



Investigating African Indigenous Ways to Mitigate Gender-Based Violence in Bushbuckridge of Mpumalanga Province in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Studies suggest that South Africa has the highest global rates of gender-based violence. Regardless of national laws imposed against gender-based violence, it continues to exacerbate. This has raised a need for a different perspective in addressing this issue of gender-based violence, an African indigenous-based perspective. This study was aimed at scrutinising African indigenous ways to mitigate gender-based violence amongst the Mapulana people of Bushbuckridge in the Mpumalanga Province. The rates of gender-based violence cases are witnessed to be increasing in Bushbuckridge. This is attributed to the isolation of indigenous methods of living. One of the study's objectives was to explore family and traditional leadership intervention in a marriage setting as African indigenous ways of mitigating conflict to attain peace in the case of gender-based violence. Sankofaism theory paradigms guided this study. A qualitative research method was employed. The recommendation of this study submits relevant and appropriate strategies to ensure that the indigenous knowledge systems of the Mapulana people in Bushbuckridge are not side-lined from mainstream knowledge. The study also recommends that future research can focus on the African indigenous response to gender-based violence against men and boys, for the purpose of equality. This study will contribute to the currently limited body of knowledge on the topic, which can be utilised by future researchers.

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INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence has been proven to be a problematic global phenomenon. It is characterised by gender inequality and its notable nature of human rights violations across societies.¹ This form of violence is not gender specific, however, it is globally estimated that at least one in three women in their lives have been subjected to either physical or sexual violence.² Many women will be subjected to perpetual physical and sexual violence, with the perpetrator being someone they know, either an intimate partner, relative, etc.³

¹ EIGE, "What Is Gender Based Violence," 2019, <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/what-is-gender-based-violence>.

² International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), "Sexual and Gender Based Violence, Fair Trial Rights and the Rights of Victims - Challenges in Using Law and Justice Systems Faced by Women Human Rights Defenders," , November 5, 2015, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/57ee7f724.html>.

³ International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), "Sexual and Gender Based Violence, Fair Trial Rights and the Rights of Victims - Challenges in Using Law and Justice Systems Faced by Women Human Rights Defenders,"

The issue of gender-based violence and sexual assault in the United States continues to be a problem. The General Recommendation of the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee), in the year 1992 established that gender-based violence “is the type of violence that is inflicted intentionally on a woman because she is a woman”, and also that “gender-based violence manifests to be a form of discrimination against women enjoying their rights and liberation as compared to men”.⁴

According to Mpani and Nsibande, gender-based violence is viewed as violence against women and is widely spread, studies done globally suggest that the highest rates of sexual intimate partner violence (IPV), physical violence and also non-partner sexual violence are most prevalent in Africa as compared to the world at large.⁵ The ratings of women who experience such episodes once or more times in their lives amount to 45.6% as compared to the 35% of the global average.⁶

In Swaziland, domestic violence is very problematic, where gender-based and sexual violence occurs in a very patriarchal society and local customs and laws are regarded as superior to regional and international laws.⁷ However, now the kingdom is aware of the extent of the problem.

In Zimbabwe, the Domestic Violence Act was adopted in 2007, after it was seen as an unwanted intrusion into the private sphere for 16 years.⁸ Incidents of gender-based violence remain prevalent because the law is very strong on paper while in reality only a few cases have been taken to court.⁹

South Africa similarly to the world at large recognises the acts of gender-based violence as a major human rights violation.¹⁰ The South African government has been working so hard since 1994 to address numerous different forms of violence including gender-based violence, with the aim of healing and rebuilding South Africa.¹¹ The issue of gender-based violence has been acknowledged as the major concern that it has become and was reflected in the 1996 adopted Crime Prevention Strategy.¹² The 1995 Beijing Declaration, Maputo Protocol and Southern African Development Community Policy on Gender are some of the international and regional treaties signed by the South African Government in dealing with gender-based violence.¹³ Despite all the efforts through the introduction of sexual violence legislation and forums, South Africa is still known as ‘the rape capital of the world’.¹⁴

In the February 2020 State Of the Nation Address, the president of South Africa promulgated the following stricter measures to mitigate gender-based violence in the country which drives also municipalities such as the Bushbuckridge municipality:

- Harsher minimum sentencing for crimes against women and children, denying parole and bail for perpetrators of crimes such as rape and murder on women and children, and also reduce repeated offenders through introducing more rehabilitation centres in correctional services. Emergency response teams will bring together SAPS, the Department of Health, Education, Social Development and Justice to focus on violence against women and children and also marginalised groups.

⁴ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Violence Against Women: An EU-Wide Survey Luxembourg* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2015).

