

LEADING SIGNS AND CAUSES OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MEN AND WOMEN VIEWS.

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Abstract

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a pervasive and deeply rooted issue in South Africa, with significant social and economic implications. This paper aims to provide a critical analysis of men and women's perspectives on the leading signs and causes of GBV in the South African context.

Background: South Africa has one of the highest rates of GBV globally, affecting individuals across age, race, and socioeconomic lines. Understanding the factors that contribute to GBV and how different genders perceive them is essential for effective intervention and prevention strategies.

Objectives:

- To explore the perceptions of men and women regarding the leading signs of GBV.
- To identify the underlying causes of GBV from the perspectives of both genders.
- To assess the differences and commonalities in men and women's views on GBV causes.

Purpose: This paper seeks to shed light on the complex and multifaceted nature of GBV in South Africa, aiming to inform policymakers, researchers, and activists to develop targeted interventions that address the root causes of this issue.

Findings: The research reveals that men and women in South Africa share concerns about various leading signs of GBV, such as unequal power dynamics and cultural norms promoting violence. Differences in perception arise regarding the root causes, with men often citing economic stress and substance abuse, while women emphasize patriarchy and a culture of entitlement.

Conclusion: Addressing GBV in South Africa requires a comprehensive approach that recognizes both the shared and distinct viewpoints of men and women. Policy and intervention strategies should encompass economic empowerment, substance abuse rehabilitation, and, crucially, challenge traditional gender norms to build a more equitable and safe society.

Keywords: Gender Based Violence, Men, Women, Poverty, Culture

Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a pervasive and deeply rooted issue that continues to plague societies around the world. In South Africa, like many other countries, GBV represents a significant public health and human rights challenge. This critical analysis seeks to explore the leading signs and causes of gender-based violence in South Africa by examining the perspectives of both men and women. Understanding the viewpoints of both genders is essential for developing comprehensive solutions to this complex problem (Yesufu 2022).

The Prevalence of Gender-Based Violence in South Africa: South Africa has gained notoriety for having one of the highest rates of gender-based violence in the world. GBV encompasses various forms, including physical, sexual, emotional, and economic abuse, as well as harassment, stalking, and intimidation. It affects individuals across the lifespan, with women and girls disproportionately bearing the brunt of this violence. While not all men are perpetrators, it is crucial to engage men in the discourse surrounding GBV, as they play a pivotal role in addressing this issue (Tshilongo 2023).

Understanding the Causes of Gender-Based Violence: GBV in South Africa is the result of complex interplay between socio-cultural, economic, and historical factors. Some of the leading causes include:

Patriarchy and Gender Inequality: South Africa, like many societies, is deeply entrenched in patriarchal norms and values. These cultural beliefs often place men in positions of power and women in subordinate roles, reinforcing gender inequality and normalizing violence against women. **Historical Legacy of Apartheid:** The historical apartheid system, which officially ended in 1994, has left a legacy of violence and inequality that continues to impact the country today. The social and economic disparities created during apartheid contribute to the vulnerability of women to violence. **Economic Disempowerment:** Poverty and economic inequality are closely linked to GBV. Women who lack economic independence are often more susceptible to abuse, as they may have limited resources and options for escaping violent situations. **Cultural Norms and Practices:** Certain cultural practices, such as lobola (bride price) and initiation rites, can reinforce harmful gender dynamics and contribute to GBV. It is essential to challenge and change these traditions to create a more equitable society (Mugisho 2022).

Alcohol and Substance Abuse: The misuse of alcohol and drugs is often associated with incidents of GBV. Substance abuse can exacerbate existing conflicts and lead to violent behavior.

Men and Women's Views on Gender-Based Violence: This analysis will take into account the perspectives of both men and women to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the issue. Men may offer insights into the factors that drive their behavior or perpetuate a culture of violence, while women can provide firsthand accounts of their experiences and the impact of GBV on their lives (Naidu 2019). By critically examining these perspectives, we can better identify potential areas for intervention and engage both genders in the fight against gender-based violence in South Africa.

