Resisting gender-based violence in post-1994 South Africa

A half thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

(POLITICAL AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES)

RHODES UNIVERSITY

By

NOBUHLE LYNN DUBE

(g19d2117)

SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR MANDISI MAJAVU

2024

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Mandisi Majavu, my supervisor, whose advice and assistance were invaluable to me during my research. His guidance and support inspired me to explore new research techniques and improve my writing. I would like to thank all my participants for their collaboration and support. I thank you for demonstrating to me that life experience doesn't always have to be seen negatively and may actually have a positive influence on others. I am grateful to my mother Jax, who has always inspired me with her kindness and strength. Thank you for your boundless care and belief in me. I also want to express gratitude to my father Danny, whose understanding and compassion have been invaluable in helping me overcome obstacles in my studies. I wish to express my appreciation to my sister Lee-Amber, whose unwavering support and encouragement have been a constant source of motivation. The times spent laughing together offered an incredible amount of emotional comfort during difficult times. I also want to express my gratitude and very special thanks to my friends, Simamkele Mpehlo, Lesego Monyai and Tinashe Hlako, for their continuous encouragement and support throughout this journey. Your confidence in me got me through the challenging times. Lastly, I appreciate the funding provided by the Ada and Bertie Levenstein Bursary, which made this research possible.

Abstract

This study investigates the origins of gender-based violence, along with some of the legal, policing, and socio-cultural barriers to effectively addressing gender-based violence in post-1994 South Africa, as perceived and articulated by Black women activists. To that end, this study conducted semi-structured interviews with eight Black South African women activists involved in the fight against GBV, based in different parts of the country. The analysis and the discussion of the research findings are framed around six themes and theorised through an African feminism lens. A key finding of this research project is that GBV in post-1994 South Africa can be attributed to multiple sources which include poverty, African culture, women's liberation in post-1994 South Africa, patriarchy, and toxic masculinities. Another finding of the study is that GBV activists joined the fight against GBV for various reasons, which included personal experience with GBV, a development of feminist consciousness, and a desire to change the justice system and how society understands GBV. A consistent theme in the interviews was that the struggle against GBV is not the sole responsibility of women and girls and that society as a whole bears the responsibility for the fight against GBV. While participants recognised the importance of the compulsory South African high school subject – the life orientation syllabus – participants pointed out that this subject tends to focus mainly on unplanned teenage pregnancies, the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases, and HIV prevention among young people in South Africa. Thus, the life orientation syllabus foregrounds the dangers of sex, rather than prioritising encouraging students to recognise GBV and equip students with tools to effectively deal with it. Research participants highlighted the importance and benefits of getting involved in the fight against GBV. Participants further recounted that it was the #TheTotalShutDown movement in 2018 that led to President Cyril Ramaphosa meeting with the organisers of #TheTotalShutDown and forming an organising committee, consisting of representatives from the presidency, non-profit groups, and the organisers of #TheTotalShutdown, who worked together to produce the National Strategic Plan against GBV & Femicide which led to the introduction of legislation such as the Domestic Violence Amendment Act 14 of 2022, the Criminal and Related Matters Amendment Act 12 of 2022, and The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 13 of 2022.

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List of Acronyms/Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
GBH	Grievous bodily harm
GBV	Gender-based violence
GBVF	GBV and Femicide
IPV	Intimate partner violence
LGBTQA+	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-government Organisations
NPO	Non-profit Organisation
SAPS	South African Police Services
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
UN	United Nations
VAW	Violence Against Women

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The main objective of this study was to explore the origins of gender-based violence in post-1994 South Africa. Additionally, the thesis aimed to investigate how Black women activists view and explain the legal, policing, and sociocultural obstacles to successfully combating gender-based violence in South Africa post-1994. Although VAW was declared a violation of human rights by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993, in post-1994 South Africa it "is an intense and widespread problem that impacts almost every aspect of life" (Enaifoghe et al., 2021: 118). According to the Foreword, in the South African Government Report, National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence & Femicide President Cyril Ramaphosa (2020: 2), argued that "South Africa holds the shameful distinction of being one of the most unsafe places in the world to be a woman." In addition, President Cyril Ramaphosa (2020: 2) states, "Women and girls are being abused, assaulted and murdered in our country every day – at the hands of men."

According to the UN declaration in 1993, VAW includes physical, sexual and psychological violence that occurs in the family and society at large (Bloom, 2008). It is worth pointing out that the term 'gender-based violence' (GBV) is employed in this thesis "to squarely capture violence against women" and girls (Enaifoghe et al., 2021:118). VAW and GBV are therefore used interchangeably in this thesis to refer to a broad range of violence against women and girls which "includes physical, sexual, verbal, emotional and psychological abuse or threats of such acts or abuse, coercion, and economic or educational deprivation, whether occurring in public or private life" (Republic of South Africa, 2020: 10). This thesis recognises that VAW and GBV are not just problems for low-income families but are societal issues that affect everyone regardless of class, religion and race (Madhani et al., 2014). According to the UN, GBV transcends "geographic, cultural and language barriers and affects all women, irrespective of their socioeconomic status" (Madhani et al., 2014: 2).

While "men and boys can also be victims of GBV," violence against women and girls in particular is widespread in South Africa (Bloom, 2008: 14). The prevalence of GBV against

women and girls in South Africa, "represents the most extreme manifestation of discrimination and dehumanisation of women" (Buqa, 2022: 19). GBV's pervasiveness is well documented in post-1994 South Africa in the media and in public official records for instance, according to Amanda Gouws (2022) from news24, "South Africa has notoriously high levels of violence against women. The latest police figures show that 10 818 rape cases were reported in the first quarter of 2022. The country has among the highest rape incidence in the world" (Gouws, 2022). Republic of South Africa (2022) also recorded that the provinces in South Africa with the highest recorded incidences of VAW between June 2022-2023 were Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Western Cape. From April to June 2021, there were 558 murders, 897 attempted murders, and 7 585 assaults of grievous bodily harm (GBH), all of which were against women above 18 years of age. In the same period in 2022, cases of murder increased by 855, attempted murder by 1 179 and assault GBH by 11 734; also, all against women (Republic of South Africa, 2022). These exclude cases that remain unrecorded or unreported.

A quote from Women for Change (2024) captures how the statistics above unfold in the lives of young women:

> Your child goes off to university. She is getting an education. She has plans. She has dreams. Then, one day is the last day you will ever see or speak to her; because a man felt entitled to her body, and then he killed her.

Uyinene Mrwetyana's death is a symbol of this kind of violence. Mrwetyana, 19 years old, was a student at the University of Cape Town when she was raped and murdered at a post office on the 24th of August 2019 (Hack and Team, 2021). A 21-year-old Precious Ramabulana, a student at Capricorn TVET College, was discovered deceased in her off-campus room on the 24th of November 2019 and had reportedly been stabbed 52 times by an unknown assailant. In addition, she was allegedly raped before her death (Theletsane, 2019). In 2023, multiple devastating murders were reported in the media. For instance, Ntokozo Mayenzi Xaba, a young woman of 21 years, was reported to have been stabbed to death by her ex-boyfriend on the 2nd of February 2023 in her student residence in Ekhaya Junction, in Pretoria. On the 11th of November 2023, a Cape Peninsula University of Technology student, 26 years old, was stabbed by her husband at a private student residence and sustained severe injuries (Mthethwa, 2023).

1.2 Examining the Contributing Factors of the Roots of Gender-Based Violence: The Role of Patriarchy and Toxic Masculinity

Research (Ofana, 2019) suggests that widespread rape and violence against women and girls in post-1994 South Africa are partly due to entrenched patriarchal beliefs that some men hold and toxic masculinity behaviours that encourage men to view women as objects to satisfy men's sexual urges.

Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence (2022) describes patriarchy as power relationships that exist throughout society between men and women, as well as among men. It is a societal system designed to uphold heteronormativity and normalise gendered relations, the belief in male supremacy and the disempowerment of women (Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence, 2022). Historically, patriarchy has been maintained via masculine violence, blatant misogyny in some instances, and oppressive gendered cultural practices; including the veneration of masculinity and social and legal legitimation of domestic violence as a private affair that is beyond the reach of law (Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence, 2022). According to Gwen Hunnicutt (2009: 557), patriarchy is the "social arrangements that privilege males, where men as a group dominate women as a group, both structurally and ideologically—hierarchical arrangements that manifest in varieties across history and social space."

Patriarchy, according to most feminist authors, such as Kate Millet, is a political institution that holds power-structured relationships of dominance and subordination between men and women (Millet, 1999). Within patriarchy, women are treated as and made to feel inferior to the dominant male. Hunnicutt (2009: 558) gives an example that "wife beating happens more frequently in households where traditional gender roles are strongest… suggesting that more extreme patriarchal ideology is connected to domestic violence. Violence against women is a manifestation of patriarchal systems and may indeed reinforce systems of subordination."

1.2.1 Toxic masculinity

Toxic masculinity was introduced as a concept by Shepherd Bliss in the 1980s (Tait, 2019: 3). Toxic masculinity has been described as masculine behaviour that glorifies male aggression, violence and masculine power (Tait, 2019). Defining features of toxic masculinity include

putting on a pedestal male forceful behaviour and a masculine mentality that encourages men to feel entitled to women's bodies (Tait, 2019). Toxic masculinity believes that "boys will be boys" and that "men do not cry". It associates sensitivity and emotional vulnerability with women (Tait, 2019). In other words, toxic masculinity promotes male dominance, the demeaning of women, misogyny, homophobia and gender-based violence (Kupers, 2005). The drive to fiercely compete, dominate and control others is a component of toxic masculinity (Makhanya, 2023).

Men and boys express toxic masculinity in a variety of ways. For example, in December of 2023, a 15-year-old girl was allegedly gang raped by two 17-year-old boys at a party in Midrand (eNCA, 2023). The two teenage boys reportedly live-streamed on social media, confessing to having had a sexual encounter with the 15-year-old girl and making remarks on how they would end her life. After being arrested by the police, the teenage boys were released on bail under the condition that they were not to use social media (eNCA, 2023). The boys were released into their parents' custody and were instructed not to make contact with the victim or the witnesses (eNCA, 2023).

Pumla Gqola (2007), in her book '*The female fear factory',* tells a story of a woman walking in the supermarket being subjected to misogyny by a man exhibiting classic behaviours of toxic masculinity. Because the woman made it clear to the man that she was not interested in dating him, he lashed out at the woman and said, "This is why we rape you." (Gqola, 2007: 82). Everyone in the supermarket, except one woman, did nothing and just watched the man harass and violate the woman's sense of dignity (Gqola, 2007). This story illustrates how some men feel entitled to women's bodies and are prepared to express that sexist sentiment unreservedly. It demonstrates how the patriarchal society we live in has normalised GBV and the violation of women's sense of dignity.

