



Unpacking the Dynamics of Gender-Based Violence in the South African Context: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Incontrovertibly, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a cankerworm that countries in the ubiquitous corners of the globe are struggling to annihilate, South Africa notwithstanding. Although public and political discourses have been dominated by calls for increased interventions to address and mitigate their impacts, these hue-and-cry phenomena have not adequately prevented GBV; hence, there is a need for a more pragmatic analysis of the interventions. This article employed a literature review methodology, drawing on a variety of literature from journal articles, book chapters, and the authors' personal experiences. The article established that although men are the perpetrators of GBV, women also contribute to the quagmire; Pecuniary factors drive GBV, with most cases of GBV not reported. Further, the unfathomable daily increase in the quagmire attests to the fact that South African society is not winning the battle against gender-based violence, with undocumented evidence about GBV suggesting that females do not feel safe at work, at home, and on the streets. This article recommends an infusion of Indigenous/ traditional ways of dealing with GBV, together with the policies in government. This article contributes to widening the horizon of literature to advance more research in the domain of GBV.

Keywords: Gender Based Violence, Perpetrators, Victims, Women, Indigenous/ Traditional Ways.

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INTRODUCTION

Unequivocally, violence perpetrated at an individual level is often a result of power inequalities deeply embedded in social structures (Renzetti & Campe, 2020). These power inequalities are so deeply embedded in society that the phenomenon of violence has become normalized.¹ It is against this background that these researchers aim to thoroughly explore the underlying causes of GBV, rather than simply focusing on its symptoms. In South Africa today, violence has been driven by a variety of factors, the pecuniary factor being a common one, where, for instance, in the process of women asking for money from their male counterparts, altercations occur whose results usually drive violence. Indeed, women in the southern African region, with South Africa leading the pack, continue to face a constellation of abuses, including smacking, beating, or being subjected to verbal and emotional abuse.²

¹ K. M. Matussek, *Under the Surface of Sex Trafficking: Socio-Economic and Cultural Perpetrators of Gender-Based Violence in India*. (Old Dominion University, 2016).

² Simon Murote Kangéthe, “The Woman and the Girl Child Phenomenon and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Botswana,” *The Book” Human Rights and Social Equality: Challenges for Social; (1)*, 2014, 125–32.

Gender-based violence in South Africa, just like in many countries of the globe, constitutes an important political and social discourse. Despite the promulgation of the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in 1996, South Africa remains a national disaster in terms of gender equality. The body is not making strong inroads in tackling the vice.³ The Commission for Gender Equality had a cardinal responsibility of promoting respect for Gender equality and the protection, development, and attainment of gender equality.⁴ The Commission for Gender Equality has the power, as regulated by national legislation, necessary to perform its functions, including the power to monitor, investigate, research, educate, lobby, advise, and report on issues concerning gender equality.⁵ It also has the additional powers and functions prescribed by national legislation. Considering all the above, one wonders whether this commission is effective. There are no footprints of it in many South African communities. This is not to say that it should be blamed for issues of GBV, but it must work proactively to inform communities about issues of gender equality.⁶

Despite incessant calls amid the public and political discourse in South Africa for increased penalties and convictions for perpetrators of various types of gender-based violence, paradoxically, these efforts do not appear to reap any significant dividends, as the statistics for gender-based violence appear to take an upward trajectory.⁷ Perhaps the research into the current underpinnings of the quagmire is weak or incomplete. Further, perhaps the emphasis on the conventional norms that men are always aggressors and therefore eventual perpetrators, and women are the recipients of aggression and hence the victims, calls for more research.⁸

Perhaps one of the issues that needs to be demystified is the belief that women are the only victims of GBV. Pockets of empirical research attest that men are also affected, but because of the stigma and feelings of embarrassment on account of patriarchal thinking that men should not succumb to gender-based violence perpetrated on them by women, they suffer in silence.⁹ This may be dangerous in the long run because serious spates of violence can be unleashed by men acting in retaliation.¹⁰ Observation on the ground seems to suggest that because gender-based issues are taken as an embarrassing phenomenon, most men tend not to report these cases and decide to act on their own. It becomes important, then, that when investigating the causes of GBV, this reality should be taken into account, that women are also aggressors who drive gender-based violence, although not on the same scale as men manifest.¹¹ Some researchers, therefore, indicate that it has been proven to be a paradox that men are always the aggressors in cases of gender-based violence. This reality needs to be factored in when considering interventions aimed at mitigating and reducing episodes of gender-based violence.¹²