Lastly, addressing the pervasive issue of gender-based violence in South Africa requires a holistic understanding of its root causes and the collaboration of both men and women in seeking solutions. This critical analysis aims to shed light on the leading signs and causes of GBV while considering the viewpoints of both genders, with the ultimate goal of fostering a safer and more equitable society for all.

Historical context

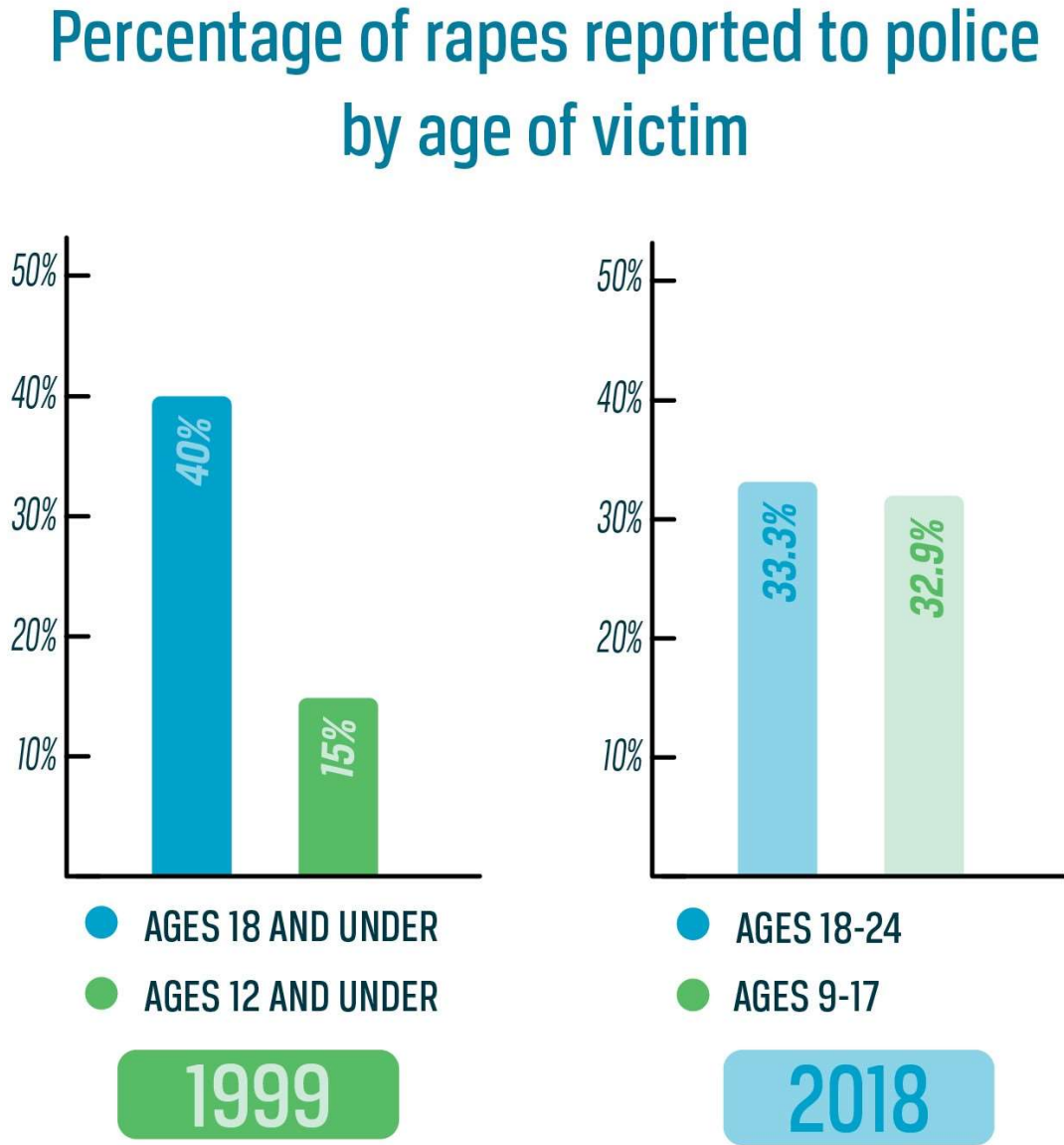
Nelson Mandela's election in 1994 marked the end of the prolonged struggle against the apartheid regime, which had its roots in the dominant European colonization of South Africa. It was a time when the possibility of democracy and equality in the country became apparent, perhaps for the first time. Before the dismantling of apartheid, violence against marginalized groups was justified by cultural and legal norms. The injustices of apartheid were most glaringly evident in the racist policies that granted white South Africans privileges and status denied to their Black counterparts. These inequalities and methods of oppression extended to various social minorities, including women. Under apartheid, only men were granted citizenship, and women were classified as dependents. This gender-based discrimination persisted in post-apartheid laws, particularly in cases of gender-based violence (Saul and Bond 2014).

