unemployed

Women indicated that when their husbands abuse alcohol, they are more likely to experience physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. In addition, they reported being beaten, insulted and coerced into intimacy against their will. They also noted that alcohol abuse encourages their husbands to utter violent and hurtful words, which they may not typically express, but alcohol gives them the courage to do so. The following statements reflect their experiences:

"Alcohol abuse is worse when it is not working. When he gets a job and goes to work every day, he rarely insults or beats me up. But when he is not working, he starts. I remember one time that he spent 8 months without having a job and we would fight almost every day for no reason. When you try to reason something with him, he would say "Just because I'm not working now, you look down on me" and start fighting. (participant 6, 41 years old)

Sub-theme 2: Destructive mood to cause abuse

The study found that married women are often abused by their husbands, who struggle with alcohol abuse. They reported that when their husbands are drunk, they become emboldened to mistreat them.

The majority of women stated that their husbands typically would not abuse them unless they were heavily intoxicated. The following sentiments support this finding:

Hahaa haa! haaa! Yoo! I can say alcohol contributes to gender-based violence. From what I experienced, my husband would not have the guts to beat me if he were not drunk. When he was drunk, he used to beat me up, although nowadays he is no longer doing it because we are old. The only abuse I am now suffering is emotional abuse. (Participant 4,69 years).

Another factor is that my husband has anger, and he can display it when he is drunk. When he does not drink alcohol, he is a bit calm, though you can notice that he has an anger problem. When he is drunk, he says things that belittle and hurt my heart. He treats me like I am nothing (Participant 5,33 years).

DISCUSSION

The study found that women's unemployment status contributes to GBV. Klassen argues that socioeconomic factors play a significant role in GBV.⁴⁷ Unemployed women were found to be at greater risk of emotional and financial abuse because men often lack financial transparency when women do not contribute to household income.⁴⁸ This is supported by Rainer et al. and Ghosh and Ghosh, who stated that unemployment leads to financial dependence on a partner, which may trigger abusive behavior from husbands with violent tendencies.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Masiko and Xinwa suggest that women's economic vulnerability is both a cause and a catalyst for GBV.⁵⁰

The study also found that patriarchy and culture contribute to perpetuating gender-based violence. Pillay highlights that culture becomes a significant risk factor for GBV, as beliefs, norms, and customs can create an environment that facilitates violence.⁵¹ Additionally, the study revealed that women are culturally viewed as subordinate to men. This aligns with research by Sarfraz, Sarfraz et al., who confirmed that 70% to 90% of married women have experienced abuse from their spouses at some point in their lives.⁵² Women's subordinate status places them in vulnerable positions, making them more susceptible to emotional and sexual abuse. As the head of the family, a man's authority often dominates, leading to the insult and undermining of women. This is supported by Wood, Wilson, & Jacobs and Cornelius, who assert that cultural hierarchies have historically granted men greater cultural status, reinforcing the notion that men have the right to punish their wives.⁵³

The study also found that, within certain cultural beliefs, when a man pays lobola (bride price), a woman is regarded as his property and loses autonomy over her own body. This cultural norm exposes women to sexual abuse, as they may be coerced into offering conjugal rights against their will. These findings align with a study by Muguti and Mlambo, who confirmed that the payment of bride price is a contextual factor associated with gender-based violence.⁵⁴ Moono further supports this, revealing that paying lobola is viewed as purchasing a wife, making her the husband's property.⁵⁵ Lobola grants the man the power to treat his wife as he pleases, including subjecting her to sexual and other forms of abuse. The practice of bride price has also been linked to an increase in intimate partner violence.⁵⁶

The findings also indicate that alcohol abuse plays a significant role in GBV against women. The study shows that alcohol consumption encourages men to express abusive thoughts that they may have kept hidden. Substance use was positively related to women's experiences of GBV. These findings are consistent with research by Ostadtaghizadeh, Azarei, Saniee, and Rasouli and Shiva, Shukla, and

⁴⁷ Klassen and Chiu, "Effects on Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Job Satisfaction: Teacher Gender, Years of Experience, and Job Stress."