Delving into the underpinnings or the drivers of GBV is critical if the vice is to be addressed successfully. The researchers believe that social ills, such as poverty, unemployment, and inequality, contribute to Gender violence.¹³ It is generally acknowledged that females are the most severely affected by these social ills. Typically, these circumstances compel women to rely on men to fulfil their basic survival needs and those of their families.¹⁴ On the other hand, men take advantage of women's pecuniary vulnerability to abuse them, especially when a disagreement ensues.¹⁵ Today, South Africa is experiencing

³ Thomas M Mogale, "Developmental Local Government and Decentralised Service Delivery in the Democratic South Africa," *Governance in the New South Africa*, 2003, 215–43.

⁴ Mogale, "Developmental Local Government and Decentralised Service Delivery in the Democratic South Africa."

⁵ Mogale, "Developmental Local Government and Decentralised Service Delivery in the Democratic South Africa."

⁶ Janine Hicks and Sithembiso Myeni, "The Impact of Gender, Race and Class on Women's Political Participation in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Challenges for Community Development," in *Class, Inequality and Community Development* (Policy Press, 2016), 107–20.

⁷ Kammila Naidoo and Denise Buiten, "Tackling Gender-Based Violence in South Africa," *MeToo and Beyond: Perspectives on a Global Movement* 46 (2022).

⁸ Kang'ethe, "The Woman and the Girl Child Phenomenon and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Botswana."

⁹ Kang'ethe, "The Woman and the Girl Child Phenomenon and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Botswana."

¹⁰ Patricia Melgar Alcantud et al., "Fear to Retaliation: The Most Frequent Reason for Not Helping Victims of Gender Violence," *RIMCIS: Revista Internacional y Multidisciplinar En Ciencias Sociales* 10, no. 2 (2021): 31–50.

¹¹ Monde Lisulo, "Attitudes of Young People towards Female Perpetrated Gender-Based Violence against Men in Zambia" (2019).

¹² Kang'ethe, "The Woman and the Girl Child Phenomenon and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Botswana."

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ E. Boserup, S. F. Tan, and C. Toulmin, *Woman's Role in Economic Development* (London: Routledge, 2013).

¹⁵ Carla Ferstman, "Reparation for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in the (Post) Conflict Context: The Need to Address Abuses by Peacekeepers and Humanitarian Aid Workers," in *Reparations for Victims of Genocide, War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity* (Brill Nijhoff, 2020), 271–97.

unfathomable levels of unemployment among the youth and women.¹⁶ This situation inevitably leads to a situation where young females find themselves doing whatever it takes to get employment, even if it means giving sexual favours in exchange for a job or securing some level of financial support, albeit inadequate to meet basic needs. These researchers worry that, in the current South African context, where levels of unemployment and poverty are rising, especially among women and children, many individuals struggle to fulfil the two lowest ranks of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: physiological needs and security.¹⁷

The issue of women's poverty will remain a thorny issue in the South African context until other pragmatic interventions are mooted. While the issue of poverty and dependence dominates South Africa's economic landscape, the government, in cooperation with local development partners, needs to develop new approaches to poverty eradication. Perhaps one of the interventions can be strengthening social enterprises.¹⁸ Such interventions must align with the country's national gender aspirations and the Sustainable Development Goals related to gender.¹⁹

Unpacking the types of abuse given to women in South Africa includes psychological or emotional abuse, which often occurs in cases where young women are looking for material possessions, making them fall prey to those who can afford that kind of life.²⁰ In some cases, this kind of life is linked with abuse because when the perpetrator buys these expensive gifts for the potential victim, the perpetrator feels as if he has acquired a whole life lease to control the potential victim.²¹ Ironically, even the potential victim understands and accepts this abuse.²² Strangely and paradoxically, the potential victims sometimes psychologically believe that they deserve to be punished, thereby indirectly allowing the perpetuation of the incidences of GBV. In some situations, these young girls engage in attention-seeking behaviours by deliberately targeting these men, whom they believe have resources. In the South African context, these men are referred to as the "blessers", while the recipients of such gestures are referred to as the "blesees".²³