It is in this discursive context that Gqola (2007: 81) asserts that women's bodies are considered available for "… consumption, caressing, raping, kidnapping, remarking on, grabbing, twisting, beating, burning, maiming and control" in post-1994 South Africa. Gqola (2007) concludes that this social situation has brought about what she calls the 'female fear factory', a social climate characterised by frequent warnings that women and girls need male chaperones when going outside at night. Gqola (2007) states that without a man to guard and supervise women's whereabouts at night, women face a high probability of rape, violence, or murder at

the hands of other men (Gqola, 2007).

1.3 Women's Response to Gender-Based Violence

In response to widespread GBV in post-1994 South Africa, women have been fighting against it in various ways. For example, Andisa Khanyile, a GBV advocate, joined a group of women and created the #TheTotalShutdown campaign in early 2018 (Le Roux, 2022). Over 40 000 women, gender-nonconforming people and girls came together to march in Pretoria, South Africa and around the country on the 1st of August 2018 against GBV. They chose August because it is the month of Women's Day (Le Roux, 2022). One of the women that was part of the #TheTotalShutdown march was Andy Kawa, a victim and survivor of abduction and gang rape (Le Roux, 2022). She wrote a book – titled "*Kwanele, Enough!"* – on her experience of GBV and how the country's justice system failed her. A tireless activist, Kawa has since led two marches against GBV (Le Roux, 2022).

The 16 Days of Activism is another campaign that aims to raise awareness against violence against women and children (UN Women, 2022). 16 Days of Activism was established at the Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991. It is an international campaign that occurs annually and starts on the 25th of November and continues until the 10th of December – Human Rights Day (UN Women, 2022). Across South Africa, women participate in the 16 Days of Activism. In 2022 the campaign theme was "Socio-Economic Rights and Empowerment to Build Women's Resilience against Gender-Based Violence and Femicide: Connect, Collaborate, Contract!" (Embassy, 2023). The idea was to focus on resolving social power disparities and the economic marginalisation women experience, which are significant contributors to GBV (Embassy, 2023).

Even here, at Rhodes University, women students have launched a campaign against GBV. For instance, in 2016, the #RUReferenceList campaign was created, which led students to protest around the University (Pilane, 2016). Women at Rhodes University protested and attacked the institution, arguing that it protected perpetrators of GBV (Pilane, 2016). The students wanted the institution to change its policy on sexual assault as they believed that the policy did not support victims of sexual violence, but rather protected perpetrators (Pilane, 2016). The students, according to Pilane (2016), took matters into their own hands and released what was known as the "RUReferenceList*"* with names of alleged violent men as well as alleged rapists

(Pilane, 2016). This was their way of protecting the women in the University.

In South Africa, women's political response to GBV culminated in the 2019 GBV Presidential Summit, where women, non-conforming people, activists and governing structures came together to say no to GBV. The Minister of Justice and Correctional Services at the time, Michael Masutha, acknowledged the importance of improving the efficiency and performance of the criminal justice system by addressing different aspects of policy, collection of evidence, accountability and how women are treated in the process, to list a few. In closing remarks, the UN's Resident Coordinator in South Africa, Bekele-Thomas (2019: 55) said,

> When all cameras have been switched off … we must continue to find other ways to work with and protect you, courageous women, from any further violence that may come your way because of your brave testimonies. You are the leading legends, and we bow to you.

1.4 The Nation's Laws to Deal with GBV

The fundamental concepts of equality were established by the 1996 South African Constitution and the Constitutional Bill of Rights (Meyiwa et al., 2017: 8614). South Africa adopted the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in January 1993 (and confirmed CEDAW under a democratically elected legislature in December 1995), in keeping with the goals of this Bill that had been undergoing debate for several years (Meyiwa et al., 2017: 8614). Legislation aimed at addressing gender-based violence and gender inequality in South Africa includes the Domestic Violence Act (No. 116 of 1998) (Meyiwa et al., 2017: 8614). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) outlines the obligations and rights of the people as citizens living in the country (Meyiwa et al., 2017: 8614).

As stated in Sections 9, 10 and 11 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), South Africa has advanced GBV and sexual-related violence laws and regulations, such as The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act, 32 of 2007 and the Domestic Violence Act, 116 of 1998 (Enaifoghe et al., 2021). These statutes express the "constitutional rights to equality, human dignity, life, freedom and personal security" (Enaifoghe et al., 2021: 135).

The National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence & Femicide (2020) was brought about in response to the ongoing Gender-based Violence & Femicide (GBVF) crisis to realise its goal

of a South Africa free from all kinds of GBVF against women, children, and LGBTQA+ people (Republic of South Africa, 2020). The terrible lack of responsibility for GBVF criminal behaviour from people, the state and society at large are a vital concern of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence & Femicide (Republic of South Africa, 2020: 36).

The National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence & Femicide in South Africa aims to combat abuse and violence against women and children. Inspired by #TheTotalShutdown march in 2018, the plan emphasises femicide and violence against all women (Republic of South Africa, 2020). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), which includes non-racism, non-sexism, human rights, justice, and human dignity, is the foundation for a successful legislative approach to GBV (Republic of South Africa, 2020). Numerous laws and policies have been implemented to address GBV, ensuring a society free from all forms of violence.

The National Crime Prevention Strategy of 1996 addresses violence against women and children, establishing minimum penalties for rapes through The Criminal Law Amendment Act 105 of 1997 (Republic of South Africa, 2020). The Criminal Procedure Second Amendment Act 85 tightens bail requirements in rape cases. The Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 provides victims of abuse with choices by outlining requirements for law enforcement agencies and establishing provisions for temporary restraining judgements (Republic of South Africa, 2020).

The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007 expands definitions of rape and sexual offences to include child pornography. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offenses and Related Matters) Amendment Act 6 of 2012 was passed to ensure that criminals would be successfully prosecuted and found guilty (Republic of South Africa, 2020). The National Security Plan is partly shaped by the National Development Plan, the Integrated Social Crime Prevention Strategy from 2011, and the White Paper on Safety and Security from 2016 (Republic of South Africa, 2020).

President Cyril Ramaphosa recently signed additional legislation that is victim-centred to help the fight against violence against women. The legislation includes the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act Amendment Bill, the Criminal and Related Matters Amendment Act, and the Domestic Violence Amendment Act (South African

Government, 2022). To increase South Africa's defence against gender-based violence, the President approved the Acts jointly.

1. "The South African Government has introduced The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act, amending Chapter 6 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act. The amendment aims to improve the duration of sex offender data retention, protect vulnerable individuals, and address sexual intimidation" (South African Government, 2022). "The Act expands the list of people who are to be protected to include other vulnerable persons, such as certain young women, people with physical, mental, or intellectual disabilities, and people over 60 who, for example, receive community-based care and support services" (South African Government, 2022).

2. "The Criminal and Related Matters Amendment Act speaks to Gender-based violence, and the Bill also extends its protection to those offences committed against vulnerable persons. Additional procedures during court proceedings to reduce secondary victimisation of vulnerable persons are also provided under this Act" (South African Government, 2022). "This law extends the circumstances in which a complainant can provide evidence through an intermediary, and it further extends the provision of evidence through audio-visual links other than criminal proceedings" (South African Government, 2022).

3. "The South African Government has adopted the Domestic Violence Amendment Act 2021 (Act 14 of 2021), which redesigns the Domestic Violence Act of 1998, addresses various cases of abuse and introduces protection orders" (South African Government, 2022). "This legislation aligns with the Protection from Harassment Act 17 of 2011, which protects victims and prevents perpetrators from being released" (South African Government, 2022).

In a speech delivered on Women's Day 2023, President Cyril Ramaphosa stated that the government implemented the above-mentioned laws because "there is no justifiable reason for us as men to believe that we own women, and we must relegate that to the past, but today no man must ever believe that they own a woman" (Ramaphosa, 2023).

1.5 Research Objectives of the Study

The goal of this research is to research the origins, and effects of GBV. The research analyses the ways in which GBV emerges in various political, social, and cultural environments.

Therefore, the thesis' research objectives are:

1. To research the origins of gender-based violence in post-1994 South Africa.

2. To investigate the legal, policing, and socio-cultural barriers to effectively addressing gender-based violence in post-1994 South Africa, as perceived and articulated by Black women activists.

1.6 Research Question

The research question that drove this study is the following: What are the causes and hindrances to addressing gender-based violence (GBV) in post-1994 South Africa, as perceived and articulated by Black women activists? The thesis highlights some of the causes and obstacles to addressing gender-based violence in post-1994 South Africa.

1.7 Significance of Research

This thesis is inspired to study this research question because of the widespread gender-based violence against women and girls in post-1994 South Africa. It is motivated by activists who fight against GBV and fight for justice, support the recovery and self-determination of survivors, and take part in a movement that confronts and transforms the social structures that support this form of violence. Additionally, this thesis researched GBV because "reducing violence against women is addressed specifically by the Sustainable Development Goals which outline the figures and seriousness of violence against women in South Africa (Stats SA, 2023). The Sustainable Development Goals set out goals to achieve by 2030. These goals include to "End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere. Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation" (Stats SA, 2023: 82).

According to Stats SA, (2023: 94),

> Despite making progress, violence against women remains among the most pressing gender-related issues in South Africa. With the legislation in place to address gender-based violence, such as the Domestic Violence Act and the Sexual Offences Act, women and girls in South Africa continue to face high levels of sexual and physical violence. More action is needed to change the mindset and deep-rooted stereotypes, which are often at the core of why violence against women occurs.

In 2024, the gender-based violence crisis in South Africa is at its worst, and as a result, requires an efficient policy response (Rapanyane, 2021). This research hopes to further efforts to generate effective policies, laws and activism against GBV.

1.8 Thesis Overview

Chapter One: Introduction- This chapter introduces the research and provides a brief background of what GBV is and what factors sustain it. This chapter presents the research question, and establishes the serious nature of GBV, while outlining the goals and objectives, and providing a summary of the thesis.

Chapter Two: Literature review- This chapter discusses some of the key literature on GBV in post-1994 South Africa. The reading of the literature identified poor policing, issues with Courts and whatever else you found from reading the literature as main contributors to GBV in post-1994 SA.

Chapter Three: Methodology- This chapter provides an explanation of the research procedures employed to address the research topic. It explains the theory needed to investigate women's experiences, the study's sampling strategy, and the data analysis process.

Chapter Four: Understanding the Dynamics of Gender-Based Violence: Motivation for Activism, Contributors and Impacts- This chapter critically discusses the research data collected from research participants and focuses on the factors that motivated research participants to become GBV activists. The chapter provides possible sources of GBV in post-1994 South Africa focusing on social, cultural and financial issues. It looks at the manner in which the South African Police Services treat GBV causes and what can be done to better handle cases related to violence against women.

Chapter Five: Exploring the Role of Activism and the Government in Addressing and Combating GBV- This chapter builds on chapter four and focuses on the role of activism as well as the role of the government in the fight against GBV. It outlines the different campaigns activists have participated in and provides a detailed analysis of the work done and the experience of research participants.