⁴⁸ Muluneh et al., "A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Associated Factors of Gender-Based Violence against Women in Sub-Saharan Africa."

⁴⁹ Ghosh and Ghosh, "The Shadow Pandemic: Gender Violence Surges as Unemployment Peaks"; Anderson et al., "Measuring the Cost of Cybercrime."

⁵⁰ Masiko and Xinwa, "Substance Abuse in South Africa, Its Linkages with Gender Based Violence and Urban Violence."

⁵¹ Pillay, "The Church, Gender and AIDS-What's Wrong with Patriarchy?"

⁵² Sarfraz et al., "Gender-Based Violence in Pakistan and Public Health Measures: A Call to Action."

⁵³ Wood, Wilson, and Jacobs, "Exploring the Differences between Men's and Women's Perceptions of Gender-Based Violence in Rural Tajikistan: A Qualitative Study"; Cornelius J P Niemandt, "A Network Society, Social Media, Migration and Mission," *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 41, no. 1 (2013): 22–39.

⁵⁴ Muguti and Mlambo, "I Paid Lobola! The Interface between Bride Price and Domestic Violence."

⁵⁵ Moono, "Lobola and Gender Based Violence: A Case of Married Women in Lusaka's Kamanga Compound."

⁵⁶ Brank, Hoetger, and Hazen, "Bullying."

Chandra, who confirmed that acute alcohol intoxication and heavy alcohol consumption are strong predictors of intimate partner violence (IPV) in any society.⁵⁷ This is further supported by Zinyemba and Hlongwana.⁵⁸ Additionally, poverty and unemployment were identified as factors contributing to the frustration men experience, which can lead to increased GBV, particularly when men are unable to provide for their families. Kaithuru supports this, noting that alcohol-related violence tends to be more verbal initially, followed by physical abuse directed at women.⁵⁹ These findings are in line with a rapid review by Akamike et al., which confirms that substance abuse by a partner and lower socioeconomic status are key predictors of GBV.⁶⁰

An important aspect of relational conflict is men's infidelity and verbal disagreements, which often contribute to physical and emotional abuse, particularly when women question their husbands about their extramarital affairs. The study found that infidelity is a significant factor in gender-based violence, as supported by Picho et al.⁶¹ This aligns with a rapid review by Akamike et al., which confirms that promiscuous behavior by a partner perpetuates GBV.⁶² Additionally, DeRose et al. found that the belief that a man is the head of the household increases the risk of IPV and infidelity within relationships.⁶³

Fear of Stigma

It is crucial to acknowledge that everyone is influenced by culture, and women are no exception. Their lives are profoundly shaped by cultural norms, values, and practices. For instance, among the Vatsonga people of South Africa, women are both directly and indirectly encouraged to stay in their marriages, even in the face of ongoing harm. Cultural sayings such as "*sirha ra nwansati rile vukatini*" (the grave of a woman is in her matrimonial home) and "*vukati va kandza hi mbilu*" (marriage is for the unwavering heart) carry significant implications. Many South African cultures have also perpetuated a stereotype that places a woman's worth in the context of her marriage, leading to societal judgments about women leaving unhappy or abusive relationships. These findings are aligned with studies done by Thomas et al; Murvartian, Saavedra-Macías and Infanti, who indicated that stigma among women in GBV is amplified by cultural norms.⁶⁴ The decision to stay is strongly influenced by the stigma surrounding the act of leaving a matrimonial home.

Another critical issue is that South Africa remains a patriarchal society, with a history marked by inequality across all areas of life. The exclusion and subordination of women in all sectors and households have resulted in deeply entrenched abuses. For example, the belief that "*nwanuna I nhloko ya muti*" (a man is the head of the family) has subjected many women to various forms of abuse.