Financial abuse flourishes when the victim financially depends on the perpetrator. In some situations, the perpetrator prevents the victim from achieving financial independence, such as by denying her the opportunity to get employed. Subconsciously, the perpetrator believes that by allowing his partner to look for work, she will likely be exposed to other men and therefore possibly exercise some independence in terms of choosing a lover/partner.²⁴ In the event that there is a disagreement, the financial incentives are withdrawn – and in extreme cases, the victim is vulnerable to physical and verbal abuse, with no access to money, credit cards, and other financial assets.²⁵

Unequivocally, gender-based violence is a cankerworm that countries are struggling to annihilate, South Africa notwithstanding. These researchers want to discuss the underpinnings of gender-based violence against the stereotype that men are always aggressors while women are the victims. The researchers think that it is fair to apportion each gender's contribution to the quagmire instead of sticking to the conventional thinking that men are perpetrators and women are the victims. Further, the researcher wishes to unpack various kinds of abuses meted out to the victimised gender, whether women or men, explore cases of GBV and their impacts (whether psychological, financial, emotional, or otherwise), and the state of the justice system in addressing GBV, as well as discuss policies or the government's goodwill in terms of addressing GBV. The discussions, these researchers believe, will aid in the programming of

¹⁶ Ferstman, "Reparation for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in the (Post) Conflict Context: The Need to Address Abuses by Peacekeepers and Humanitarian Aid Workers."

¹⁷ Simon Kang'ethe, "Violation Of Human Rights Of Older Persons In South Africa. The Case Of Lavela Old Age Centre, Ntselamanzi, Eastern Cape Province, South Affrica," *Social Work* 54, no. 3 (August 2018), <https://doi.org/10.15270/54-3-649>.

¹⁸ Robert Mutemi Kajiita and Simon Murote Kang'ethe, "Socio-Economic Dynamics Inhibiting Inclusive Urban Economic Development: Implications for Sustainable Urban Development in South African Cities," *Sustainability* 16, no. 7 (2024): 2803.

¹⁹ Kajiita and Kang'ethe, "Socio-Economic Dynamics Inhibiting Inclusive Urban Economic Development: Implications for Sustainable Urban Development in South African Cities."

²⁰ Zinyemba and Hlongwana, "Men's Conceptualization of Gender-Based Violence Directed to Women in Alexandra Township, Johannesburg, South Africa."

²¹ C. Moser, C. O. Moser, and D. F. Clark, *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors?: Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).

²² Moser, Moser, and Clark, *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors?: Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*.

²³ Sharon Thabo Mampane, "Youth Development Through Participation in Decision Making," 2019, 35–53, <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-9388-1.ch003>.

²⁴ Courtenay Sprague et al., "'Eventually I Wanted Something More': Sexual Self-Reflections of South African Women Engaged in Transactional Sexual Relationships with Blessers," *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 24, no. 7 (2022): 871–85.

²⁵ Ruth M Mampane, Margaret F Omidire, and Folake Ruth Aluko, "Decolonising Higher Education in Africa: Arriving at a Glocal Solution," *South African Journal of Education* 38, no. 4 (2018).

gender-based programmes and practices, as well as in unearthing the real causes of the quagmire of GBV and how to tackle the quagmire.

METHODOLOGY

This is a literature review-based article aiming to discuss the contribution of the two genders to the spate of gender-based violence. Data was collected through desktop research, drawing on literature from heterogeneous sources, including books, theses, journal articles, and secondary data, as well as informal conversations that tapped the intuition of various discussants.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Gender Paradoxes Associated with GBV