⁵ Patience Mpani and Nondumiso Nsibande, “Gender-Based Violence,” April 21, 2017, <http://www.soulcity.org.za/projects/advocacy/gbv/resources/understanding-gender-policy-and-gender-based-violence-in-south-africa-a-literature-review>.

⁶ Mpani and Nsibande, “Gender-Based Violence.”

⁷ International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), “Sexual and Gender Based Violence, Fair Trial Rights and the Rights of Victims - Challenges in Using Law and Justice Systems Faced by Women Human Rights Defenders.”

⁸ International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), “Sexual and Gender Based Violence, Fair Trial Rights and the Rights of Victims - Challenges in Using Law and Justice Systems Faced by Women Human Rights Defenders.”

⁹ International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), “Sexual and Gender Based Violence, Fair Trial Rights and the Rights of Victims - Challenges in Using Law and Justice Systems Faced by Women Human Rights Defenders.”

¹⁰ CSVr, “Mapping Local Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Strategies in South Africa,” 2016, <http://www.csvr.org.za>.

¹¹ CSVr, “Mapping Local Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Strategies in South Africa.”

¹² CSVr, “Mapping Local Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Strategies in South Africa.”

¹³ CSVr, “Mapping Local Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Strategies in South Africa.”

¹⁴ International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), “Sexual and Gender Based Violence, Fair Trial Rights and the Rights of Victims - Challenges in Using Law and Justice Systems Faced by Women Human Rights Defenders.”

- National register for gender-based violence offenders which will document all the offenders of gender-based violence.
- Injecting more funds to gender-based violence campaigns through school programs, workplace policies and community initiatives.¹⁵

This research study advocates the use of African Indigenous ways to mitigate gender-based violence because they are currently not playing a role even in the Bushbuckridge municipality. It focuses on the African indigenous ways of the Mapulana people of Bushbuckridge to mitigate gender-based violence with even more focus on the women and children as victims of gender-based violence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

African Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Kaya in his paper which interrogates the prospects and challenges of integrating African Indigenous Knowledge Systems into higher education, highlighted a few important points about African Indigenous Knowledge Systems.¹⁶ Although the paper does not have all the relevant information related to the research study, it touches on certain aspects of the research. He argues that the longstanding traditions and practices of culture-specific to local communities are referred to as African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS). Kaya also additionally states that the African Indigenous Knowledge Systems of a community form the community's fundamental decision-making in health, conflict resolution, natural resource management, agriculture, governance and leadership and other livelihood activities.¹⁷

Kaya's definition of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems identifies IKS as knowledge owned by the local community.¹⁸ The researcher agrees with the above scholar because he additionally indicates that African Indigenous Knowledge Systems are owned and used by the community of origin. Hence African Indigenous Knowledge systems are the knowledge systems that are fundamental tools of the daily proceedings and also on how the proceedings of local communities are conducted. Since time immemorial, before the invasion of Westernisation, Africans had their methods of sustaining their daily lives. By living closely, in harmony and having an interdependent relationship with the natural environment, they could identify and manufacture medicine from plants and animals, read the stars for directions, and read certain animal behaviours to predict weather and harvesting seasons. Through their African Indigenous Knowledge, they also created local ways of attaining and maintaining peace and order, gender roles, education, and food security methods applicable to them.

Gudhanga and Makaudze opine that Africa takes ownership of its own African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS) which includes beliefs, social values and also practices that were used to inform the various African institutions.¹⁹ The above scholars also state that in a close analysis of the African worldview, it was revealed that the African continent has advanced agricultural systems, judiciary structures, medical practice and strong social structures that had high concern for humanity's well-being.

Gudhanga and Makaudze in their argument reveal Africa's independent advancements in a number of spheres.²⁰ The researcher agrees with the above scholars because they indicate the capabilities of the owners of African Indigenous Knowledge through African Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Africans have their world view, hence their knowledge systems are different from many other views. The knowledge systems were invented in ways that cater for their world view and hence they managed to survive. To date, traditional medicine which was derived from trial and error through IKS

¹⁵ The Presidency, 2020.

¹⁶ H O Kaya, "Integration of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems into Higher Education in South Africa: Prospects and Challenges," *Alternation* 20, no. 1 (2013): 135–53.

¹⁷ Kaya, "Integration of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems into Higher Education in South Africa: Prospects and Challenges."

¹⁸ Kaya, "Integration of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems into Higher Education in South Africa: Prospects and Challenges."

¹⁹ E.S. Gudhanga and G. Makaudze, "Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Confirming a Legacy of Civilisation and Culture on the African Continent," *Prime Journal of Social Science* 1, no. 4 (2012): 72–77.