Nyawo concurred that GBV among women is incubated by patriarchy.⁶⁵ However, Refikal indicated that patriarchy, which is the oppression of women and should not be used as a culture to be inherited, still exists and is justified in society, so that there is a gender gap between men and women.⁶⁶ On the other hand, Setyorini et al., support that these barriers to patriarchy exacerbate injustice and undermine efforts to improve women's quality of life.⁶⁷ As a result, despite the violence women face in their marriages, they often struggle to leave or divorce their husbands. A central issue is the disconnect between cultural norms that pressure women to remain in abusive marriages and the harsh realities they

⁵⁷ Ostadtaghizadeh et al., "Gender-Based Violence against Women during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Recommendations for Future"; Shiva, Shukla, and Chandra, "Alcohol Use and Gender-Based Violence."

⁵⁸ Zinyemba and Hlongwana, "Men's Conceptualization of Gender-Based Violence Directed to Women in Alexandra Township, Johannesburg, South Africa."

⁵⁹ Kaithuru, "Alcoholism Fuels Gender-Based Violence in the Family."

⁶⁰ Akamike et al., "Predictors and Facilitators of Gender-Based Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Rapid Review."

⁶¹ Marjorie Pichon et al., "A Mixed-Methods Systematic Review: Infidelity, Romantic Jealousy and Intimate Partner Violence against Women," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 17, no. 16 (2020): 5682.

⁶² Akamike et al., "Predictors and Facilitators of Gender-Based Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Rapid Review."

⁶³ DeRose et al., "Couple Religiosity, Male Headship, Intimate Partner Violence, and Infidelity."

⁶⁴ Thomas et al., "Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and HIV, They Are like Sister and Brother': Barriers and Facilitators to GBV Screening and Referral in Public HIV Treatment Settings in Uganda"; Murvartian, Saavedra-Macías, and Infanti, "Public Stigma toward Women Victims of Intimate Partner Violence: A Systematic Review."

⁶⁵ Nyawo, "'Women's Sexuality Captured': Another Form of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in the Swati Patriarchal Space."

⁶⁶ Refikal, "Influences of Patriarchal Culture and Femicide as a Form of Gender-Based Violence against Women from Human Rights Perspective."

⁶⁷ Setyorini et al., "Defying the Odds: Can Women Truly Thrive in a Patriarchal World?"

face daily. Societal norms and values continue to reinforce the chains that trap women in abusive situations, creating formidable obstacles that are hard to overcome. Failing to acknowledge the impact of cultural norms in the context of GBV is a form of ignorance that can exacerbate the mental health challenges women face. This is evident in the ongoing prevalence of abuse in South Africa, despite concerns raised by the government, stakeholders, and civil society. As a result, many women remain in abusive marriages out of fear of the stigma they would face if they left, choosing to prioritize societal judgment over their well-being.

Fear of Family Disintegration

It is important to acknowledge that women often develop a strong emotional attachment to the memories they have shared with their partners, which can create a sense of obligation to stay, even when their situation calls for them to leave. In South Africa, the idea of family extends beyond the nuclear family to include extended family as well. The memories women create within these family structures, including children born from their unions, are deeply meaningful. As a result, leaving their matrimonial home can feel like abandoning these memories, including their children. As mentioned earlier, cultural bonds hold significant influence, and preserving family unity is seen as essential. Women often stay in abusive marriages because they fear disappointing their family members by leaving. Furthermore, many women remain in these marriages for the sake of their children, concerned that their departure may harm them. They worry that a new partner may not love their children as their biological father does, or that their children may not receive proper care. In toxic relationships, women often endure abuse for the sake of their children, particularly when custody battles are at stake. Mutambo and Perez-Vazquez & Bonilla-Campos support these findings, stating that while women do seek help for GBV, they often hesitate to leave their husbands and families due to the fear of disrupting and breaking up their families.⁶⁸