Observation on the ground suggests that harsh socio-economic conditions, such as poverty, unemployment, and crime, lead to several reported cases of Gender-Based Violence.²⁶ The literature abounds that most cases of gender-based violence go unreported.²⁷ Some people suggest that this may be because a section of society in South Africa has lost faith in the justice system.²⁸ Another school of thought indicates that victims of GBV fear reporting these cases due to fear of reprisals. Another school of thought is that men are also victims of GBV. Research indicates that very few men, if any, report these cases of being victims of GBV.²⁹ This may be the result of sociocultural factors, such as the norm in many traditional societies that a man should not be oppressed by a woman.³⁰ In many communities, especially those that are patriarchal, men are expected to be strong, not to cry, to be in charge, and not to show emotions. Men, therefore, try to outlive these sociocultural norms. In fact, men who report being victims of gender-based violence are regarded as weak by the community and are not worthy of being men.³¹ This calls for advocacy interventions to encourage and urge men to come out of the socio-cultural cocoons and report any act of gender-based violence meted out against them by women.³² Men, just like any other population category in society, deserve protection. Moreover, the approaches and interventions meant to address gender-based violence against women and girls should be cross-examined to achieve gender parity. Gender pragmatists and those who programme gender-based policies need to overcome the gender-based stereotypes that tend to make societies unequivocally consider men as gender-based perpetrators and women as victims of gender-based violence. Gender-based violence needs to be viewed through the lens of the atrocious act against one another, and not the gender that one represents.³³ It is high time that the normative stereotype that gender-based violence is driven and unleashed by men should experience a paradigm shift.³⁴

However, the above argument does not suggest that gender-based violence is not driven and energised by men. Many cases of gender-based violence are instigated by men to the detriment of women.³⁵ However, as cultures and traditions are not static, societies are experiencing a wave of women who incite and drive gender-based violence. Although this has, in the recent past, presented a cultural shock to many societies, these researchers challenge gender activists and advocates to fairly apportion blame to the gender responsible for violence against the conventional stereotypes that men are always the aggressors and women the victims.

²⁶ Festus Mukanangana et al., "Gender Based Violence and Its Effects on Women's Reproductive Health: The Case of Hatcliffe, Harare, Zimbabwe," *African Journal of Reproductive Health* 18, no. 1 (2014): 110–22.

²⁷ Kang'ethe, "The Woman and the Girl Child Phenomenon and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Botswana."

²⁸ A. J. Hattery and E. Smith, *Gender, Power, and Violence: Responding to Sexual and Intimate Partner Violence in Society Today* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2019).

²⁹ Kang'ethe, "The Woman and the Girl Child Phenomenon and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Botswana."

³⁰ Kang'ethe, "The Woman and the Girl Child Phenomenon and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Botswana."

³¹ R. C. Carpenter, *The Criminology of War* (London: Routledge, 2017).

³² B. T. Shepkong, "Violence against Women and Implications for Public Policy: A Qualitative Case Study of Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria" (Union Institute and University, 2018).

³³ Fanny Johansson, "Femicide as a Form of Gender-Based Violence Against Women in International Human Rights Law: Critique of Current Regulation and Suggestions for Future Development," 2022.

³⁴ S. M. Hani Sadati and Claudia Mitchell, "Serious Game Design as Research-Creation to Address Sexual and Gender-Based Violence," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 20 (January 7, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069211046130>.

³⁵ T. Minerson, H. Carolo, and T., & Jones, C Dinner, "Issue Brief Engaging Men and Boys to Reduce and Prevent Gender Based Violence," 2011.

GBV driven by pecuniary reasons

Due to economic challenges such as poverty and unemployment, there appears to be an increase in what is known as transactional relationships.³⁶ Studies indicate that many cases of GBV result from these transactional relationships.³⁷ Because most women are unemployed and must rely on their partners for support, they find themselves powerless as far as negotiating for sexual rights is concerned.³⁸ Literature abounds that many men, especially from areas that prescribe patriarchy, exploit this phenomenon, with the result of unleashing various kinds of gender-based atrocities on their female counterparts. Therefore, women are often found to have no say in the running of the relationship.³⁹ Incontrovertibly, most women often stereotypically interpret that accepting financial or material assistance from a man means accepting sex on his terms. This means that women are often on the receiving end and can easily be coerced into engaging in sex without any contraception, as per the whims and demands of their male counterparts.⁴⁰ The major problem with these kinds of relationships is that even if the woman is abused, it may not be easy to report incidents of this nature to family members. This is because they are socially and culturally embarrassing.⁴¹ This relationship emanates from a set of cultural norms, the first being that relations between men and women should be unequal, the second being that male partners should be in charge, and the third being that women should be submissive to the whims and demands of their male counterparts, whether sexually or otherwise.⁴² On the other hand, a relationship called *blessor-blessee* stringently places the relationship in a purely transactional phenomenon.⁴³