²⁰ Gudhanga and Makaudze, "Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Confirming a Legacy of Civilisation and Culture on the African Continent."

is relied on by 80% of the world's population.²¹ Plants have different mixtures of phytochemicals (metabolites) that are capable of improving health.²²

All of the above scholars had similar arguments on authenticating the role of African Indigenous Knowledge. Even with the existence of globalisation, some of the African Indigenous Knowledge methods can be borrowed to help assist in modern-day problems while not disputing the fact that some African Indigenous Knowledge methods are still playing a role currently such as in subsistence farming. Therefore the African Indigenous Knowledge of ways of attaining and maintaining peace and order in local areas needs to be revived and applied to mitigate the problem of gender-based violence in the Bushbuckridge municipality.

African Indigenous Societal Pedagogy

Kano and Ndubisi argue that spirituality was used by African students for assistance in attaining meaning from what they learned.²³ Additionally, he also argues that spirituality played a pivotal role in indigenous societies such that students even employed it to make links between values, morals and intellect as opposed to acquiring knowledge. The indigenous pedagogy prioritised producing functional and productive individuals. Anene and Njoku, argue that it also inculcated social responsibility to individuals to ensure that individuals contribute meaningfully towards the community.²⁴ They further argue that in such societies social compliance was guided by spiritual and physical influences and punishment for crime was communal thus leaving no room for manipulation of accounts.

The argument by the above scholar serves to prove that Africans are spiritual beings although they do not detail the fundamental reason why and how that came to be. This research is in agreement with the above arguments since it appears that the precolonial African societies were intertwined with their spirituality. They were more aware of their spirituality as having a sense of purpose and peace with a positive impact on their lives. The researchers believe that this is evident through the use of myths, proverbs, and taboos to instil and follow good conduct which had a spiritual reference. They opine that the scholars do not portray how much spirituality shaped the day to day-to-day activities of the people in the then societies. Since Africans are spiritual beings, it is believed that the employment of spirituality in their methods of teaching and learning was compulsory and came naturally. The utilisation of spirituality in their teaching gave more weight, determination and meaning to the overall activity. This also held together the good conduct of individuals within the community. This was easily adapted as there was no other widely existing means of belief apart from spirituality.

Modern societies have shifted their parameters from African spirituality which used mechanisms to instil good conduct amongst people in a community. Not only did this leave the African spirituality abandoned, but also left communities with no mechanisms that instil good conduct amongst individuals. This gradually led to a slow-moving social destruction which we today witness as gender-based violence and femicide to name a few as prioritised by this study.

African Indigenous Societal Lifestyles

Olowu argues that social control in most African societies was overridden by emphasising social harmony.²⁵ The scholar additionally states that the concept of Ubuntu which was identified through different names and labels by numerous communities played a major role in social harmony. He further states that since the Ubuntu philosophy is founded on the basis that all humans are symbiotic, societal

²¹ WHO, *Global and Regional Estimates of Violence against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Nonpartner Sexual Violence* (Italy: WHO Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data, 2013).

²² M.F. Mahomoodally, *Traditional Medicines in Africa; an Appraisal of Ten Potent African Medicinal Plants; Evidence Based Implementer and Alternative Medicine* (South Africa: Routledge, 2013).

²³ Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu and Ejikemeuwa J. O. Ndubisi, *African Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Problems and Perspectives*. (The Association for the Promotion of African Studies, 2020).

²⁴ C.P. Anene and C.U. Njoku, "African Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Problems and Perspectives. Communal Oral Historians as Reservoirs and Curators of Indigenous Historical Scholarship," 2020, <https://www.researchgate.net>.

²⁵ Oladejo J Olowu, "Indigenous Approaches to Conflict Resolution in Africa: A Study of the Barolong People of the North-West Province, South Africa," 2017.

and individual roles are all equally important. Furthermore, in support of the above scholar's argument, Motsamai opines that Africans and the communal world are inseparable in African history.²⁶ The African worldview is profoundly based on communalism in all aspects of life. The researcher agrees that it is important to regulate social control to achieve social harmony. The Ubuntu philosophy managed to unite societies in the past. However, today social control has no regulations in most societies hence the Ubuntu philosophy is less practiced. The Ubuntu philosophy which instilled compulsory human interdependence and equality was replaced by individualism and endless fights for power attainment. This can be seen through observing the different types of human abilities to cause distress and harm to each other which are perpetual. Gender-based violence, femicide, serial killer acts and crime to name a few, serve as concrete proof that the Ubuntu philosophy only exists verbally amongst people in societies. The African worldview of communalism has departed from the lives of Africans. Personal gains take precedence over communal gains. This is also observed through the prevalent act of rape as a form of gender-based violence. Instead of the perpetrator considering how selfish and inhumane such a violation is, they take pride in it by repeating it either to the same victim or another.