During apartheid, there were few legal and social safeguards in place to protect women from gender-based violence, and the judicial system that did exist often failed to adequately protect victims. Research conducted in 1994 during apartheid revealed a high incidence of rape against older women using objects as weapons, as the South African government at the time only recognized rape if the perpetrator used their body to assault the victim. The harshest legal charge for those who used objects in sexual assault cases was assault. The South African Department of Justice had no established guidelines for sentencing in rape and sexual assault cases, leaving judges to rely on their own biases (Welsh 2010). The "Cautionary Rule" required courts to scrutinize women's rape testimonies extensively, especially when lacking physical evidence or witnesses. This resulted in the discrediting of many women, leading to a low conviction rate of only 53% in rape cases in 1992, compared to an 86% conviction rate for non-sexual assault cases. This created a subjective legal landscape where sexual assault charges were inconsistent, and women were often not taken seriously when reporting their experiences. Furthermore, the state allowed husbands to physically punish their wives, normalizing and legalizing domestic abuse (Clark and Worger 2016).

Despite the social progress made in South Africa since 1994, there is still a lack of effective support for victims of gender-based violence and women in general. While various government and social initiatives have addressed systemic discrimination against South African women, cultural gender inequality persists, particularly in the prevalence of gender-based violence. Gender-based violence encompasses a wide range of crimes, including intimate partner violence, domestic abuse, and sexual violence, such as rape. Definitions of rape vary by country, and in South Africa, the legal definition as of 2020 includes any intentional penetrative intercourse with a woman without her consent. The legally recognized age of consent is 12, and any penetrative intercourse with a girl

under the age of 12 is considered rape. Marital rape was not criminalized in South Africa until the Prevention of Family Violence Act of 1993, which stated that a husband could be convicted of raping his wife.

Figure 1: percentage of rapes reported



Source: Ballard Brief, 2018

Approximately 200,000 South African women annually report incidents of violent physical attacks to the police. In surveys, over 40% of South African men admit to engaging in physical violence towards their partners, and 40% to 50% of women acknowledge experiencing some form of

intimate partner violence. According to data from the World Health Organization in 2012, South Africa has the highest globally reported rate of domestic abuse, affecting around 60,000 women and children every month. In 2009, the rate of female homicide by intimate partners in South Africa was 24.7 per 100,000 people, which is more than six times the global average. Gender-based violence, especially against female sex workers, is alarmingly high, with some reporting lifetime rates of gender-based violence as high as 76%. It's important to note that gender-based violence is often underreported, and specific factors in South Africa may further downplay the extent and frequency of such incidents (Sonneborn 2010).

Additionally, half of South African women have experienced some form of intimate partner violence, while 40% of South African men have admitted to being physically violent with their partners. South African girls also face a significant risk of gender-based violence, with approximately 39% of them experiencing sexual violence during their childhood. Notably, there have been shocking cases of "baby rape" that first gained attention in 2001 when a 9-month-old girl was gang-raped by six men. This led to investigations into past child rape incidents dating back to the 1990s, and such crimes have continued to occur and receive publicity in South Africa, with the most recent case occurring in 2019. As recently as 2006, some parts of South Africa saw nurses advising mothers to bring their daughters to local clinics for contraceptive injections as soon as they started menstruating due to the high likelihood of teenage rape (Boehmer 2023).