Fear of the Unknown

Most women remain in abusive marriages because they fear the uncertainty of what the future holds. They worry that if they leave their husbands, they may not be able to find another partner. This is supported by Moussion-Esteve and McCole, who noted that women often stay in abusive relationships due to a fear of change and the unknown.⁶⁹ They are anxious about what life would be like without their spouses and feel a sense of obligation to their partners, making it difficult to determine whether leaving is the right decision. Additionally, many women stay because they love their husbands and remember times when their husbands treated them well. They also fear that leaving would result in personal suffering, as they feel unable to care for themselves independently. Over time, women become accustomed to their husbands' behavior, even accepting the abuse. Their desire to maintain love and affection may be so strong that they endure the mistreatment in hopes of showing or receiving love.

The findings revealed that factors such as financial dependency, the payment of lobola, men's extramarital affairs, and substance abuse all play a role in contributing to GBV. Women often stay in abusive marriages because of the fear of stigma, concerns about the potential breakdown of their families, and uncertainty about their future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings, this study recommends that the government implement policies aimed at economically empowering women to reduce their vulnerability to GBV. The Department of Social Development and Health should provide women with the tools and resources needed to support their livelihoods independently, freeing them from economic dependence on men. Additionally, the government, traditional leaders, and stakeholders should work together to challenge and transform socio-cultural norms that perpetuate GBV. Although culture is an integral part of society, cultural practices that undermine the worth, dignity, and identity of women should be redefined. Cultural norms

⁶⁸ Mutambo, "Investigating Social-Cultural Factors Contributing to Low Reporting Levels of Gender-Based Violence Cases"; Perez-Vazquez and Bonilla-Campos, "Women Refugee's Perceptions, Experiences and Coping Mechanisms in Situations of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV): A Metasynthesis."

⁶⁹ Moussion-Esteve, "Domestic Fear beyond Traumatic Terror: Understanding Mothers' Everyday Experiences of Recurring Fear in the Context of Domestic Violence"; McCole, "3 Reasons Why We Stay in Unhappy Marriages."

that cannot be reformed and that continue to subordinate women should be dismantled to help reduce GBV.

The study also recommends that civil society, religious organizations, non-profit groups, and governmental institutions prioritize empowering women to value themselves above societal pressures to stay in abusive marriages. Women should be educated about the harmful effects of all forms of abuse on their health and well-being. They should be taught that true love and genuine marriage do not require adherence to cultural norms that stigmatize women for wanting to leave abusive relationships. Women must be encouraged to understand that leaving an abusive marriage is not an embarrassment, but rather an act of self-love and confidence.

Furthermore, the government and its partners should implement transformative campaigns to educate men about the psychological and social harm they cause when they abuse women. Men should be empowered with knowledge that challenges traditional perceptions of masculinity and reshapes their understanding of what it means to be a man. Cultural views of masculinity should be redefined to shift men's attitudes towards women, promoting respect, equality, and non-violence.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore Women's Experiences of Lamentation in GBV Marriages in Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa. The objectives of the study were achieved. The study presented various contributing factors to GBV. Although various recommendations were made on how the scourge of GBV could be dismantled, it remains daunting. The reason for this intimidating reality is that most of the factors are embedded in the culture and socio-economic realities of our daily lives. People are enclosed in culture and surrounded by situations that are pernicious to their lives. This being the case, GBV could be annihilated in our society if it could be multidimensional approached. This calls for the working together of the government, stakeholders, civil organizations, and the community at large. The findings revealed that factors such as financial dependency, the payment of lobola, men's extramarital affairs, and substance abuse all play a role in contributing to GBV. Women often stay in abusive marriages because of the fear of stigma, concerns about the potential breakdown of their families, and uncertainty about their future. The study also recommends empowering women to leave abusive marriages to help restore their self-esteem, value, and confidence.

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