African Indigenous Ways of Child Grooming

Wenner and Smith in Murovhi et al. state that childrearing practices are embedded within the culture.²⁷ Murovhi et al. argue that these child-rearing practices determine the behaviours and expectations around the child's stages of life from birth, to infancy, childhood, and adolescence and the way these children will parent in their adulthood.²⁸ Additionally, Murovhi, et.al opine that to further enculturate children, male and female initiation schools played a role. Furthermore, Murovhi, et. al state that in the Vhavenda culture, *vhutuku* and *mula* are for boys while girls attend *domba*, *musevetho* and *vhusha* and these traditional schools play a big role in child upbringing. However, at times some of the songs that are taught to boys in *mula* to disrespect women when they come back from initiation school encompasses negative impact.

The above scholars in elaborating the channels of enculturation bring initiation schools to the arena. Indeed they play a major role in further enculturating children across cultures. Be that as it may, the type of knowledge passed down during enculturation is important as it determines the upbringing of the children. While these teachings offered at initiation schools are important, some instil negative behaviours which are often misconceptually related to adolescent stage behaviour. To some, such negative behaviour goes far beyond the elaborated behaviour by Murovhi, et.al to general disrespectful mannerisms at home, in schools and society. Most of the children who adopt such behaviour grow up to be notorious members of the society who engage in activities such as assault, rape, mugging and burglary. Therefore it is important to review the type of teachings offered at initiation schools in Bushbuckridge in relation to the direct/indirect role they may play in gender-based violence and negative behaviourism.

Hebert, et.al argue that how parents interact with their children, especially in their childhood can either assist or delay their way of developing through to the adolescent stage.²⁹ Moreover, they argue that the early interactions caregivers have with their children partake in how the children present themselves and represent others in close relationships, together with learning skills required during conflict resolution and dealing with violence. Furthermore, they pinpoint that the social learning theory states that experiencing abuse at home or in the family of origin often leads to the belief of accepting violence in general as a conflict resolution norm.

²⁶ Motsamai Molefe, "Personhood and Rights in an African Tradition," *Politikon* 45, no. 2 (May 4, 2018): 217–31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02589346.2017.1339176>.

²⁷ Avhurengwi Murovhi et al., "Traditional Child Rearing Practices in Vhavenda Families South Africa," *Journal of Gender, Information and Development in Africa (JGIDA)* 7, no. 1 (2018): 21–37; .

²⁸ Murovhi et al., "Traditional Child Rearing Practices in Vhavenda Families South Africa."

²⁹ Martine Hébert et al., "A Meta-Analysis of Risk and Protective Factors for Dating Violence Victimization: The Role of Family and Peer Interpersonal Context," *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 20, no. 4 (October 22, 2019): 574–90, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838017725336>.

The results of what parents expose their children to as they are growing have been seen as having a significant role to play in the children's lives as mentioned above.³⁰ The same argument has been made by several scholars raising awareness among parents on the importance of paying attention to what they expose their children to and how it can impact their children's future. It is worth noting that the behaviours in adulthood are shadowed by how one was raised, therefore good parenting skills are very crucial to a child's life.

African Indigenous World View

Molobela, argues that the African worldview can be seen as a humanistic philosophy which originates from the rural settings of pre-colonial Africa.³¹ He also states that the African worldview is made up of allegiances between people and empowers relations among people through moral values of sharing, friendliness, caring, respect, kindness, generosity, consideration, hospitality and compassion. Additionally, he states that the ethical and moral values on what is right and wrong and also what is good and bad are derived from the African Philosophy. Moreover, he argues that this African philosophy has a connection with the concept of Ubuntu which plays the role of the rule of conduct and a factual description defined by the acts of morality, discipline, responsibility, duty, altruism, self, and social consciousness. Furthermore, he argues that the African philosophy also describes that human beings are identified with others and prescribes the way they should relate with each other.

Although the above scholar does not detail the style of living of the rural setting in pre-colonial Africa, the researchers agree with him that the style of living had an influence behind it which he identifies as humanistic philosophy. Observations on the daily lives indicate that there was a systematic order of rule which was compulsorily followed by all. Molobela does not elaborate on how the humanistic philosophy came to be or what factors influenced its manifestation, which I believe would give an even broader understanding of the then-overall style of living.³² However, the researchers are of the belief that his revelation that a connection between the African philosophy and the concept of Ubuntu exists to give light to what might have influenced the manifestation of the African philosophy.