Chapter Six: The Conclusion - this chapter summarises and concludes the thesis and makes recommendations for the South African government and non-governmental organisations.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of some of the key literature pertaining to the topic of gender-based violence in post-1994 South Africa. The discussion is structured around six key themes, namely the factors that sustain GBV/VAW, patriarchal silencing in the fight against GBV, the justice system, and police incompetence in dealing with GBV, intimate partner violence: masculinity, and activism against GBV. The discussion begins with exploring the factors that sustain GBV/VAW.

2.2 Factors That Sustain GBV/VAW

In their 2023 qualitative research titled '*A conceptual framework of gender-based violence and femicide drivers in South Africa'*, Matolwandile Mtotywa, Ledwaba Bekezela Mambo, Zenani Nkonzo, Rofhiwa Ntshagovhe, and Azwihangwisi Negota, conducted an in-depth analysis on the factors contributing to and the complexities of GBV. This study looked at the structural and extensively rooted nature of violence against women and girls in South African systems, religions, practices, and traditions that contribute to the greater impact of GBV.

Mtotywa et al. (2023) state that it is often acknowledged that a perpetrator's life is influenced by many factors rather than a single factor. Mtotywa et al. (2023) argue that growing up in a home where violence is used as a form of communication or having experienced violence as a child can lead to some victims accepting violence as the norm in adulthood.

Mtotywa et al. (2023) also examined love and violence, arguing that they coexist in harmony in some relationships because of prevailing social norms that normalise male aggression and dominance. Mtotywa et al. (2023) refer to two types of love; they argue that the first one is 'romantic love', where some men show their love for their partner by spending time with them, and the second one is 'provider love' which is centred in some men providing women with money and gifts. Mtotywa et al. (2023) state that in both these relationships, violence is possible. They further argue that the idea that some men have more authority over women in

relationships than women, is another factor that sustains GBV (Mtotywa et al., 2023). They explain that this is evident in various areas, such as decision-making, gender standards, and a reluctance to compromise.

A limitation of this study is that it is not based on empirical evidence; the authors did not conduct fieldwork but rather based their argument on a rigorous literature review. Thus, it did not have participants and relied on the work of other researchers who conducted empirical studies. It would have been beneficial to see how research participants would have contributed to this study and their understanding of the factors that sustain GBV/VAW.

In their research study titled '*Blessings or curses? The contribution of the blesser phenomenon to gender-based violence and intimate partner violence'*, Brent Frieslaar and Maake Masango (2021) interviewed women regarding their experience in blesser relationships and gender-based violence and intimate partner violence (IPV). A blesser relationship is a relationship agreement between a young woman and an older, wealthy man, where the man supports the young woman financially and provides her with all her needs and wants. In return, she would comfort him and provide him with sexual pleasure (Frieslaar and Masango, 2021). Some young women from low-income families turn to interactions with sugar daddies (blessers) in order to obtain their most fundamental needs due to a lack of economic opportunities. Another argument given by Frieslaar and Masango (2021) to explain why some young women enter these relationship agreements is that it exposes them to a posh lifestyle that allows them to socialise with the right people and attend the proper events (events attended by celebrities, rich people and people that society deems to be important), which in turn helps them feel more confident and good about themselves (Frieslaar and Masango, 2021).

Frieslaar and Masango (2021) conducted this research in a rural university in Limpopo, South Africa, where there seems to be little to no resources for young women such as financial support from their families. The study found that not all but some blessees have experienced shame and trauma from the abuse inflicted on them by the blesser during the duration of the relationship (Frieslaar and Masango, 2021). Frieslaar and Masango (2021) argue that some of these blesser-blessee relationships tend to turn into abusive relationships, where the young woman feels trapped because of the financial support from the blesser and sometimes pregnancies. For example, the study discusses the case of Jackie Phamotse, a South African writer and social

activist, who shared her story of being in a blesser relationship and how if she had not gotten away from the relationship, she would have lost her life (Frieslaar and Masango, 2021). Her relationship had gotten violent to the point that she suspected that her blesser would kill her or arrange for someone to do it (Frieslaar and Masango, 2021).

Frieslaar and Masango's research on young South African women highlights the seriousness of some of these relationships but lacks context in giving more examples of these blesser-blessee relationships and provides no potential ways for the community to intervene and help blessees when they encounter hardship.

Emma L. Backe, Edna Bosire, and Emily Mendenhall's 2022 qualitative study titled *'Drinking too much: The dual "disasters" of intimate partner violence and alcohol use in South Africa'*, took a different study lens and looked at alcohol as a factor contributing to GBV in Soweto, a township in South Africa – the study found that some men frequently cite alcohol as a justification for acting violently. Backe et al. (2022) conducted interviews with women from different generations, from those in their late 20s to those in their 60s and 70s. Backe et al. (2022) highlight the link between alcohol consumption and IPV in South Africa and give an example of a woman who had said that looking back on her relationship with her husband, she realised that he abused her throughout the relationship, and the abuse only stopped when she fought back. She stated that every time he would fight with her and become violent, he was under the influence of alcohol. Backe et al. (2022) argue that some men in South Africa who disclose abusing their intimate partners and wives also have a greater likelihood of heavy drinking.

Backe et al. (2022) state that some women who choose to stay in abusive relationships may do so out of fear of community judgement, financial dependency, or traditional expectations of women not to run away from their marriages. One of the main weaknesses of this paper is that it only considers the perspectives of women regarding the high rates of violence and alcohol consumption in South Africa. Backe et al. (2022) state that approximately 19% of women (in their study) in townships in South Africa indicated weekly drinking sessions. Backe et al.'s (2022) study states that not much is known about the alcohol drinking of women in their homes as a way of coping with abuse from their husbands and seven of 77 participants in Backe et al.'s (2022) study admitted to drinking alcohol, which may be a way of coping with violence in their romantic relationships (Backe et al., 2022). However, the study does not outline the

effects that women experience when they drink alcohol in Soweto. The study is also limited as alcohol consumption of both men and women takes place in all townships in South Africa, and the study only focuses on the stories of women in the township of Soweto.

In 2021, Shakila Singh published a qualitative research paper titled 'South African male university students' perspectives on gender norms concerning alcohol and related harmful behaviours towards female drinkers'. Singh's (2021) research focused on alcohol being a contributor to gender violence, and her focus was on male university students. The study used feminist principles and practices to challenge gendered inequalities. Singh interviewed 10 Black male South African students about their experiences and understanding of gender norms and the harmful behaviours perpetrated on female drinkers by male drinkers. She makes it clear that the study's focus was not on Black masculinity and does not present Black men as predators in using violence.

The findings show that alcohol is viewed as an enticement enjoyed by some men. Male students clarify that some men turn to alcohol to strengthen themselves against the pressures of dominant heterosexual masculinity (Singh, 2021). In other words, male students use alcohol to give themselves the confidence to approach women, in many cases, whereafter, the approach turns into aggression.

The participants in the study seemed to agree that drinking alcohol is a mood-changer; it gives them the courage to do things they would not think of doing when sober (Singh, 2021). Singh (2021) states that the participants realised that the two main masculine qualities male students believed to be the effect of alcohol consumption on their personalities were courage and a loss of self-control (Singh, 2021). Not only did drinking alcohol result in confidence when approaching women for sex, but it also caused a loss of self-control. One of the participants stated that when they are drinking alcohol with women, "things" happen that one may regret the next day (Singh, 2021). This participant does not acknowledge the overstepping that might have happened, and he does not make it clear what the "things" are, which leaves the reader with an idea of sexual harassment in this context.

Most of the participants in Singh's study acknowledge women's freedom to drink alcohol but further suggest that "women who drink alcohol willingly entered into an unsafe space" —a discursive strategy to 'blame the victim', for in this narrative, women who drink alcohol are

regarded as ‘asking’ for whatever bad things that may happen to them (Singh, 2021: 558). This statement shows the misconception of gender norms from the side of the male participants.

Singh (2021) states that even though the male participants in her study blamed alcohol for losing control, they did not stop consuming it. This is a crucial point, in that most of the participants, even though they could see the negative effects of alcohol on them, still judge women who drink alcohol and blame women for their bad behaviour. They devalue women and make comments like, “When women are drunk, they tend to dance or wear revealing clothes, and when they do so, males think it is okay for them to touch them in an inappropriate way” (Singh, 2021: 559).

Singh’s (2021) study touches on essential arguments that must be addressed. Even though the study was based on male university students, it would be useful if it had also given the perspective of women who drink alcohol in the same spaces as these men in order to obtain their understanding of the violations perpetrated on them. The study does not speak on campus protection or protocols that women who are violated can take or report; it simply indicates that some men are aware of their violations and entitlement over women’s bodies, but this leaves the reader with this question: what can be done to change these practices?

2.3 Patriarchal Silencing in the Fight Against GBV

In 2021, Jenna Meredith Pagel published a study titled ‘*#AmINext: The link between European colonisation and gender-based violence in contemporary South Africa’*. The research aim was to investigate “how the transmission of colonial patriarchal values happened to South Africa by the European domination of the region and subjugation of indigenous peoples to connect the European patriarchy to modern gender inequalities, specifically gender-based violence” (Pagel, 2021: 4). This qualitative study contends that colonisation of South Africa brought about patriarchal practices and structures that created systematic and internal inequalities for women in South Africa and this shows itself in the form of GBV (Pagel, 2021).

Pagel (2021) states that during colonisation, the values of patriarchy were employed as a weapon to subdue Indigenous people; women were devalued in relation to men in order to weaken their foundations of power – colonisation brought patriarchal ideologies that resulted in systemic inequalities for South African women that still exist today (Pagel, 2021).

Pagel (2021) argues that African gender roles prior to colonisation show how Indigenous women and girls were independent of the same limitations of a gendered hierarchical society. Before colonisation, gender roles were not specific, and colonisation came with the practice of women having domestic roles and men having power over the household. Post-1994, there have been changes where women are included in structures they were not before. Owing to the inequalities and gender stereotypes colonisation and apartheid created, Pagel (2021) affirms that post-1994, some men do not hold the same power they used to during apartheid concerning economic opportunities and social positions and now take out their frustration on women, children, and other men.

The advantage of this study is that it outlined the history of why South Africa is experiencing pervasive GBV and how, if history is not corrected, GBV will persist. However, the drawback of this study is that the author does not speak on the struggles of GBV that other races in South Africa go through. South Africa is a diverse country with different races coexisting together, and it would have been beneficial to see how the effects of colonisation on GBV affect them. Pagel (2021) does not elaborate on solutions; instead, it seems that she wants the reader to acknowledge the problem of GBV and how patriarchy rooted in colonisation is a factor that contributes to it, but without advice on how to correct and move past the issue.