Unequivocally, the transactional phenomenon has arisen out of economic imperatives, where the *blessor* (The man with the requisite resources) makes a relationship with the *blessee* (a woman needing assistance).⁴⁴ This relationship is characterised by an imbalance, where the *blessor* provides everything to the *blessee*.⁴⁵ For example, the *blessor* may be paying for the *blessee's* university fees, buying clothes, and in some instances, building a house and buying a car for the *blessee*. This may lead to a situation in which the *blessor* feels that they have negotiated a lifetime lease of controlling the *blessee*.⁴⁶ On the other hand, the *blessee* enjoys the new status that has just been acquired and may be blinded by these gifts, thinking that they are acts of genuine love. Dunkle, Jewkes and Brown are of the view that some observers have historically suggested that transactional dynamics are ubiquitous in sexual relationships within sub-Saharan Africa, arising and deriving from the practice of lobola (bride price), which tends to make societies that practise the norm view women's sexuality as instrumental and open for commoditization.⁴⁷

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- ³⁶ Jaideep Gupte, Dolf te Lintelo, and Inka Barnett, "Understanding 'Urban Youth' and the Challenges They Face in Sub-Saharan Africa: Unemployment, Food Insecurity and Violent Crime," 2014.
- ³⁷ Kristin L Dunkle et al., "Transactional Sex with Casual and Main Partners among Young South African Men in the Rural Eastern Cape: Prevalence, Predictors, and Associations with Gender-Based Violence," *Social Science & Medicine* 65, no. 6 (2007): 1235–48.
- ³⁸ Mukanangana et al., "Gender Based Violence and Its Effects on Women's Reproductive Health: The Case of Hatcliffe, Harare, Zimbabwe."
- ³⁹ Dunkle et al., "Transactional Sex with Casual and Main Partners among Young South African Men in the Rural Eastern Cape: Prevalence, Predictors, and Associations with Gender-Based Violence."
- ⁴⁰ Melanie Pleaner et al., "Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Knowledge, Perceptions, and Experiences of Adolescent Learners from Three South African Townships: Qualitative Findings from the Girls Achieve Power (GAP Year) Trial," *Gates Open Research* 6 (2022): 60.
- ⁴¹ Pleaner et al., "Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Knowledge, Perceptions, and Experiences of Adolescent Learners from Three South African Townships: Qualitative Findings from the Girls Achieve Power (GAP Year) Trial."
- ⁴² Hilde Jakobsen, "What's Gendered about Gender-Based Violence? An Empirically Grounded Theoretical Exploration from Tanzania," *Gender & Society* 28, no. 4 (2014): 537–61.
- ⁴³ Dunkle et al., "Transactional Sex with Casual and Main Partners among Young South African Men in the Rural Eastern Cape: Prevalence, Predictors, and Associations with Gender-Based Violence."
- ⁴⁴ Desiree Govender, Saloshni Naidoo, and Myra Taylor, "'My Partner Was Not Fond of Using Condoms and I Was Not on Contraception': Understanding Adolescent Mothers' Perspectives of Sexual Risk Behaviour in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa," *BMC Public Health* 20, no. 1 (2020): 366.
- ⁴⁵ Govender, Naidoo, and Taylor, "'My Partner Was Not Fond of Using Condoms and I Was Not on Contraception': Understanding Adolescent Mothers' Perspectives of Sexual Risk Behaviour in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa."
- ⁴⁶ Joanne S Palfreman, "The Blessor Phenomenon: Transactional Sex and Intergenerational Relationships in Urban South Africa," *Unpublished MSc, Lund University*, 2020.
- ⁴⁷ Dunkle et al., "Transactional Sex with Casual and Main Partners among Young South African Men in the Rural Eastern Cape: Prevalence, Predictors, and Associations with Gender-Based Violence."

A weaker criminal justice system to avert GBV

Observations on the ground suggest that the sudden increase in GBV cases is due to the criminal justice system not being strong enough to deal with these cases.⁴⁸ For example, there is a perception that officers do not take cases of GBV seriously.⁴⁹ (In some instances, claims of bribery result in courts of law subverting justice in favour of the accused and to the detriment of the complainants.⁵⁰ Another observation on the ground is that the motivation to carry out GBV killings is driven by demands from sorcery, witchcraft, and other cultural and metaphysical beliefs.⁵¹ To this end that many African states have adopted laws that criminalize rape and other forms of gender-based violence (GBV), but the enforcement of such laws is often weak. In the South African context, many rape cases are never brought to court, and victims are frequently encouraged to accept reconciliation instead of prosecuting offenders.⁵²