From Molobela's argument, the study opines that the existence of the African philosophy and Ubuntu held the community together.³³ The researchers believe that this ensured peace within the community. Molobela does not detail the exact methods of how the African philosophy and the Ubuntu concept were instilled in members of the community.³⁴ As a result, no knowledge exists of specific formal or informal institutions where such knowledge was instilled in members of the community. The researcher believes that had he made mention of the institutions responsible for instilling norms and would be able to make a productivity contrast between the then institutions and the modern modern-day institution with keeping the community together. The state of the community now versus the then community suggests that they were not cut from the same cloth.

Molobela, argues that the lack of individualism is seen through the African's view that awards the whole community great importance compared to its individuals and thus the extent of their unshaken solidarity which oversees individual needs.³⁵ He also argues that in trying to obtain a further understanding of this notion we can microscope the way the African traditional thought considers personhood in holistic terms. He further argues that in this regard, the human individual is not denied the ontological fact, rather the ontological primacy is given to the community through which an individual identifies with. Molobela, additionally argues that according to the African conception of the human, he/she is not just a person but he/she is an individual born into a community, the purpose and survival of such is connected with that of others.³⁶ Moreover, he argues that this then fuelled the

³⁰ Hébert et al., "A Meta-Analysis of Risk and Protective Factors for Dating Violence Victimization: The Role of Family and Peer Interpersonal Context."

³¹ L. Molobela, *Exploring Black Rural Bushbuckridge Women Constructions and Perceptions of the Practice of Abortion* (South Africa: University of South Africa, 2017).

³² Molobela, *Exploring Black Rural Bushbuckridge Women Constructions and Perceptions of the Practice of Abortion*.

³³ Molobela, *Exploring Black Rural Bushbuckridge Women Constructions and Perceptions of the Practice of Abortion*.

³⁴ Molobela, *Exploring Black Rural Bushbuckridge Women Constructions and Perceptions of the Practice of Abortion*.

³⁵ Molobela, *Exploring Black Rural Bushbuckridge Women Constructions and Perceptions of the Practice of Abortion*.

³⁶ Molobela, *Exploring Black Rural Bushbuckridge Women Constructions and Perceptions of the Practice of Abortion*.

argument on African Ubuntu that Its ideal maturity requires an individual to maintain their individualisms but should not lose the sense of the community because it facilitates their individuality. Furthermore, he argues that it is so because the basis of the African worldview is determined to prepare people with normative principles that are required for taking responsible decisions and actions for both themselves and the community at large.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research study through the lens of the theory interrogated the African worldview of societal growth. This was so to understand and attempt to intertwine their ways with the modern ways. Since the research study was about seeking relevance of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems, theories such as cultural feminism, Afrocentrism and Sankofaism have relevance to the study. However, cultural feminism theory is the theory that underpinned the paradigms of this research study. This is so because it is a theory that emphasises the differences between men and women, concerning their biological differences in reproduction capacity.³⁷ Cultural feminism results from the distinctive and superior natures of a woman.³⁸ This theory relates to the study because it is based on acknowledging women's differences from men and upholding them instead of using and victimising them.

The Afrocentrism of Asante Molefi is asserted based on the idea that there should be a sense of agency re-asserted to African people to achieve sanity.³⁹ Afrocentricity is a revolutionary shift in the way of thinking which is proposed as an adjustment to decentred, disorientation and lack of agency.⁴⁰ Therefore it has relevance to the study because it requires the African to think without Western influence, to think the way an African would think before the Western invasion.

However, the research study was underpinned by the paradigms of Sankofa, an African indigenous philosophical thought of the Akans (Twi-speaking people) of Ghana.⁴¹ Sankofa is made up of three syllables San (return) ko (go) fa (take) with the philosophical meaning of go back so you can learn and a direct translation of go back and take.⁴² The Sankofa symbol is a mythical bird that is flying in a forward direction but with its head backward, which is interpreted by the Akans as meaning that learning from the past has wisdom.⁴³ According to the Akan worldview, people belong to the past which determines the present and has a major impact on the future.⁴⁴

The theory of Sankofa was employed because it relates more to the study compared to the first two mentioned theories. This theory advocates for the need to go to the past to seek a solution profitable for the present and future. Similarly, the research study was intended to poke the past ways of the Mapulana people which are found in their indigenous ways, for the betterment of the gender-based violence situation in Bushbuckidge municipality. The study sought to go back to the African indigenous ways, in an attempt to find ways of mitigating gender-based violence faced presently and this will have an impact in the future. The theory relates more to the study because it still sees the relevance of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems in this constantly evolving world. According to the theory of Sankofa, the past holds wisdom.⁴⁵ This is mainly because people from the past encompass experience on how things must be done, attained through possible trials and errors, therefore considering the experience from the past is most crucial in shaping a better future.

METHODOLOGY

³⁷ J Bingham et al., "Cultural Feminism in South Africa," *Mississippi: Jackson State University-CLL*, 2009.