Kgauhelo Lekalakala's 2015 qualitative research titled '*The use of patriarchy and a sense of entitlement in justifying gender-based violence including sexual abuse of young children'* focuses on the comprehension of the reasoning behind the sexual acts committed against young children by those who abuse them. Her research investigates the causes of some men's sexual abuse of young children and how to influence practice and policy regarding child safety measures (Lekalakala, 2015). Lekalakala (2015) conducted semi-structured interviews in 8 different languages with 27 imprisoned sexual predators from the ages of 15 to 86 who confessed to sexual crimes and were allocated to eight prisons in three provinces of South Africa. All the perpetrators were found guilty of sexually abusing children under the age of six.

Lekalakala (2015) states that some participants admitted to finding young children attractive, that they would admire how some parents choose to dress their children and admire their beauty to the point where they find themselves raping the children. For example, Lekalakala (2015: 227) quotes one participant who said, "He looks at the child's body and the way she is dressed up. Sometimes the dress could be a little bit shorter, and you will see as well that eish this child,

let me have her and feel how it is a bit." Perpetrators of GBV who exhibit and act out predatory impulses on little girls are formally called paedophiles. Lekalakala (2015) argues that some of these men know what is appropriate and what is not, yet they choose to sexualise young children, even though they know right and wrong. Lekalakala (2015) also touches on how some fathers find themselves in situations where they are attracted to their own children and sexually abuse them. For example, one participant said, "Some of the men, when they have a responsibility to bath their children and change nappies, when they see the child's genital area, they start developing a desire towards that child. He ends up taking a decision to pleasuring himself with her" (Lekalakala, 2015: 228). This suggests that some of these men are aware of the power they have over children, and they abuse it. They know that children are raised to respect their elders, and because some of these children know them and have some form of relationship with them, they are free to speak to them; some of these men take advantage of that.

According to Lekalakala (2015), some of the participants argued that they had mistreated children since they had no other choice and did not care whether the children were harmed. Lekalakala (2015) states that because women and children are dehumanised and seen as commodities of male enjoyment in a patriarchal society, the suffering of the children is insignificant. Some men decide to take advantage of young children because they see them as vulnerable, and they would not fight back or report abuse, whereas if they were to abuse an older woman, she would call the police, and the perpetrator would not be able to cover his tracks (Lekalakala, 2015). Lekalakala (2015) argues that some of the men in her study believed that they could get away with sexually abusing young children because of the children's lack of vocabulary about sexual abuse, being at the age where they are not able to speak, and the practice of obedience towards elders.

The strong point of Lekalakala's (2015) study is that it produced perpetrator reasoning highlighting how language and society's role help spread attitudes that uphold patriarchal norms supporting gender inequality. As a result, the study's findings add to the global discussions concerning the perpetrator theory of child sexual assault, and it gives an awareness of the ongoing and unreported child sexual violence that society may not be aware of.

2.4 The Justice System and Police Incompetence in Dealing with GBV

Elspeth Burris's 2022 research titled '*Gender-based violence in South Africa: Thinking beyond carceral solutions'* used an intersectional lens and qualitative method to examine the involvement of the police in the GBV epidemic in South Africa. Burris (2022) contends that police views and conduct against women and other gender minorities lead to the normalisation of GBV. Burris (2022) outlines the history of the South African Police Services (SAPS) and how, during apartheid, the police system was militarised; post-1994, the government tried to change the structure and rules of the previous police force. However, Burris (2022) argues that the police system still presents the legacy of apartheid, where there was police violence, especially against Black people. Owing to the increased crime in post-1994 South Africa, SAPS adopted the use of force.

Burris (2022) states that when it comes to taking accusations of GBV seriously, conducting in-depth investigations and promoting misogynistic stereotypes about survivors, police officials who are tasked with handling such cases frequently fall short of improving the circumstances for survivors. In certain instances, police officers cause even greater harm by committing GBV themselves. Burris (2022) states that the past has shown that survivors disclosing abuse could result in additional abuse or re-traumatisation and that they may experience judgement, mistrust, or neglect from the police. Burris (2022) states that not only are some police incompetent when it comes to stopping and looking into GBV offences, but their behaviour and views towards women and other gender minorities also help to normalise GBV. Burris (2022) states that 90 SAPS personnel were found guilty in 2011 of a range of charges, including, "attempted murder, death as a result of police custody, improper performance of duties, murder, rape, and assault with grievous bodily harm."

Burris (2022) states that because the South African police are tasked with attending to and seeking justice in situations of violence, they are fundamentally connected to the problem of gender-based violence in South Africa, as some are often perpetrators of violence far too frequently. Burris (2022) argues that police have much control when it comes to choosing whether to investigate reports of GBV, which may result in the non-arrest of known perpetrators. Burris (2022: 26) states that "police encounter additional practical difficulties, such as an overwhelming number of cases and inadequate training in obtaining testimonies and

handling sexual assaults, even when they decide to investigate GBV cases".

The police force is a contributing agent in the safety of women and the fight against VAW and GBV. Burris (2022) writes on the story of a 26-year-old Black woman who, in 2022 in Brackenfell, South Africa, walked to the police station to report her boyfriend who had assaulted her. During an argument she had with her boyfriend, he hit her on the head with a bottle of beer, and when she was at the police station opening the case, the captain of the police insisted that she was drunk because of the smell of alcohol on her from the beer bottle and that she should go home. It is important to note that the police had no right to dismiss her even if she was drunk; she had the right to open a case and receive assistance from the police. The day after the incident, the boyfriend became violent again, so she called the police. When the police arrived at her house, they offered to take her to her friend's house. On the way to the friend's house, one of the police officers who was driving the car offered to drop off his police partner at the station, and he would proceed with the woman and drop her off at her friend's house. The police officer later pulled the car over and raped the woman and threatened to kill her and kidnap her boyfriend if she ever told anyone (Burris, 2022). The story given by Burris (2022) shows how the police system is failing women in South Africa.

According to The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (2016), following the Domestic Violence Act, the police must assist the victim or apprehend the GBV offender. It additionally becomes the responsibility of the police to support the victim in seeking legal aid, including securing and delivering a protection order to the offending party (The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2016). The police must direct the victim to seek counselling or housing at a shelter to ensure their safety and well-being (The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2016).

The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (2016) argues that studies have shown that numerous law enforcement personnel are reluctant to help victims of intimate partner violence because they view these instances as a private matter between two partners/lovers despite the Domestic Violence Act being explicit about the duty of the police in such instances. Passive and adverse views from police personnel contribute to secondary victimisation by keeping victims from reporting their crimes to the police or retracting them once they have (The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2016). The research findings indicate that while the law is effective, victims are deterred from getting assistance by certain police

officers' negative attitudes. For police officers to successfully aid victims of gender-based violence, patriarchal attitudes must be addressed (The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2016).

It would be a helpful implementation to have volunteers help the police, specifically with GBV-related police work because the load would be shifted from some police officers so that they can focus on other criminal cases while volunteers focus on GBV cases. Police officers also need training on how to handle GBV, and there need to be structures that penalise police who mishandle GBV cases (for example, suspension without pay).

In their qualitative research titled '*Analysis of institutional responses to gender-based violence and femicide in the South African Police Service'*, (2023) Nozipho Nkosikhona Simelane, Jacob Tseko Mofokeng, and Dee Khosa aimed to show how closely the SAPS look at the legal foundation for the national policy guidelines for victim representation. As a data collection tool, Simelane et al. (2023) used a cross-sectional design and a paper-based questionnaire administered to the participants.

Simelane et al. (2023) state that the SAPS had numerous obstacles in the pre- and post-COVID-19 era when it came to defending women and children against abuse and efficiently dealing with such incidents. Simelane et al. (2023) argue that there is an occurrence of tolerance for offenders by SAPS, limited resources, relevant legislation that appears to be ineffective or inactive, and a significant lack of assistance programmes and funding to improve the safety of women and children. Simelane et al. (2023) report that half of the study's participants believed that there are not enough police officers handling GBVF cases to address the epidemic of gender violence.

According to Simelane et al. (2023), the increasing incidences of GBVF in South Africa threaten the efficiency of the legal system and draw attention to its flaws, which derive from a deficiency in service provision. Simelane et al. (2023) explain that in cases involving femicide or violent attacks, personnel of the SAPS are frequently the first to arrive on the scene. Their duties include gathering evidence, ensuring that survivors receive medical attention, and locating appropriate housing for them. Simelane et al. (2023) state that following domestic violence and GBV research, specific police departments fail to provide victims with appropriate assistance. The police continue to lack committed and qualified staff to handle such

cases who can provide victims with legally accurate information and other forms of help (Simelane et al., 2023).

Simelane et al. (2023) argue that SAPS needs to devote the same amount of time, money, and focus as given to other criminal cases to address the concerns raised by domestic violence and GBV. Owing to the increased pressure that GBVF places on the police and other government departments, SAPS members must be able to adjust to changing circumstances. As indicated by Simelane et al. (2023), to address the widespread nature of GBVF, a focused and consistent commitment to the entire system is required. In addition, GBVF needs to be prioritised by SAPS and other pertinent parties.

The strength of this study is that it has shown how if the government and SAPS fail to support survivors and victims of GBV effectively, the country will continue to experience a rise in cases and in non-reporting of cases by victims. It will take a long time for survivors and victims to seek and obtain justice.

In the Herald newspaper, Devon Koen (2024) writes about Andy Kawa's cold case where she was kidnapped, and gang raped in Cape Town in 2010. She launched a civil claim against the police over their failed investigation of her attack. Koen (2024: 1) makes it clear that over 13 years after the incident the police have only now linked one of the suspects' DNA "from a stolen property case." Andy Kawa has been fighting for justice for over 13 years after her attack, which happened in 2010, and only in 2024 did the police find one of the suspects. Even though she won the claim case against the police, she has not yet been reimbursed. Andy Kawa's story is significant in showing the incompetence of the police and the justice system. It is one of South Africa's significant highlights of the injustices of GBV and the treatment of women in the country.

2.5 Intimate Partner Violence: Masculinity

Shanaaz Mathews, Rachel Jewkes, and Naeemah Abrahams conducted qualitative research in 2015 titled *'So now I'm the man': Intimate partner femicide and its interconnections with expressions of masculinities in South Africa'*, which focused on the high levels of femicide in South Africa. This research conducted in-depth interviews with 20 imprisoned men who murdered their romantic partners and investigated their attitudes about relationships with

women. The study demonstrates that the men attempted to embody excessive forms of dominating masculine ideals, stressing severe control and power over women. The study portrays killing as the final way of regaining control in a society where gender stereotypes justify men's employing violence to establish authority and control.

Mathews et al. (2015) found that there is a societal acceptance of some forms of violence from men as a way of controlling their partners, punishing them, and gaining respect. Mathews et al. (2015) state that in South Africa, women are made to have social expectations to be controlled by men, and they protect those abusive men by justifying their actions. In the interviews that Mathews et al. (2015) conducted, these men expressed that they were inspired to kill their female partners because they claimed these women misbehaved and were disrespectful towards them. Some men felt out of control because of their sexual jealousy and thus punished their female partners as a way for them to feel and express their masculine control over their female partners. Mathews et al. (2015) state that they learnt that these personal relationships are complex because some males cannot trust their intimate partners, and they set them up for failure by demanding control, respect, and submission.