GBV interventions are symptomatic in nature

The primary prevention strategies of GBV should address the underlying causes and drivers of gender-based violence to prevent violence and promote safer, respectful, and happy relations between men and women.⁵³ In that spirit, it appears that the practice of addressing GBV in South Africa is handled symptomatically, thereby removing strong deterrents from the quagmire. Other than poverty and unemployment, which may be seen as obvious causes of GBV, there seems to be a growing trend of situations where women, despite being able to finance their affairs, still wish to rely on men. This lack of independence makes them subjects of gender-based violence. These researchers believe that, if a lifestyle audit were conducted, their material possessions, such as their houses and cars, could be significantly more expensive than their ordinary earnings. These researchers believe that women should focus on developing their sense of responsibility and independence, rather than making efforts to fight for their rights.⁵⁴ Further observation on the ground suggests that one way for women to fight GBV is to avoid forming inadvertent relationships with men.

The unfathomable rise in cases of GBV in South Africa attests to the fact that South African society is not winning the battle against gender-based violence.⁵⁵ It is inopportune that females do not feel safe at work, at home, and on the streets.⁵⁶ Another school of thought holds that women do not want to take the lead in the fight against gender-based violence.⁵⁷ For example, in matches against gender-based violence, men appear to take the frontline, while women take a backseat. This presents a paradox that needs a cross-examination. If women are indeed victims, they should stand up and take care of their destinies. It is not enough for leaders of political formations to increasingly advocate against GBV while women are passive. Perhaps it is also important for those fighting GBV to go deep and assess whether the women viewed as victims could contribute to the environment of gender-based violence. Perhaps the cases of some men who have been victims of GBV could help in a deeper analysis of the contribution of women in the fray of GBV.⁵⁸

Furthermore, the country needs a gender-transformative education that is not limited to being operationalized only in the classroom setting or in response to incidents, but rather one that addresses the

⁴⁸ M C Van Hout and D Chimnga, "Tackling the Intersectionality of Drug Offences, Gender Based Violence and Victimization in the South African Criminal Justice System: Leveraging for Greater Implementation of the Tokyo Rules within a Sustainable Development Agenda," *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* 22, no. 3 (2020): 157–65.

⁴⁹ Kunle Oparinde and Rachel Matteau Matsha, "Powerful Discourse: Gender-Based Violence and Counter-Discourses in South Africa," *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 8, no. 1 (January 1, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2021.1911035>.

⁵⁰ Soma Pillay, "Corruption—the Challenge to Good Governance: A South African Perspective," *International Journal of Public Sector Management* 17, no. 7 (2004): 586–605.

⁵¹ Peace A Medie, "Fighting Gender-Based Violence: The Women's Movement and the Enforcement of Rape Law in Liberia," *African Affairs* 112, no. 448 (2013): 377–97.

⁵² Martha Minow, "Do Alternative Justice Mechanisms Deserve Recognition in International Criminal Law: Truth Commissions, Amnesties, and Complementarity at the International Criminal Court," *Harv. Int'l LJ* 60 (2019): 1.

⁵³ Elspeth Burris, "Gender-Based Violence in South Africa: Thinking beyond Carceral Solutions," 2022.

⁵⁴ Kressent Pottenger et al., "Women Farmworkers Fight to Secure Their Rights and End Sexual Harassment," in *New Labor Forum*, vol. 28 (SAGE Publications Sage CA: Los Angeles, CA, 2019), 92–97.

⁵⁵ Pottenger et al., "Women Farmworkers Fight to Secure Their Rights and End Sexual Harassment."

⁵⁶ Shalini Mittal and Tushar Singh, "Gender-Based Violence during COVID-19 Pandemic: A Mini-Review," *Frontiers in Global Women's Health* 1 (2020): 570087.

⁵⁷ Pottenger et al., "Women Farmworkers Fight to Secure Their Rights and End Sexual Harassment."