The above figure 1 shows that in 1999, 40% of individuals who reported sexual assaults to law enforcement were minors under the age of 18, with 15% of them being girls under the age of 12. Fast forward two decades to 2019, and the situation remains relatively unchanged. An analysis conducted by the South African Police Services (SAPS) in 2017 and 2018 revealed that 33.3% of rape victims in the Northern Cape were between 18 and 28 years old, while 32.9% fell into the 9 to 17-year-old age group. According to SAPS, the reported rape rate in 2019 stood at 90.9 cases per 100,000 people. However, SAPS estimates that only 1 out of every 36 cases is actually reported to the police. By this estimate, there may have been over two million additional unreported rape incidents (Jibril 2015).

The current issues related to the inadequate prevention of gender-based violence and inaccurate reporting can be traced back to the era of apartheid. During that period, there was consistent underreporting of statistics concerning rape and other forms of gender-based violence, especially when it came to assaults against Black women. Black women were reluctant to report any kind of crime to the police, let alone their experiences of gender-based violence. This reluctance stemmed from the police's lack of action and the fear of being seen as informants, which, in those times, sometimes led to their homes being burned down and them being targeted by others in the community (Brites and Padilha 2017).

Because of this system with widespread inaccurate reporting, the recorded incidents of gender-based violence during those years are likely far from accurate. In 1994, it was estimated that approximately 1 in 4 women had experienced rape, with the average age of first sexual assault

being 14. Much like during apartheid, Black women continue to face disproportionate silencing in the context of gender-based violence today. Although it's nearly impossible to quantify the numerical statistics of unreported rapes, the culture of impunity established during apartheid still lingers in modern society (Klotz 2018).

A 2009 study conducted by the South Africa Medical Research Council (MRC) revealed that 27.6% of interviewed men admitted to raping a woman or girl. Furthermore, 46.3% of these men confessed to repeat offenses, and 7.7% of self-admitted repeat offenders disclosed raping 10 or more women. During the same year, an analysis of imprisoned rapists in South Africa showed that Black men were the most frequently convicted perpetrators of rape. This trend was also apparent during apartheid when Black men were often executed for raping, but only if the victim was a white woman. Under apartheid, no white man was given the death penalty for rape. These facts underscore the racism inherent in the legal system at that time, as only crimes committed by Black men or against white women were considered for legal action (Picard and Mogale 2015).

The higher conviction rate of Black and mixed-race men for rape can be largely attributed to the fact that Black and mixed-race individuals make up around 90% of South Africa's population. Black and mixed-race men were responsible for 27.1% and 45.7% of rapes, respectively, while white men accounted for 11.1% of rape cases. Despite the approximate population representation in these statistics, deeply ingrained beliefs from the apartheid era that Black men are more aggressive and violent than white men persist and likely influence conviction and incarceration rates. For example, in 2016, a white South African judge, Mabel Janson, made a racially charged statement on social media, suggesting that "rapes of baby, daughter, and mother" were a "pleasurable pastime" for Black men. This highlights the enduring presence of apartheid-like racism within the South African justice system (Shivambu 2014).

The persistence of gender-based violence in South Africa can be attributed to a combination of law enforcement officials' dismissive attitudes towards sexual assault and the lack of effective legislative enforcement. This is evident from the absence of any statistically significant reduction in gender-based violence over the past two decades, highlighting the government's struggle to enforce relevant laws. Despite the establishment of various government initiatives and committees aimed at improving the status of women in South African society, high rates of gender-based violence persist, despite the broad and intentional adherence to the national Constitution. Recent policies and initiatives have been comprehensive and progressive, aligning with the constitutional principle that guarantees every person the right to freedom from all forms of violence, whether from public or private sources (Dubow 2014).

One significant hindrance to legislative effectiveness is the attitudes held by local law enforcement and judicial committees. The South African Department of Justice openly acknowledges its bureaucratic inefficiencies and wastefulness, resulting in a failure to obtain value for the resources deployed. The conviction rate for sexual crimes in South Africa remains dismally low, ranging between 4% and 8% of reported cases, and considering that many sexual assaults go unreported,

the overall conviction rate for perpetrators is even lower. Additionally, the bureaucracy within South African courts, coupled with the personal beliefs of judges and police officers, could contribute to the low conviction rate. A study from 2017 revealed that a significant portion of rape victims who reported their cases to the police faced challenges, with over half reporting that no witnesses involved in their case were interviewed by law enforcement, and more than a third stating that the police made no effort to gather evidence related to their assault. This underscores how individual law enforcement officers can significantly impact the outcome of a case.