Mathews et al.'s (2015) study states that there needs to be interventions to prevent GBV and Femicide in South Africa; however, it does not suggest ways that some men with abusive tendencies can be assisted and how society can be taught to address concerns related to violence. In her 2005 qualitative research titled '*Men behaving differently: South African men since 1994'*, Liz Walker states that one man expressed how men sometimes feel threatened by the success and independence of women. Therefore, they express that feeling of fear and threat by enforcing violence on some of these women (Walker, 2005). Walker discusses how strict concepts of masculinity are being questioned and how new types of masculinity are developing in their place. Some males want to be part of an emerging social system, while others stubbornly hold to more established habits. Walker's 2005 study is an old study for this thesis; however, it provides a good understanding of masculinity and how it manifests in GBV post-1994.

Walker (2005) argues that the ongoing concern about masculinity and male sexuality in South Africa has been highlighted by the country's move towards democracy (particularly about gender equality), the approval of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), and public discussions on human rights. Walker (2005) states that although being a man in South

Africa post-1994 is certainly different, the past and present are not entirely separated. Instead, current ideas and behaviours of manhood have historical roots. Thus, while the state of manhood in South Africa may be different, it is not new. Walker's (2005) article examined modern masculinity in South Africa through in-depth interviews with young African middle-class men. This study explored how men navigate their masculinity during social change and transition. Walker (2005) discusses how many men grow up in abusive households, that the abuse creates deep scars, that they take that abusive treatment and deem it normal and, in turn, abuse their romantic partners and children.

Walker (2005) argues that the democratic changes in post-1994 South Africa such as women's rights are causing resentment in some men, which in certain instances activates violent tendencies. A limitation of Walker's research is that it only focused on young Black men as though they were the only perpetrators of GBV/VAW. It also focused on young men who want change in themselves and society. The study left out those young men who may want to change their past abusive behaviours but do not know how to. They do not know that their actions are a problem and are unaware that GBV/VAW is not a good trend but a problem in South Africa.

In 2016, Mason-Jones, De Koker, Eggers, Mathews, Temmerman, Leye, P. de Vries and H. de Vries, conducted qualitative research titled, '*Intimate partner violence in early adolescence: The role of gender, socio-economic factors, and the school'*. The study investigated the frequency of gendered physical and sexual abuse perpetration and victimisation and the related risk and protective variables. Mason Jones et al. (2016) interviewed 2 839 young adults from 41 randomly selected public high schools in the Western Cape province of South Africa who answered a self-administered questionnaire. Mason-Jones et al. (2016) argue that IPV is a global concern affecting teenagers, with research showing that between 10% and 50% of cases involve sexual, emotional, and physical assault. In their study, Mason-Jones et al. (2016) collected data from teenagers aged 13 years. They had shocking findings where, in their intimate relationships, 10% of participants admitted to using physical violence, and 5.9% committed sexual violence on their partners.

In contrast, 21.1% of boys and 12.4% of girls stated having experienced physical IPV, and 11.1% of boys and 4.8% of girls reported experiencing sexual IPV (Mason-Jones et al., 2016). The overwhelming statistics in the research of Mason-Jones et al. (2016) demonstrate the seriousness of gender violence; however, it does not speak on the effects that IPV has had on

the participants. Although this study made a commendable effort to collect data, it did not provide ways in which teenagers can be assisted when they have encountered or are facing GBV in their intimate relationships. Mason-Jones et al. (2016) could have listed different structures made available by the government and non-government organisations (NGOs) to help young people who have experienced or are experiencing GBV or IPV.

2.6 Activism Against GBV

Apart from NGOs that are helping young women who have experienced GBV, many activists have been hard at work. Take the article by Paula Vermuë titled '*We have nothing to celebrate: Fighting gender-based violence in Cape Town, South Africa'*. In 2021, Paula Vermuë conducted qualitative research and undertook semi-structured interviews with feminist NGOs and women activists who were organising the Total Shutdown March in Cape Town in 2018. In this research, Vermuë looked at the work of NGOs and activists and the opportunities they have opened for victims and survivors of GBV. Vermuë (2021) started the research by stating that South African women leaders, NGOs, and grassroots activists are fighting for gender equality, which existed before and after 1994.

Vermuë (2021) criticises the ribbon-cutting initiative by the current South African government. She states that she sees the ribbon-cutting celebrations as the "palliative-care approach" – that the ANC provides a type of "band-aid" care that raises awareness but ignores the underlying reasons for the widespread rape and uneven patriarchal relationships between men and women (Vermuë, 2021: 246). Instead, it results in pointless politics. This is what Vermuë (2021) holds to be the de-politicisation of femicide and gender-based violence in South Africa. Vermuë (2021) defines de-politicisation as the ability of political leaders to downplay or deny the political nature of government and to portray policymaking as an impartial, essential, and unquestionable process that limits or eliminates disagreement about politics.

Vermuë (2021) states that women's NGOs emerged as an important factor in providing accommodations and support for survivors of GBV during the country's move to a post-apartheid democracy. Non-governmental organisation (NGO) donors in this case study showed dissatisfaction with the government's empty commitments regarding gender-based violence plans (Vermuë, 2021). NGO participants felt compelled to fill in the gaps of the plans made by the governments and emphasised that the South African government depends on NGOs for

services because they assign most of the work to them (Vermuë, 2021). Vermuë (2021) highlights a point that seems to be affecting most of the NGOs in South Africa: there is a lack of financial assistance and support from the South African government, which then jeopardises the goals of NGOs in supporting GBV victims and survivors. It is difficult for NGOs to find funding due to the high number of GBV NGOs in South Africa. When they do find funding, the donors have their set plans on what they want the NGOs to achieve which derails the goals of the NGOs – this leads to them not finishing their year plans and not fully supporting the victims and survivors as a result (Vermuë, 2021).

In 2018, activists engaged the quote, "We have nothing to celebrate!" when the Total Shutdown activists took to the streets demanding to be heard in the South African political framework (Vermuë, 2021: 250). They expressed their anger at the celebration of women for one month, whereas in other months of the year, women and children are abused and some are killed. Hence, the Total Shutdown movement's primary objective is to make the government responsible for the 1994 constitution, which protects everyone's right to safety and security in South Africa. Vermuë (2021) contends that the struggle against GBV and Femicide has been successfully reintroduced to the political discussion following the May 2019 elections. Politicians were obliged to reevaluate their approaches to gender equality and their campaigns after the growth of the Total Shutdown movement. Vermuë (2021) argues that the movement compelled action, and the topic of GBV was again made politically relevant. Vermuë (2021) states that the movement made the point that lengthy performance national addresses and false vows by the government were no longer sufficient. The disadvantage of this research is that it is based on activism from three years before the study; more activism took place between the time of the #TotalShutdown movement and the time of the research publication. The researcher could have expanded the research to activism till 2020.

Nandipha Nwabisa Mazana in 2022 added to the activism against GBV discussion, in a study titled 'B*ayasibulala: #AmINext? An analysis of Instagram as a tool for activism against Sexual Gender-Based Violence in South Africa'*. Mazana's (2022) study aimed to discover how Instagram, among other social media platforms, has grown as a platform for online activism in South Africa. To do this, Mazana (2022) used qualitative analysis to examine 700 posts with the hashtag #AmINext from the COVID-19 level 5 period from March to June 2020 in South Africa. Mazana (2022: 19) begins by explaining the root of violence in South Africa, linking it

to colonisation and apartheid and how "violent behaviour is deeply woven into the new democratic South Africa." Because of the violence associated with the practice of masculinity in South Africa, online activism provides us with an alternate platform for activism and awareness-building regarding ongoing sexual GBV. This is significant because offenders frequently have influential positions that can be used to silence survivors who want to come forward, particularly in South Africa, where an individual can be charged with rape and still win two terms of office (Mazana gives an example of Jacob Zuma who was accused of rape and won the case and later became the South African president for two terms) (Mazana, 2022).

According to Mazana (2022), activists use Instagram to engage in citizen journalism through exchanging information, awareness-raising, mobilisation, organising, and advocacy. Mazana (2022) argues that studies conducted over the years have revealed a global increase in hashtag activism, which has sparked the emergence of hashtag feminism. Social media platforms are used by hashtag feminism to spread awareness of topics that are frequently ignored by newspaper articles and radio press. Instagram is one social networking site that has been increasingly popular in South Africa for online campaigning (Mazana, 2022). This is because hashtags, such as #MeToo and #BeenRapedNeverReported, can be used to create traction on social media sites. In addition, survivors of GBV can choose to remain anonymous through this kind of advocacy, which also gives them a sense of belonging (Mazana, 2022).

Mazana's (2022) research fills the gap in academia in the sense that social media is usually portrayed as a mind-eater, that it increases feelings of laziness and jealousy, and its positives are never analysed. However, Mazana does not reflect that sometimes people use social media to degrade and tarnish other people's names, especially men. Some women falsely accuse men of abuse and rape on social media, knowing the reach it will have in the nation. Hence, 'cancel culture' is when many people, largely on the X app (previously known as Twitter), gather together and attack and tarnish the accused on social media. This has many negative effects like embarrassment and sometimes suicide, for example, the case of a high school boy whom a classmate falsely accused of rape, who committed suicide on school grounds because of the accusation (Moichela. 2022).

In 2020, in a newsletter article published by the Non-profit Organisation (NPO), Tekano titled '*16 Days of Activism against VAW'*, a few VAW activists wrote on the importance of 16 Days of Activism and critiqued legislation approved in 2018. This article looked at the impact of the

Covid-19 pandemic on some women who lived with their abusers and the insufficient reporting of statistics from SAPS during that time. In relation to this, they indicate that many organisations, including Rise Up Against Gender-based Violence, had an increase in the number of calls from victims who needed to be evacuated and moved to women's shelters (Tekano, 2020).

The activists in this article state that some women, men and activists have taken to the streets to demand better treatment, laws, and responses from the government; however, little has changed (Tekano, 2020). The government has come under increasing pressure to take decisive action to stop or attempt to stop gender-based violence and femicide over the past few years. Among these is the GBV summit, and the creation of the National Strategy Plan against GBV and Femicide – a request that civil society organisations have made for decades. According to Tekano (2020: 6), and with reference to the legislation approved in 2018, President Cyril Ramaphosa stated that "sadly, a lot of victims of gender-based violence have come to distrust the criminal justice system. When these Bills are finished, they will contribute to the trust of women in our nation that the law will in fact protect them." The activists in the article argue that the laws that have been amended and enacted with reference to the statement made by the President, have loose ends and need to be re-amended.