³⁸ Bingham et al., "Cultural Feminism in South Africa."

³⁹ A.E. Molefi, *Afrocentricity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009).

⁴⁰ Molefi, *Afrocentricity*.

⁴¹ K P Quan-Baffour, "The Wisdom of Our Forefathers: Sankofaism and Its Educational Lessons for Today," *Journal of Educational Studies* 7, no. 2 (2008): 22–31.

⁴² Bingham et al., "Cultural Feminism in South Africa."

⁴³ Quan-Baffour, "The Wisdom of Our Forefathers: Sankofaism and Its Educational Lessons for Today."

⁴⁴ Quan-Baffour, "The Wisdom of Our Forefathers: Sankofaism and Its Educational Lessons for Today."

⁴⁵ Quan-Baffour, "The Wisdom of Our Forefathers: Sankofaism and Its Educational Lessons for Today."

The Qualitative research design was chosen from the existing pool of approaches such as quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. Its nature of presenting factual words made it more applicable as compared to the quantitative approach which is based on facts that are numerically presented.⁴⁶ The study undertook the explorative design method which according to Goundar is most applied to new topics or issues, and also where little information is known about a topic or issue, hence deemed relevant to be employed in investigating African Indigenous ways to mitigate gender-based violence amongst the Mapulana people.⁴⁷

Bushbuckridge Municipality, which is informally known as Mapulaneng was the study area for the study solely because it is where the Mapulana people reside and have their cultural history embedded in the land. Research also suggests that it is an understudied geographical area as very minimal literature exists about the area.

Semi-structured interviews and group discussions were the data collecting instruments used to gather information from respondents and obtain a detailed understanding of Mapulana's cultural strategies for mitigating gender-based violence. Semi-structured interviews were chosen due to their advantageous open-ended nature, while focus group discussion allows for the stimulation of varied responses amongst respondents. In qualitative research, data analysis is a process that is ongoing, emerging, and non-linear.⁴⁸ The data for this qualitative study was analysed thematically.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Current Understanding of Gender-Based Violence by Society in Pre-marital Relationships

Gender-based violence according to CSVr is the term given to identify the type of violence that takes place mainly resulting from unfulfilled normative gender role expectations and unequal power relations.⁴⁹ The respondents had the following to say when asked what they understand gender-based violence to be.

“It’s when men oppress women in all corners such as beating, raping, and forcing her to do things she doesn’t want. Gender obviously has to do with men and females.” Respondent 1

“How I understand it is in as much as it is gender-based violence it is not particularly mostly on the male side. Let me say in South Africa it usually happens a lot in the female side. The female gender is the one that is mostly abused by the males and if you look at it, also with kids, girls. So basically it is violence caused by males to women and children, it is both sides though even women can abuse men and boy children.” Respondent 2

The findings revealed that there is a clash of varied views on the term gender-based violence but most had a common meaning. While the findings show that there is an existing understanding of gender-based violence according to the book and it was also unveiled that the most common existing understanding leaned more towards women and children being the common victims of gender-based violence. Gender-based violence has no confinements therefore such findings conflict with the actual definition of the term gender-based violence. This subsequently means that the people of Bushbuckridge copiously lacked the appropriate understanding of the term as expressed by the most common existing understanding. According to the common understanding, a man/boy being physically or sexually abused by a woman/girl is not considered gender-based violence by most Mapulana respondents of Bushbuckridge. The findings suggest a need to direct their understanding of what gender-based violence is accordingly, so they can be able to identify aggressors irrespective of their gender. This will help them be able to not only know what gender-based violence is but also to identify it, beyond their limit of basing it only on women as victims since it is not violence against women.

⁴⁶ T.J. Mudau, “Educational Achievement Tracking for Teen Mothers in South Africa with Specific Reference to Vhembe District” (2015).

⁴⁷ S. Goundar, “Research Methodology and Research Method,” 2012, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333015026>.

⁴⁸ Mudau, “Educational Achievement Tracking for Teen Mothers in South Africa with Specific Reference to Vhembe District.”

⁴⁹ CSVr, “Mapping Local Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Strategies in South Africa.”

However, this does not take away the fact that in South Africa, women and adolescent girls are primarily the victims of gender-based violence. This is often due to certain limitations they face such as lower socioeconomic status coupled with gender discrimination.⁵⁰

Family and Traditional Leadership Intervention in a Marriage Setting as African Indigenous Ways of Mitigating Conflict to Attain Peace in the Case of Gender Based

“When a conflict of a man beating a woman arises between people that are married and staying together, the aunt of the family would be told usually by the wife, who then had has to pass the message on to the parents of the husband. The parents would sit them down to talk to them. They would discourage their fighting by making them aware of their responsibility as adults. The responsibility to take forward the family in a proper way and also the responsibility to conduct themselves well because their younger siblings are looking up to them. They would also be told that fighting with each other is like fighting with their parents because their parents are old and now looking up to them to grow the family in a well-mannered way with peace.”