Often, victims of gender-based violence endure further mistreatment, known as secondary victimization, when they face additional harassment from law enforcement. Women are compelled to provide testimonies in public against their will, and during questioning and cross-examination, insinuations are frequently made that suggest they somehow provoked the violent treatment they suffered from their assailant. This secondary victimization has been associated with a decline in pursuing charges at various stages, including reporting the incident. Moreover, it has been linked to discouraging other women, making them doubt the effectiveness of reporting to the police in achieving justice. In a 2017 study, 37.5% of victims who had reported their assault rated the police's empathy as "bad" or "very bad," and of all the victims in this study, 62.5% expressed that they would not report future victimizations to the police, believing it would be futile. Without grassroots enforcement of gender-based violence laws on the local level, top-down governmental actions become entirely ineffective (Worden 2011).

Regarding social and cultural perspectives on gender, South Africa's constitution, written in 1994, is more recent than those of other similarly developed nations. As a result, the country is currently grappling with the challenge of reconciling one of the world's most inclusive and progressive constitutions with its predominantly patriarchal and culturally influenced society. Some of the patriarchal elements within South African society can be traced back to the cultural history of indigenous tribes. In traditional South African tribes, like the Valoyi, women were historically ineligible to own property or assume leadership roles within the tribe due to their gender. Even today, certain rural laws dictate that if a married man passes away, his house and property pass to the nearest living male relative rather than his wife and children. Additionally, a historical power imbalance has prevented women from having autonomy within their marriages and families and from accessing political power. These male-dominant power structures thrived under the apartheid regime. In 2013, nearly two decades after apartheid's abolition, a contentious bill was proposed, which granted even more power to tribal and traditional leadership. This bill, while aiming to restore power to tribes that had suffered under apartheid, put the 47% of South African women living in rural areas at greater risk of facing sexist leadership rooted in traditionalist views of gender. The traditions of gender inequality are deeply ingrained in South Africa's history and culture, and the inseparable cultural link between power, dominance, and maleness manifests itself in the highly normalized gender-based violence in South African society (Campbell 2016).

In contemporary South Africa, male identity remains closely tied to the notion of owning or controlling a woman and children. An adult man is still seen as incomplete without a wife and

children. This cultural prerequisite for manhood conditions men to view women as possessions to be acquired and controlled, rather than as autonomous individuals. This reinforces the idea that women are weaker and should be subordinate. These attitudes about power are not exclusive to men; a provincial study on attitudes toward sexual violence found that 59% of women believed that sexually violent men were more powerful, and 9% were more attracted to such men. The association between power and violence, especially gender-based and sexual violence, worsens and normalizes the notion that women are inferior to men and that there should be no consequences for men exerting physical, emotional, and mental dominance over women. Furthermore, the belief that women are responsible for their own rape is prevalent among both South African women and men: 22% of women surveyed believed that rape victims brought it upon themselves, and 26% of men did not believe that women hated being raped (Sable, Danis et al. 2006).

In South Africa, rape has become a distressingly common aspect of life and is often tolerated to the extent that committing violence against women has little impact on a prominent man's political career—a trend observed in other countries as well. For instance, South African parliamentary chief whip Mbulelo Goniwe faced charges for soliciting sexual favors from his intern but remained in office for over a year after his conviction in 2007. Jacob Zuma, a prominent politician, was put on trial for rape in 2006 and was acquitted of the charges, despite openly admitting to having had sex with the victim. Zuma went on to serve as the president of South Africa for nearly a decade from 2009 to 2018. Zuma's case is not unique; in 2017, Deputy Minister of Higher Education Mduzuzi Manana assaulted three women outside a Johannesburg nightclub. Manana received a one-year prison sentence but was allowed to remain a backbencher in the African National Congress despite his conviction (Edwards, Turchik et al. 2011).