Tekano (2020) criticised the Domestic Violence Act and stated that the Children's Institute highlighted that "physical abuse should include corporal punishment and that the Domestic Violence Act should define "domestic violence" precisely" (Tekano, 2020: 7). The institute further suggested against eliminating harassment from the legislation given that it can be an element of domestic violence against an intimate partner, and because doing so shows "a failure to acknowledge the various forms domestic violence can take and how it occurs on a continuum," harassment should remain under the Domestic Violence Act rather than being entirely removed (Tekano, 2020: 8). Tekano (2020) argues that the National Strategy Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (2020) promotes a victim-centred approach, which is why Sonke Gender Justice, the NPO, suggested stalking as a legal offence in the Domestic Violence Act. Tekano (2020) states that even if the government proposes all these steps, other social players can contribute and collaborate with the government to address this concern.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed many factors sustaining GBV in South Africa, like patriarchal silencing, men's feeling of entitlement over women's bodies, men's loss of self-control with alcohol consumption, and victim blaming. This is especially in cases where some men blame women for drinking alcohol and wearing revealing clothes as their reason to rape and sexually harass them, and the misunderstanding of gender roles and norms. Feminist authors like Jenna Meredith Pagel (2021) argue that GBV persists because of the silencing and lack of acknowledgement of the history of the racial sexual violation of Black women. She states that gender-based violence is caused by patriarchy and violent masculinity, traced back to colonisation and apartheid. Some scholars like Kgauhelo Lekalakala (2015) agree with Pagel (2021) and add that the other challenge that persists in GBV is the entitlement that some men think they have over women's bodies. Gender roles are constructed, and there is a need for re-educating society on good gender relationships and moving away from the gender stereotypes that most of society follows such as the idea Burris (2022) speaks of where boys are socialised to be rough, whereas girls are socialised to be understanding.

The literature suggests that numerous law enforcement officers are reluctant to help GBV cases (because in most communities, it is understood that IPV is a private matter), they have not acquired skills to help victims of GBV/VAW and are often not understanding and judgemental. The literature explored in this chapter revealed that many different factors cause GBV, and allow it to persist; however, patriarchy is the most common cause. The literature shows the awareness of GBV and multiple examples and cases of people experiencing and perpetrating it. However, it does not give solutions that communities must follow to prevent GBV. There is power in the community, and the government, and both need to use that power to prevent and stop GBV. By creating community-based policies, community members could hold each other accountable. Community members can then involve law enforcement for arrests and detainment. Within communities, there are active and supportive GBV activists who understand GBV/VAW. This research project aims to add to existing literature the role of activists in the fight against GBV, with this chapter laying the foundation of the causes of GBV, and factors and issues that persist in GBV.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodologies used to conduct research for this project. The discussion begins by explaining that this is a qualitative research project. In line with qualitative research methodology, this chapter describes the sampling strategy used to recruit participants, the interview strategy employed to interview participants, along with the coding and the data analysis of the interviews. The chapter also outlines the theory used in this study to make sense of participants' interviews.

3.2 Qualitative Research

This master's thesis is a qualitative study and used qualitative methods to collect data. Qualitative research focuses on various methodologies and takes an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject (Aspers and Corte, 2019). This means that qualitative researchers investigate events in their natural environments while aiming to explain them in terms of the meaning individuals assign to them (Aspers and Corte, 2019). In qualitative research, many kinds of data sources are collected to reflect common and impactful events and meanings in people's lives, including case studies, first-hand experiences, interviews, and written materials (Aspers and Corte, 2019). This thesis uses semi-structured interviews to collect data.

3.2.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

The data in this study has been collected by conducting semi-structured interviews with eight Black South African women who identify as activists, and who fight against VAW/GBV. The interviews were 45 minutes to an hour long and were tape-recorded, as recommended by Adams (2015) that the maximum duration of semi-structured interviews be around an hour to reduce interviewer and respondent weariness. These interviews were conducted on Zoom because the participants were in different parts of South Africa, and due to financial constraints, travelling to the participants was not possible. The semi-structured interviews allowed this study to use a mix of closed- and open-ended research questions followed by why- or how-specific questions to allow for the broadness of the interview (Adams, 2015). Instead of strictly

keeping to precise questions as in a structured poll, the conversations were able to drift around the topic at hand and went into entirely unexpected areas. The interviews were conducted in English and one in IsiZulu, as those were the languages participants were comfortable with when expressing their thoughts and experiences. One interview was conducted in English and isiZulu.

To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, research participants have been given pseudonyms in this thesis. The pseudonyms are in alphabetical letters, A to H, instead of numeric numbers. This study avoided categorising participants using numbers because of their non-human nature and used alphabetic letters to humanise them, and participants are referred to as, for example, "Activist A" in chapters four and five of the data analysis. The interview conducted in IsiZulu, and the one conducted in IsiZulu and English were translated into English, except for instances where it was appropriate in this study that the response remained in isiZulu and an English translation was provided in brackets next to the isiZulu response.

Instagram and LinkedIn were two social media platforms that were used to reach out to the participants of this study. This is where the participants shared their activism and spread awareness of GBV/VAW and that is what attracted me to them (Mazana, 2022).

3.3 Sampling

This study used purposive sampling to recruit research participants. Literature shows that purposive sampling is a frequently used method for selecting participants (Gill, 2020). Purposive sampling, also known as judgement sampling, involves selecting participants on purpose based on their attributes (Tongco, 2007). The qualifying sampling determined what information was necessary and searched for willing and prepared participants to contribute to the study, considering their knowledge or experience (Tongco, 2017). Given the sampling strategy of this study, specifically and purposefully Black South African women from the age of 20 years old whose activism against GBV post-1994 South Africa is public and vibrant were approached. The research participants selected for this study provided useful information for the study (Campbell et al., 2020). Because of the study's goals and objectives, the participants had significant and differing opinions regarding the GBV/VAW pandemic in South Africa post-1994. These women had participated in the #TotalShutDown and #FeesMustFall movements and campaigns in social workspaces. These are Black South African women who

had been campaigning against GBV and had shown their work and dedication on multiple platforms.

A small number of activists involved in the fight against GBV/VAW were recruited to represent activism by Black women in South Africa (Rai and Thapa, 2015). These participants were selected because this study aims to add to the existing literature on the causes and hindrances to addressing gender-based violence in post-1994 South Africa, and this thesis focuses on Black South African women of African descent. However, this sample is not a representation of the population of all activists from different races and backgrounds, as its focus is gaining a deep understanding of the perceptions and opinions of the research participants.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data collected through the semi-structured interviews was organised and coded. Coding is organising collected data and incorporating it into one's research (Elliot, 2018). Basit (2003) states that coding is a process of creating categories which leads to developing a system of thought that works with data. This framework allows question formulation, cross-data comparison, category expansions and deletions and hierarchical data organisation (Basit, 2003). In this thesis, data coding was done manually without the assistance of technology to create themes. Rather, every interview was read through carefully, finding patterns and differences in the ways that participants discussed GBV (Basit, 2003). Information collected from interviews was broken down, and categorised under different themes repeatedly (Elliot, 2018). These patterns served as the basis for the analysis, which identified six themes, including, motivation to fight against GBV, sources of GBV/VAW, police's lack of accountability and perpetrating violence and sexual offence, GBV is not a woman's issue, the impact of activism, and the role of the government in the fight against GBV/VAW. These answered my research question and divided and organised the responses from the participants. From analysing the data, the above-mentioned themes were selected by organising similar words and phrases from participants' responses (William and Moser, 2019).

According to Elliot (2018: 2851), text data is dense data, and it takes a long time to go through them and make sense of them. Data coding in this thesis matched relevant data to specific arguments in the research. Similar data in all the participants' responses were analysed, connected and put under one theme (Elliot, 2018). Doing this allowed a separation of ideas that

were further explained. It, however, takes time to code. Creswell (2015) states that there are small and large databases where one can have 20 codes or as many as 50 codes. In this process, the number of codes in this thesis has been reduced into a few themes and these are the six themes mentioned previously that are the headings in the finding's chapters (Creswell, 2015). In these themes, the study discusses the data from the interviews which is supported by existing literature. The coding process helped to understand the participants' experiences in comparison to each other as GBV/VAW activists and answered the research's main question: What are the causes and hindrances to addressing gender-based violence in post-apartheid South Africa, as perceived and articulated by Black women activists? The data generated from interviews is analysed through the African feminism lens.

3.5 Theory: African Feminism

In addition to identifying themes through a coding system explained in the previous section, the data generated from interviews was analysed through an African feminism lens. This study draws on the various discourses and histories of African feminisms (Perspective Editorial, 2021). The theoretical premise of this study is the following:

> Throughout the history of social and political movements in African societies, generations of women have, in one way or another, worked to oppose patriarchal domination, laws and practices in the pursuit of gender equality; advocating for their equal participation in all aspects of social, economic and political life (Perspective Editorial, 2021: 4).

One of the social problems that contemporary African feminists are grappling with on the continent is GBV (Perspective Editorial, 2021). Ruvimbo Goredema (2010) in her study of African feminism quotes Gwendolyn Mikell who states that African feminism focuses on women first and foremost as human, rather than sexual beings, meaning that since women's access to and movement in the public realm has historically been influenced by their sexuality and maternal role in society, African feminism stands against that and advocates that women be seen and treated as equal to men (Goredema, 2010). This thesis focuses on the activism of Black South African women in their fight against GBV/VAW, and African feminism correlates with this thesis in the sense that it deals with/is about the oppression of women and advocates for women's rights and is against GBV (Goredema, 2010). The thesis does not imply that the

participants of the study are African feminists, it rather uses the theory to analyse and make sense of and support the argument concerning GBV activism in South Africa post-1994. A Black African feminist who has done a lot of work on this subject is Pumla Gqola. In her book, titled '*Rape: A South African nightmare',* Gqola (2015) argues that women and girls live in fear of GBV in post-1994 South Africa, and it has become a defining feature of growing up in South Africa. The fear of GBV and VAW is a significant part of the collective experience of all women and girls in South Africa (Gqola, 2015). Women are made to feel scared in part by increasing sexual harassment in public places and public threats of violence against them. The production of female fear is a common occurrence (Gqola, 2015). Gender-based violence/VAW is far too common and made a norm in many South African societies. Gqola's work focuses on Black women's everyday experiences, and she regards her scholarship as being part of the lineage of Black women doing the work of dismantling patriarchy (Gqola, 2007). She argues that these lineages inspire African feminists to have the vocabulary to name and shame abusers which is a good African feminist way of responding to patriarchal violence (Gqola, 2007). This study aims to build on the theoretical insights of Gqola's scholarship in order to make sense of GBV in South Africa, and more importantly, to theorise the various ways in which GBV activists who campaign against VAW have used their political voices to fight against violence perpetuated on women and girls.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Before participants were recruited and interviews conducted, Rhodes University gave ethical clearance for the study and permission was obtained from the Rhodes University Ethics Committee. Participants were then contacted and asked for permission to have/conduct a conversation or interview with them regarding their activism against GBV/VAW post-1994 South Africa. All participants were sent a consent form approved by the Rhodes University Ethics Committee that informed them of all the research procedures, including recording the interview and the participant's right to withdraw at any time (Artal and Rubenfeld, 2017). The participants in this research did not experience any form of harm or emotional triggers. Interviews were conducted with sensitivity and catered to all the participants' feelings; the interviews were not rushed and moved considering the comfort of each participant (Artal and Rubenfeld, 2017). I deeply respect the activists who do this kind of work, and this research was conducted to contribute to our shared understanding of the causes of GBV. As a young Black

woman in post-1994 South Africa, this matter affects me directly, and thus this thesis contributes to finding solutions. It is for this reason that the following was made explicitly clear to all the research participants:

You are not obliged to accept this invitation to participate. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

1) Withdraw from participation in this project at any time, and you can request that any data related to you be withdrawn until 1 August 2024, after which the final report will have been written.