Respondent 4.

The verbatim response elucidates a profoundly significant manner of resolving conflict amongst the Mapulana people. This researcher believes the above step-by-step form of dealing with conflict is productive, especially when utilised fairly. The whole process was productive because of the amount of trust and respect that is embedded within families. Those are the same qualities that drive a person to voice out their challenges to a person they trust because they trust they will be helped, and because they respect them they will sincerely listen to them. Subsequently, it is crucial to plant the seed of trust and respect within families.

The study found out that they are in existence and are indeed under-employed in Bushbuckridge. Regardless of their productivity, people have different views about them. These different views are mostly resulting from a single bad experience if not based on a “hearsay” bad experience. However, they play a significant role in a form of regulating married people to treat each other in acceptable ways. These methods of regulating gender-based violence include arranged marriages which are believed to produce one of the most harmonious marriages as it is between distant relatives, who are aware of their relation. This is so because the union is between two related people. Therefore the husband and wife are compelled to ensure that peace is sustained in their home so as not to embarrass their elders. The other method involved a systematic process with the end result of asking elderly family members for assistance, in most cases for married people. This process is facilitated usually by the aunt of the husband, who after being alerted by either the husband or the wife, sometimes depending on who is at fault, then takes the necessary steps to request the elders in both families for their assistance. This method is very much reliant on the equal need to attain peace and resolution by the participants in the meeting and also mutual respect. In the absence of a mutual goal and response, peace will not be attained. The matter will therefore be escalated to the *nduna* who holds the final judgement to resolve the matter.

Collaborative Strategies for the Existing Measures of Mitigating Gender-Based Violence and African Indigenous Measures

“So if we were to take this matter, and when our children start squabbling then we advise that they should not rush to report the matter to the police. Because when a case is reported and the husband is arrested and locked up, these policemen have tendencies to go back to the victim and start sexual relationships with them because the husband would be arrested. So if we were to intervene as parents when our children that are together start fighting, intervene and have a serious talk with them, they must also have intentions to build their union, and they listen to us as their parents. Intervene to help them recover and build, not starting by saying to the husband that you have hurt our daughter so we need to fight. So as parents, we would be

⁵⁰ SAHRC, “Unpacking the Gaps and Challenges in Addressing Gender-Based Violence in South Africa,” 2018, www.sahrc.org.za.

coming in to build, even when we see what is wrong as adults, we focus on helping to build and we should consider our children's well-being. The remedy for such is that between them you identify the initiator and remedy them until they are healed to the depth of their heart. I feel like in that way we can mitigate gender-based violence. Culture has its way of conflicting people but it also has respect, helping each other, taking care of each other, humanness and seboka (communality) and it takes care of people." Respondent 6

The above respondent and most others would rather have the family intervene first to assist as compared to going to the police. This approach gives the family a chance to give their assistance as expected by the cultural etiquette. This approach gives the complainants a chance to chest out their challenges as they are interrogated. That is crucial as it is a form of therapy for the mind and emotions which gives way for healing. A lot of people go around carrying burdens in the form of issues that they feel like they cannot talk to anyone about. This channel addresses such and perhaps referral to a professional counsellor where needs be.

The findings of the study with regards to how the Mapulana people of Bushbuckridge feel about their indigenous ways of mitigating gender-based violence currently, revealed that people had mixed feelings about it. While there is a feeling of confidence towards the employment of indigenous methodologies, there is also a lack of confidence that was revealed. The confidence arose from people who have had experience with the Western methods of mitigating gender-based violence but were not satisfied. Hence they saw a need to strengthen the shortcoming through the indigenous ways. Corruption and unprofessional conduct of the police were some of the biggest stressors. The lack of confidence in indigenous methods was supported by how the final judgement of paying fines to the traditional leader was not enough and also the issue of confidentiality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommendations that have been made to successfully address the key challenges of the study:

A. The Police and House of Traditional Leaders

There's a need for a change in behaviour especially by police officers who behave unprofessional when victims present their statements. Laughing at male victims who report gender-based violence and making unsympathetic comments as stated by one of the respondents. Such behaviour adds salt to the wound for the victim and also brings a feeling of sceptical nature towards the outcome of the matter. The respondents had interesting views on each of the indigenous ways of Mapulana to mitigate gender based violence. Some also touched on their experiences with the police. There was an undoubted sense of poor confidence in the justice system and sceptical confidence in the African Indigenous ways. This suggests a dedicated collaborative manner between the police and the House of Traditional Leaders. The study thus recommends that the police and the Traditional Leaders work together without undermining each other. This recommendation can be facilitated through referrals between the authorities together with communication and agreement between the authorities. A channel of productive collaboration should be prioritised and established between the authorities. This will assist the public regain confidence in the relevant authorities as opposed to resorting to illegal mob justice.