Findings and results

Poverty and its associated social issues increase the vulnerability of women to gender-based violence. Violence metrics like homicides, major assaults, and gender-based violence are linked to income inequality and economic underdevelopment. Poverty-stricken areas tend to have higher rates of violence, although establishing a direct causal relationship is complex. Data shows that violence is more prevalent in nations with a significant economically deprived population. South Africa exemplifies this correlation; statistical analysis of five countries with high violence rates revealed South Africa to have the highest homicide rate and the widest economic disparity between different social classes (McQueen, Murphy-Oikonen et al. 2021).

The conditions stemming from poverty put women at a greater risk of victimization. In 2015, 55.5% of South Africans lived below the poverty line. Poverty in South Africa was defined as living on less than US\$74.60 per person per month in 2019. Just as women are disproportionately affected by gender-based violence, they also bear a heavier burden of poverty. Data from South Africa's national agency in 2015 indicated that 49.2% of those living below the poverty line were Black women. Households headed by single women are consistently and significantly more impoverished. Homelessness, housing instability, and distressed urban environments increase the

risk of gender-based violence, particularly affecting women living in poverty (Muuo, Muthuri et al. 2020).

Impoverished women, in comparison to their wealthier counterparts, place a higher value on having a partner with some form of income. South Africa's patriarchal and heteronormative society can lead to situations where economically disadvantaged women are sexually exploited by men to gain access to money and basic necessities. For instance, in poverty-stricken South African mining regions, large groups of men drive the sex trade, leading women and girls in dire financial circumstances from surrounding areas to be trafficked or coerced into sexual exploitation. Moreover, women in poor areas, such as slums and mining towns, have limited access to resources like piped water, electricity, and indoor bathrooms. These conditions increase the risk of attacks when women have to go to latrines or water sources, especially when they are alone at night (Fryszler, Hoffmann-Walbeck et al. 2020).

Women who have steady employment report lower rates of intimate partner violence (IPV). A study of young South African men also found that having a stable job reduces the likelihood of perpetrating IPV, indicating that higher socioeconomic status for one or both household heads reduces the risk of gender-based violence at home. Conversely, increased food insecurity is linked to higher levels of IPV. Home conflicts are more common when resources are scarce, and impoverished women who rely on their husbands for income are less likely to leave abusive relationships if it threatens their access to essentials. Partnered women whose husbands refused to provide money for household items were 12% more likely to report incidents of sexual violence than women in more financially stable households (Decker, Holliday et al. 2019).

Consequences:

Health: Victims of gender-based violence often experience psychological trauma. A study conducted in South Africa found that a significant number of adolescent rape survivors suffered from stress-related disorders, anxiety, and depression. Women who experience non-partner sexual violence are more likely to have anxiety and depressive episodes. Furthermore, women who face abuse at home are at a higher risk of suicidal tendencies. In addition to anxiety and depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is common among women who have experienced violence. PTSD can lead to substance abuse, mental health issues, academic problems, school dropouts, criminal behavior, and various health and relationship problems (Brahim, Turki et al. 2022).

Unintended Pregnancy: Women who are victims of rape or sexual coercion are more likely to experience unwanted pregnancies. Rape victims often lack control over contraceptive use and may become pregnant due to their assault. Additionally, women who have experienced sexual coercion are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviors, increasing their risk of unintended pregnancy. Forced first intercourse is also linked to higher rates of unintended pregnancy among those under 18. In South Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, a significant percentage of pregnancies are unplanned, leading to health risks for women who may delay or forgo antenatal care due to various factors

like lack of education, limited access to medical facilities, and financial constraints (Cotter and Savage 2019).

Mother and Infant Well-Being: Unintended pregnancy is associated with domestic abuse during pregnancy, which can lead to preterm births and low birth weights, endangering both the mother and the baby. Stress during pregnancy increases the likelihood of preterm delivery. Infants born into homes where domestic abuse is prevalent can exhibit trauma symptoms, leading to increased stress responses, fussiness, and an elevated risk of developing PTSD later in life.