2) Decline to answer any particular question in the interview.

3) Ask any questions about the study at any time.

4) Have your interview files and transcript returned to you.

5) Be given access to a summary of the key findings when the project is concluded.

6) Ask for the audiotape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

All the information collected from the interviews is confidential (Pietila et al., 2019). Research participants will not be named in the research, in publications or any reports about the research. Every effort has been made to protect the research participants' identities in the research findings and subsequent publications or reports (Pietila et al., 2019). This was informed to the research participants before they signed the consent forms, and they were fully informed of any requirements if they chose to sign and participate in this project. All the private details of the participants have been stored securely on password-protected computers on my supervisor's laptop and my laptop. The digital files of the audio recordings and data have been treated as highly confidential (Pietila et al., 2019). Only my supervisor and I have access to this material. After five years, the digital audio recordings and data files will be deleted from the computers and the digital audio recorder. All the transcripts and any files containing the data will also be deleted. Paper files containing research data will be shredded. Ensuring anonymity and privacy was essential to this research, particularly concerning delicate topics like GBV (Pietila et al., 2019). Every effort was made to protect research participants' identities in the research findings and subsequent publications or reports.

Chapter Four: Understanding the Dynamics of Gender-Based Violence: Motivation for Activism, Contributors and Impacts

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on the results of the interviews conducted with participating activists fighting against GBV. This chapter is divided into three themes, namely, motivation to fight against GBV, sources of GBV/VAW, police's lack of accountability and perpetrating violence and sexual offences. Some of the themes include sub-themes that provide depth to the analysis. The findings contribute to identifying the nature and settings of GBV and the effects of activism against GBV in communities. They also contribute to factors the government and communities should consider in preventing GBV/VAW. The discussion begins with analysing factors that motivate activists against GBV to get involved in the struggle against GBV.

4.2 Motivation to Fight Against GBV

Five of the participants interviewed for this study became involved in the struggle against GBV because they were survivors or victims of some form of GBV/VAW. In addition, seven out of eight participants interviewed became activists involved in the struggle against GBV due to the increasing incidents of GBV in post-1994 South Africa. In other cases, participants became activists because they were survivors or victims of GBV/VAW. For instance, Activist B explained how she got involved in activism against GBV:

> So, I have always been passionate about social justice education in general. I have always been a very passionate feminist, particularly an intersectionalist, and much like you, my other focus outside of gender-based violence is anti-racist and decolonial education.

The quote above from Activist B suggests that some activists are attracted to activism against GBV because of their ideological orientation. In the case of Activist B, it was her feminist ideology that sparked her interest in activism against GBV. The feminist ideology aims to enable all women to realise all their rights while embracing the diversity of women's experiences, identities, expertise and strengths (Mama, 2017). Intersectional feminism prioritises the voices of women experiencing interconnected, coexisting forms of oppression,

such as racism and classism, to understand the root causes of the disparities in any given situation (UN Women, 2020).

Similar to Activist B, Activist D's journey into being an activist against GBV was activated by intellectual curiosity.

> My journey with arriving, and probably some of the bits and pieces of my work or art and craft, is that it speaks to GBV, uhm, started predominantly around my kind of keen advocacy for women. I would say, first and foremost, as a woman, and essentially comes from like my lived experience living in a patriarchal system and realising soon as a little girl, soon as I had my period, that there was something almost that felt a little unfair. First, it was a physiological experience that made me wonder why women were given the gift to have children and then evolved over time as more like leading into the power of the womb and also what women are to society. And then coming to not understand how people who give birth and essentially are responsible for incubating the inter world, could come to be disrespected, disregarded and fought against. (Activist D).

The quote from Activist D reflects a particular strand of feminism concerned with how gendering is expressed in the power dynamics that shape women in everyday life. This type of feminism views male power as a social construct shaped by history, culture, and society (Edwards, 2024). According to Edwards (2024), feminists emphasise how power dynamics play out in relationships, households, offices, and social settings, often harming women and perpetuating gender stereotypes. Everyday power means the small-scale interactions and methods by which power is used and managed in everyday life (Edwards, 2024). Activist D speaks about this power and how some men negatively exercise their power on women who have the power and ability to carry life and give birth to it.

Unlike Activists B and D, some activists became activists against GBV because of their personal experiences with GBV. This was the case with Activist C.

> With me, it is more personal than anything else because I can say that I am a victim as well, and my story of being a victim starts with me back as a child. I was sexually molested at the age of 10. And during that process, because the perpetrator was a family member, it caused a lot of division between my family. I'm a victim … I couldn't live a life after matric

> that's been difficult because as a child, you go to class, you get the support you need. You have everybody that supports you, but nobody really knows the monster in your mind, the things you go through, your fears … then when you reach adulthood you have to face those fears. And that's where I'm starting to date … I got involved with a guy from my early childhood and I was telling him that I knew he was abusive from the onset, but I wouldn't think either way. And it's a mental thing whereby you find everybody more like you, we always believe that we can change people, and it cost me two front teeth. I think this motivated me because after that relationship, I think that has turned into activism and trying to help our sisters out there. (Activist C).

As the quote above shows, Activist C describes herself as a 'victim' of sexual abuse, which she says left her with "the monster in my mind." What Activist C describes as "the monster in my mind" are fears and mistrust of men. For example, she explains how she only started dating in adulthood, in her twenties. However, even with her experience of sexual abuse and her unresolved fears about men, she still made the mistake of getting involved in an abusive relationship, which she says "cost" her "two front teeth," presumably from being physically assaulted by the man she was romantically involved with. It is worth noting that what Activist C describes as "the monster in my mind" has been written about and theorised about by feminist scholars who research GBV.

For instance, Pumla Gqola (2021) writes about the female fear factory, a memory, a previous event that we carry on experiencing now and carry with us into the future. Whether it is expressed verbally or physically, patriarchal violence serves as a constant reminder to women and those who are rendered feminine that rape and other violent acts are always a possibility. Mlamli Diko (2023) further adds that the trauma that victims of GBV, particularly women and young girls, undergo may end up costing them their lives. For instance, they might experience severe psychological and emotional effects which may impact how they see men (Diko, 2023).

For example, Activist E was motivated to become an activist against GBV because of personal experience:

> For me to be an activist, I was in an abusive relationship, and that thing that you will go to the police station, where today, they will arrest your abuser, and tomorrow, they are released, and like there is no way forward and like they do not refer us to places that are

> relevant for them to help you, and with your health. You understand. And with people in the township, the police station is too far; you arrive there, and you have healed, and you are tired, and the evidence has been wiped off. You understand, that is why I decided to be a GBV ambassador.

Activist E's quote above suggests that she did not only become an activist against GBV because of her own experience with GBV, the incompetence of the police system to handle GBV further strengthened her motivation to get involved in the struggle against GBV. For instance, Caroline Smart (2022) states that according to 2019 Corruption Watch research, one of the main obstacles stopping women from reporting their perpetrators is mistrust of the police. This is because some police officers subscribe to sexist views that are based on the 'blame the victim' mentality. It is against this backdrop that some police officers do not take GBV cases seriously enough to investigate them properly, leading to a neglect of their responsibilities (Smart, 2022). Thus, women who report GBV to the police are frequently ignored and according to Smart (2022), this is because some police officers, in some cases, are bribed.

The journeys of Activists B, C, and E discussed above illustrate that women's trajectories in becoming GBV activists diverge substantially. The journey of Activist F adds to the complexity of this trajectory. For instance, Activist F got involved in activism against GBV because she was part of a support system for women who had survived GBV.

> I was part of the Victim Empowerment Programme. It encompasses gender-based violence as well as human trafficking. So, you know, you resonated with some of these things. You begin to realise that I have seen this happen, but now, at that point in time, I didn't understand its impact. Sometimes you see the behaviour, you don't necessarily think, no man, this is violence against someone, this is infringement of someone's rights. Once I got into it and I learnt more about it, I was like okay, you know what? I like it here. (Activist F).

Activist F sympathised with many women who are and have experienced GBV. Due to her involvement with the victim empowerment programme, Activist F's perception of what GBV means changed over time. Initially, she did not understand what the impact of GBV was, and she could not point out a problem and say that it was gender-based violence. However, the victim empowerment programme exposed her to the literature about GBV and, as a result,

made her fully understand what GBV entails and its devastating impact on women.

The quotes from research participants discussed under this theme reveal that GBV activists join the movement for various reasons, with some driven by their personal experiences with GBV. Those who engage in activism because of their own experiences display an incredible spirit of survival and the pursuit of justice. Research indicates that many women who endure GBV often blame themselves, leading to silence or a reluctance to report the perpetrators to the authorities. The women who become activists after enduring such horrific experiences serve as a powerful reminder of resilience and the capacity to fight back against GBV.

4.3 Sources of GBV/VAW

Gender-based violence (GBV) does not have a single source of origin. Research has shown that multiple variables contribute to the origins of GBV in South Africa. Similarly, the responses from participants confirm that the origins of GBV include multiple variables such as social issues, financial, sexual, emotional, or physical. Activist C pointed to another variable – race and culture:

You know, for us as Black people, I always emphasise putting race on this, it's something that is deeply rooted and we have not touched on the causes. Because remember a Black woman or a Black child coming from a school of thought that when a man speaks and a man being the father in the house, we keep quiet and also our customs, and I think it is the same whether you are Swati, Zulu or Pedi, there's this thing that *emendweni kuyabekezelwa* (in marriage you must be patient) those are some of the things we meet. I think we have not penetrated that space. We need to get to a place where we decondition the mindset.

Activist C added:

> Why do we say girls must play with dolls and boys must play with cars? You are even told as a girl child that hey, don't sit like that with your legs open, close your legs, whereas a boy child is not told about that. He is actually taught that he can sit and open his legs. It's okay for him.

Activist D expressed a similar sentiment:

> If I were to begin to like to theorise, I think for me, we have to start tracing back the

> relationship between men and women from a young age into cultural stereotypes and expression and understanding these things that we've decided to keep and upkeep as tradition. Even all up to the institution of marriage. Why? What was the original design? So, if women were dependent on men because they couldn't have an education and so families needed to have their dowry, have the woman extend to the man's family, she brings something to their home, but that value is completely missed.