⁵⁸ Pumla Dineo Gqola, "How the 'Cult of Femininity' and Violent Masculinities Support Endemic Gender Based Violence in Contemporary South Africa," *African Identities* 5, no. 1 (2007): 111–24.

seeds of GBV attitudes and practices. Mainstreaming gender-based lessons in the educational curriculum could be a bold step in addressing spates of GBV in the country. Such a curriculum should address the patriarchal motivation that makes men feel that they should not be equal to women.⁵⁹

Weaker government goodwill to address GBV policy in South Africa

The struggle for liberation, equity, and equality in South Africa has come a long way to the point where South Africa celebrated twenty years of democracy in 2014.⁶⁰ Unequivocally, substantive advancements have been made toward a constitutional framework and domestic policy that is transformational, progressive, and empowering.⁶¹ However, South Africa still faces inordinately high levels of gender-based violence that day-in-day-out takes a geometric progression.⁶² In response to the prevalence of gender-based violence, both government and civil society have responded in various ways. This article seeks to trace the policy contours for addressing gender-based violence in this young democracy and submits that South Africans and supportive partners should address the underlying factors that create violent crimes in South Africa in a sincere manner.⁶³

THE WAY FORWARD

The policies regarding GBV are more Westernized and less applicable to the African local milieu. It would then be essential to integrate traditional approaches to addressing GBV with the existing government interventions. This aligns with one of the views that to curb the scourge, communities must be involved. This is applying the spirit of indigenisation. This community involvement is one of the pillars of community development that guarantees project success. Importantly, Faith-based organisations are supposed to play a vital role in settling grievances that result in GBV. It is believed that to significantly tackle GBV, women must be empowered economically so that they do not depend on men, whether financially, emotionally, psychologically, or physically. It should be noted that in some communities, women learn self-defense lessons so that they can defend themselves against episodes of GBV attacks.

Embracing the spirit of Ubuntu, women must believe in themselves and support one another.⁶⁴ They should adopt a lifestyle that is not economically dependent on men. They should strive for the spirit of self-sufficiency and independence.⁶⁵ Lastly, as South Africa is facing social ills such as unemployment, poverty, rape, etc., one of the suggestions is that there must be good partnerships between all levels of government, from local, provincial, and national levels, and the communities. This is because communities better understand these social ills and can guide the government's efforts in tackling them if they are made important partners. Awareness campaigns targeting all population groups are critical, with a particular emphasis on youth. The other thing that must be highlighted in our communities is that GBV does not affect only women but also affects men. Men should be encouraged to report cases of gender-based violence imposed against them by their female counterparts.

CONCLUSION

The government and other gender-friendly organisations need to go to the bottom of the causative agents and drivers of gender-based violence if ever the phenomenon is annihilated or mitigated significantly. Since gender-based violence is an outcome of various kinds of dysfunctionalities in society, it is critical that the underpinnings of these quagmires, such as divorce, substance abuse, and a lack of adherence to

⁵⁹ Benedikta, Yosefina Kebinjin and Armada Riyanto, "The Impact of Education on Patriarch Culture and Gender Equality," *Journal of Asian Orientation in Theology* 04, no. 01 (February 25, 2022): 79–104, <https://doi.org/10.24071/jaot.v4i1.4223>.

⁶⁰ Hattery and Smith, *Gender, Power, and Violence: Responding to Sexual and Intimate Partner Violence in Society Today*.

⁶¹ Eric Kibet and Charles Fombad, "Transformative Constitutionalism and the Adjudication of Constitutional Rights in Africa," *African Human Rights Law Journal* 17, no. 2 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.17159/1996-2096/2017/v17n2a1>.

⁶² Favour Uroko and Solomon Enobong, "Beyond the Rhetoric of Genesis 34: 1-28: Understanding the Rape Epidemic during the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 42, no. 1 (2021): 1–8.

⁶³ Thenjiwe Meyiwa et al., "A Twenty-Year Review of Policy Landscape for Gender-Based Violence in South Africa," *Gender and Behaviour* 15, no. 2 (2017): 8607–17.

⁶⁴ Simon Murote Kang'ethe, "Coping Opportunities and Deficits Displayed by People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in Alice Region, Eastern Cape, South Africa: Social Work Implications," *African Journal of Social Work* 12, no. 3 (2022): 123–32.

⁶⁵ D. Brown, *Globalization and the Politics of Religion: Secularism, Religious Pluralism, and Global Christianity and Islam* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

social norms, such as Ubuntu, are seriously interrogated. It is essential that interventions aimed at addressing these underpinnings are proposed and reinforced.

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