Homicides: South Africa's homicide rate is about five times the global average as of 2019, with homicides accounting for a significant portion of fatal injuries among individuals aged 15-34. In 2018, a staggering number of women were murdered in South Africa, with one female homicide victim every three hours in certain regions.

In 2019, the country had a homicide rate about five times higher than the global average. In South Africa, approximately 56% of fatal injuries among individuals aged 15–34 are attributed to homicides. In 2018, 2,771 women were killed in South Africa, translating to one female homicide victim every three hours. In a specific region of South Africa, homicides accounted for 30.61% of unnatural deaths among women from 1993 to 2015. Historically, up to 50.3% of female homicide cases in South Africa were reportedly connected to intimate partner violence. However, this percentage might be even higher, as it only considers homicides with evidence of prior IPV. Interviews with incarcerated men who had killed their intimate partners revealed that they saw homicide as a means to assert control. Many of these men faced economic instability or substance addiction but believed that maintaining control over their female partners' actions was not only possible but socially expected. Losing control over their wives or girlfriends would threaten their societal perception of manhood. These interviews suggest that, in many cases of intimate partner homicide, South African men prioritized their societal image of masculinity over the lives of their partners (Gbhabo and Duma 2021).

South Africa's notably high rate of adult female homicide also extends to girls aged 0–4. The World Health Organization reports that the frequent victimization of infant girls and toddlers is often associated with cultures that place greater value on sons than daughters. Child homicides in South Africa mirror the high rates of adult intimate partner murder. In cases of sexual homicides, where there is a sexual element involved, such as rape, more than 92% of child victims in South Africa are girls, while only 1% of boy child deaths are categorized as sexual homicides. This indicates that young girls are disproportionately more likely to experience lethal sexual violence compared to young boys.

While the exact proportion of individuals who suffer from sexual abuse and subsequently acquire HIV in South Africa remains uncertain, there is a common association between elevated rates of sexual violence and a heightened prevalence of HIV. Specifically, when we look at women living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa, a significant 40% of them are situated in South Africa. This aligns

with the unusually elevated levels of gender-based violence prevalent in the country. Notably, women are disproportionately affected by HIV in comparison to men, as evidenced by the fact that within the 15- to 24-year-old age group in South Africa, there are five women living with HIV for every two men (Dahal, Joshi et al. 2022).

Both the physical harm resulting from gender-based sexual violence and the subsequent psychological trauma have been demonstrated to elevate the chances of contracting HIV. HIV primarily affects CD4 immune cells, which are drawn to sites of injury in the body. When a violent rape inflicts physical trauma, more CD4 cells migrate to the site of the injury, essentially providing the virus with greater access to CD4 cells and thereby increasing the risk of HIV transmission. Additionally, psychological trauma is linked to weakened immune function, reducing the body's ability to cope with the HIV viral load and worsening HIV transmission and symptoms. The higher rates of risky sexual behaviors among male perpetrators, including a greater likelihood of engaging in multiple concurrent sexual relationships and committing physical violence against their partners, further heighten the likelihood that these men are infected with HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Among men who have confessed to raping women, 46.3% have admitted to repeated offenses. Considering the probability of victims being assaulted multiple times and the likelihood that perpetrators commit multiple rapes, individuals subjected to gender-based violence face an elevated risk of HIV transmission (Kash 2020).

Within South Africa, the intersection of gender-based violence and HIV is particularly perilous for female sex workers. Female sex workers are highly susceptible to experiencing gender-based violence, and their profession places them at significant risk of contracting HIV. In sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, the prevalence of HIV among female sex workers is 29%. However, in South Africa, HIV prevalence among female sex workers ranges from 39.7% in Cape Town to 71.8% in Johannesburg, highlighting the co-occurrence of high rates of sexual violence and HIV in this vulnerable population.