B. Department of Health

Gender-based violence is now considered to be a pandemic. It is only fair for it to be treated as such. It is recommended that the clinics and hospitals in Bushbuckridge municipality and beyond, raise awareness of this pandemic through their channels such as school visits campaigns. This will assist people to be able to identify and seek assistance when they are affected by this pandemic. These campaigns can be joined by SAPS officers and members of the House of Traditional Leaders to show their union in fighting off the social ill of gender based violence.

C. Department of Education

It is recommended that the department through the schools in the Bushbuckridge Municipality, do more about raising awareness of the pandemic of gender based violence. It is very concerning to learn that regardless of how much awareness is raised in the country on gender-based violence, there are still people who do not understand what gender-based violence means, and which acts are considered gender-based violence. How do the people then metaphorically fight a beast that they do not know nor understand? Schools through their extramural activities are at liberty to engage their learners and raise awareness of this social ill so that learners can live around this social ill. No society nor school is immune to gender-based violence, therefore the need to understand this social ill is dire. Every school teaches life orientation as a compulsory subject. It is therefore recommended that the compulsory subject of life orientation taught in schools must include aspects of gender based violence. Life orientation is a subject that assists children to navigate through their different stages of life, it is therefore best fitting for this subject to include aspects of the gender-based violence pandemic so it can be identified and be wary of.

D. House of Traditional Leaders

Paying fines by perpetrators should not be prioritised. In the case where the perpetrator has no money and is failing to raise funds for the fine, they might end up committing a crime to pay for the fine. Such is metaphorically stagnation. It is recommended that traditional leaders when putting judgement on a perpetrator, should consider a punishment beyond a monetary supplement. The communities in Bushbuckridge are part of the communities that have complained about service delivery and resort to un-peaceful strikes to have their demands heard by the municipality. The research believes that it is very fair for perpetrators of both forgivable and non-forgivable gender-based violence post-conviction to be subjected to assisting the municipality with rendering services to the communities with dedication. Services such as clearing roads, covering potholes, and clearing sports fields to name a few can be given to the perpetrators post-conviction as an assisting gesture to the community. The House of Traditional Leadership should not be mainly focused on issuing land to residents and business owners, it should be engaged in conflict resolution strategies for their communities. Traditional Leadership is vested with sufficient authority to influence appropriate behaviour amongst their people in a number of ways. It is therefore recommended that they utilise their influence by emphasising teachings of holistic respectful behaviour in both male and female initiation school curricula. It is crucial to have children familiarise themselves with acceptable behaviours at a young age. Children look up to their parents and it is unavoidable for them to resemble their parent's behaviour. Traditional Leadership must furthermore also emphasise respectful conduct by parents in community social gatherings. By so doing, people's consciousness of the culture of waywardness and lawlessness portrayed through gender based violence will be awoken.

E. Church Leaders

Church leaders need to play the role of raising awareness of this social menace. The leaders should motivate their congregants to seek help, either through family meetings, traditional leader's intervention, or reporting to the police. Unfortunately, churches are also not immune to gender-based violence, at worst the church leaders are perpetrators. This recommendation is aimed at normalising talking about gender based violence even in churches and by the leaders. This will be helpful to congregants who might be victimised and are not calling for help to see the level of maltreatment they are under.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate African indigenous ways to mitigate gender based violence in Bushbuckridge. The investigation unveiled that African indigenous ways to mitigate gender based violence in Bushbuckridge amongst the Mapulana culture have existed since time immemorial. They prevailed over the years until the imperative Western culture was brought about by modernisation. Regardless of their productivity, some of these indigenous methods have grown to be incompatible with modern ways of living. Those such as punishment of perpetrators can only be applicable if there is compliance with the national laws of the Bill of Rights and criminal law. In the cases of arranged marriages, the researcher fears might not be applicable considering how much most people prefer living a non-scripted social life. On the contrary, most of those who chose to, are seen thriving in arranged polygamous marriages without gender based violence.

Gender based violence is threatening to exist alongside normative standards judging from how prevalent it continues to grow. Whilst no one is immune from it, everyone in Bushbuckridge Municipality must play a proactive role in combating it. Learn about it, teach others about it, advise victims to report it to their preferred channels and most importantly the collaboration from SAPS, House of Traditional Leadership and Department of Health officials will curb the surge of gender-based violence in Bushbuckridge Municipality.

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