The University of Oxford's studies in Africa suggest that men may resort to violence against women as a way to assert their masculinity when they perceive a disconnect between their personal experience of masculinity and societal expectations of male control. The widespread acceptance of the "boys will be boys" ideology excuses men from the consequences of gender-based violence. However, recent research from the United Nations (UN) indicates that educating men about the adverse effects of dominant masculine norms can increase their involvement in reshaping gender dynamics. Organizations like Sonke Gender Justice, located in Cape Town and Johannesburg, South Africa, recognize the vital role of educating men in effecting systemic change in gender equity. Sonke is a leading advocate for male education and engagement in combating gender-based violence. They employ targeted workshops known as "One Man Can" (OMC) to enhance male participation in gender-related issues within communities across South Africa, spanning both rural and urban areas in provinces such as the Eastern Cape, the Western Cape, Gauteng, and Mpumalanga (Peacock 2013).

These workshops adopt a multifaceted approach to transformation, aiming not only to alter individual male behaviors but also to redefine the concept of South African masculinity as a whole. Sonke has also played a significant role in introducing the Men as Partners (MAP) workshop framework, which incorporates a curriculum designed to challenge the systemic belief in male superiority and female subordination. Additionally, the Men as Partners model delves into how gender oppression mirrors the racism seen during the Apartheid era, drawing from South Africa's rich history of political engagement to frame gender-based violence and other gender-related issues as part of the human rights discourse (Sonnenberg-Smith 2019).

Men attending OMC workshops have the opportunity to openly discuss and confront the roles they play in the landscape of gender-based violence within their communities and families. They are educated about the pervasive consequences of South Africa's gender-based violence problem, learning about its impact on the women in their lives as well as on themselves as men. In areas where these workshops take place, participants may be considered for involvement in a Community Action Team (CAT). These Sonke CATs are established to act as the "eyes and ears" in their communities, encouraging individuals to report gender-based crimes and rallying more community members to engage in events and training related to gender-based violence (Kaeflein 2013).

Conclusion

A critical analysis of men and women's views on the leading signs and causes of gender-based violence in South Africa reveals a complex and multifaceted issue that requires a comprehensive and multidimensional approach. While this conclusion is not exhaustive, it highlights some key insights drawn from the perspectives of both genders: Sociocultural Factors: Traditional gender norms and patriarchy play a significant role in perpetuating gender-based violence in South Africa. Men are often expected to be dominant and aggressive, while women are expected to be submissive. The normalization of violence within intimate relationships is a concerning aspect of South African society. Many individuals, both men and women, have been exposed to violence in their homes, which perpetuates the cycle of abuse.

Economic Disparities: Economic inequalities exacerbate gender-based violence. Unemployment and poverty can lead to frustration and tension in households, which can escalate into violent confrontations. Dependency on abusive partners for financial support can trap some women in abusive relationships, making it difficult for them to leave. **Lack of Education and Awareness:** A lack of awareness and education about gender-based violence and its consequences is a significant issue. Both men and women may not fully understand the impact of their actions or the rights and resources available to victims. Comprehensive sex education that addresses issues of consent, respect, and healthy relationships is crucial in preventing violence (Mutinta 2022).

Substance Abuse: Substance abuse, particularly alcohol, often plays a role in incidents of gender-based violence. Excessive drinking can impair judgment and increase the likelihood of aggression. Both men and women may engage in violent behavior under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Legal and Law Enforcement Challenges: Weak enforcement of laws and inadequate support for victims contribute to the perpetuation of gender-based violence. Some individuals may believe they can act with impunity. The criminal justice system's failure to hold perpetrators accountable can discourage victims from reporting incidents (Yesufu 2022).

Fear and Stigma: The fear of social stigma and retaliation often prevents victims from seeking help or reporting abuse. Both men and women may stay silent due to the fear of being ostracized or further victimized. Public awareness campaigns that challenge societal norms and reduce stigma are essential. In conclusion, gender-based violence in South Africa is a deeply entrenched issue with multiple underlying causes (Ndlovu, Mulondo et al. 2022). Men and women both have a role to play in addressing this problem, from challenging traditional gender roles to promoting education and awareness. Effective solutions require a holistic approach that involves changes at societal, community, and individual levels. Government policies, legal reforms, and support services must be implemented to provide protection and resources for victims, while also holding perpetrators accountable for their actions. Ultimately, it is crucial to work toward a South African society where gender-based violence is not tolerated, and where individuals of all genders can live free from fear and abuse.

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