The quotes from Activists C and D reflect the cultural setting of some families in South Africa, where the patriarchal ideology of a man as the head of the household holds the most power. Activist C brings forward the view that there are many instances where some Black women find themselves in trouble, but they do not get support from the community or their families. They are told that violence in relationships and families happens and that one should try to fix the situation in the household and not run from it. Activist D added another layer to the discussion of GBV and culture. According to Activist D:

> *Umakoti* (A bride) is not treated to the value she brings to her family. She is almost treated as a vehicle, a thing that births these children and then pleases the in-laws, but not respected enough … certain cultures have been trained to be anti-Semitic and anti-white man, and the culture isn't quite the same. It doesn't quite perpetuate these ideas as strongly, maybe mostly in the corporate space. But I do believe that going back to family structures, cultural ceremonies, cultural thought leadership, restoring new value systems, rewriting what we believe of ourselves and thus what these kids will believe about human beings and humanity first and foremost and also thus the value of a woman in that sense. And so, I think it all comes back down to, like the folklore, how these teachings are passed on through oral traditions and ceremonies and rites and passages that we go through that teach young men that a woman should be A and a woman should be B.

Activist D wondered aloud:

> …leaning quite steeper towards my cultural perspective, which is more on issues around patriarchy, which is embedded in our tradition … I suppose practices … I didn't understand why there were always the idea of separating different needs for women, different spaces that women can be, the craw vs *Iziko* (traditions), and inquired as to where the true value system lies in understanding the problem that we have right now, which is a power struggle

and a power dynamic.

Given that some authors like Sepeng et al. (2022) argue that African people believed that male children would carry on the family name, it could be argued that the patriarchal system began at birth, giving preference to male children over female children. As a result, the male child dominated the female child from birth. Because of this preference for a boy child, women who gave birth to male children were respected more than those who gave birth to girl children or were childless (Sepeng et al., 2022). Furthermore, African societies required men to support their families. Nevertheless, nowadays, roles are frequently reversed because women are employed and occasionally make more money than men. Because of this, men tend to feel as though they have lost their position of power in those circumstances, and as a result, in many instances, men become resentful and abusive to women when patriarchal traditional gender roles are reversed (Sepeng et al., 2022).

Activist F identified more variables that contribute to the climate of GBV in South Africa. For example, in the quote below, she highlights how the violent history of South Africa has normalised GBV in post-1994 South Africa. She further talks about how the patriarchal legacy of positioning men as 'breadwinners' has created a dependency issue for women because some women find themselves in a position where they have to rely on the man for financial support – this situation makes it difficult for some women to leave abusive relationships.

> The notion that *uzwa enyameni* (you respond/react to violence), there's only much that words can penetrate a person, but the minute someone uses force, then a person will understand you better. So, I think as a nation coming from that, that's just one of the things. There's so much violence outside of it being a domestic situation, it's just a lot of violence, right? And then what I noticed with GBV, it's mostly a dependency thing. You find that somebody is in a relationship that is not a good one for them. That is not conducive to their growth or functioning as human beings. You know, you want to do something, but you can't because you understand there's not much support. This person is there to feed you, to look after your needs, you know, your human needs. So, you stay. Most of the clients are like that, they don't know where they are going to get the food from if I leave this man, or if I leave this woman, you know. (Activist F).

The quote above from Activist F confirms long-standing research findings that some women

find it difficult to leave abusive relationships because they are financially dependent on their abusive partners. This is because some women are still not occupying high-paying and empowering jobs that would enable them to leave abusive relationships. According to Stats SA (2023), in South Africa, apart from women making up 51.1% of the population, 47% of them are economically stagnant. Stats SA (2023: 21-22) quotes the Quarterly Labour Force Survey, stating that "for the second quarter of 2023, employment contribution for women stood at 54,3% compared with 64,9% for men, a gap of 10,6% points. Moreover, women remain less likely to participate in the labour force compared to men." In instances where women find employment, research shows that their pay will still be less than that of men (Masiphephe Network, 2023).

The circumstances of women in the labour market over the past 30 years have been unsatisfactory. Furthermore, this situation contributes to maintaining the sexist context in which women are forced to stay in abusive romantic relationships because their partner is the sole breadwinner.

Another essential variable identified by research participants is how social media has normalised GBV to the extent that GBV has lost its shock value. For example, Activist A stated:

> I think, one, it's like, this is more of a society issue. I think it's just like because we are so inundated, like, every single time we open social media, you open the news, you hear someone else was raped or a woman was killed, and I feel like we've become numb or unresponsive to these things. Not because they don't care, but because they're sort of used to seeing it. So, when it happens to another person, it's just like, ok, that happened, and there's no more shock value or people aren't really taken back by that. Whereas I think in a different context, maybe in a different country or a different situation, you would be so shocked to hear that type of news. But I think because of how frequently it's occurring here, it's become so normalised, ingrained in our society, and so that it's really hard to take it further or to actually reach some form of justice.

However, for Activist B, the problem is not social media but how the post-apartheid discourse has foregrounded concerns regarding race and racism over gender and GBV.

> I will say post-94; I think the issue that I find is that we still don't like to talk about gender-

> based violence. During 94, we used to not talk about gender-based violence because our primary political agenda was dealing with racism and colonialism, and particularly in the South African context, there was a focus particularly on Black women to put up a united front and to ignore the gendered issues and just put up with a Black united front in order to push back against apartheid, right? So, these issues of IPV and GBV were very much dealt with in private, but I think now, even in the year 2023, there is such a lack of drive to understand what causes gender-based violence. People will just name-drop toxic masculinity and rape culture as is and don't criticise it as they understood it. They'll say those terms, but it's more of a regurgitation. They themselves haven't gone to bother to read up on what toxic masculinity is. They haven't bothered to go read up on what rape culture actually is, what it stems from, how it manifests itself. And I find that in the South African case, that GBV is dealt with very punitively, but that's only with cases that are very secularised. (Activist B).

It must be pointed out, however, that research shows that owing to the struggle of Black feminists putting the concern of GBV on the table, it has become an essential topic in the mainstream debate over the last decade. Furthermore, the feminist discussions over the last decade have become much more sophisticated and theoretical than the vocabulary that feminists use against GBV, which is rich and precise and accurately captures women's situation in post-1994 South Africa. For example, the way that feminists and some research participants make theoretical connections between GBV and social inequality is illuminating.

For example, Activist G states:

> I think inequality sets a limitation for … for women especially because as much as we can work hard and have the right qualifications, you know, we can work the same amount of hours, we can work just as hard, all of these different things, but unfortunately because of our gender and because of our sex we are not taken seriously, we are not … we are not going to be paid on the same level as the male counterparts, so I definitely think that inequality is a major issue that I think people overlook quite a lot.

The quote above from Activist G suggests that men are awarded more power in society and the workplace. This confirms a longstanding feminist observation that in a patriarchal society gendering, male privilege, and power are normalised in everyday life, including schooling and

employment practices. Consequently, men in general expect to be granted male privilege, and when that privilege is taken away from them, some react violently towards women.

Activist C spoke eloquently about the unequal distribution of power and wealth in South Africa and how these factors negatively impact gender roles in post-1994 South Africa. According to Activist C, South Africa has come a long way, and the country is moving to a more gender-neutral position than an unequal one, but that may be the very reason for the rise of GBV cases post-1994.

> Last week, I was at a mining stadium, and the numbers were small. About 32% of women have penetrated the mining industry/space. That number is still very low, but it shows gains because we are coming from 3% in 1994. Women are included in spaces where previously were known to be occupied by men, right now you are finding cases where men are the ones unemployed, and women are the ones more employable than the men, and this is what now causes some sort of friction and some anger from this other gender, and I think the men voices are not dealing with that. These men need to understand that there are new terms, and it is the new norm, and they need to be able to interact and fit into the space they are in. (Activist C).

Activist C speaks of the infiltration of some women in the workplace (this infiltration, however, does not mean that the employment of women is higher than that of men in South Africa). It highlights how these changes in women being employed and some men not finding employment causes friction and anger, which they violently direct to women; the slight inclusion of women in the workplace results from successful government programmes that facilitate women's ability to obtain credit, which is encouraging (Commission for Gender Equality, 2023). However, studies have shown that the absence of economic opportunities for young men could exacerbate resentfulness and bitterness, which could emerge as aggressive behaviour directed towards women (Malatjie and Mamokhere, 2024). According to Malatjie and Mamokhere (2024), men who experience unemployment and poverty may be more likely to use violence to assert their masculinity, which is one of the factors that contributes to gender-based violence. A lack of traditional male roles, dissatisfaction, and feelings of inferiority can all be brought on by economic uncertainty, making some people turn to violence in an attempt to regain control or authority (Malatjie and Mamokhere, 2024).

Some research participants understood the causes of GBV as being explicitly rooted in patriarchy and toxic masculinity. Activist A, for example, argued:

> But I think that it's rooted in misogyny. It's rooted in patriarchy. And men feel as though they have ownership. It's not only with women. It's in any room that they feel their voice is the most important; their thoughts or opinions is the one that's the right ones. And so, I think that they've been given such a platform to be in power. And a lot of times with gender-based violence, it's like you'll see maybe a man who isn't the boss at work then comes with that violence at home.

Activist G traced male chauvinism and GBV to how boys are socialised in society:

> Young men have grown up with the mentality or this perspective that, you know what, as a man, I am in power, I am in charge, and I am in control and whatnot. There is a perspective like that that is okay, but in a country like ours that is the rape capital of the world, the dangers of that, where it becomes dangerous and toxic, is where we get to a point where there is an entitlement of the body of another person and not because you know you are paid higher, only because for instance one of the forms of abuse is financial abuse, which some of the people avoid and overlook.

Activist B made similar points using a Venn diagram as a tool to analyse the situation:

> I think the cause of gender-based violence sits at a Venn diagram, hey. That is the idea of; I would say, internalised hetero-patriarchal norms. A lot of those norms are stuff that we internalised from colonialism and apartheid. It's a box of gender roles specifically. But there's something when we constitute our gender roles based on heteropatriarchy that becomes a problem. There's a rape culture, the normalisation of sexual harassment in South Africa is insane. From the wolf whistling to the non-consensual touching, to the idea that a woman belongs to someone else, that women are not yours. I find even when men will try to speak out on women's issues; they will say we need to protect our women. I also find that sentiment incredibly problematic. I feel men need to focus more on working with other men.

Activist B uses the Venn diagram synonymously with intersectional feminism. For example, she explains how colonialism and apartheid encouraged gender norms and the idea of

patriarchy. A patriarchal society favours gendered hierarchies where men have more social, political, and economic power than women. By its very essence, patriarchy is oppressive. According to Mary-Anne Plaatjies Van Huffel (2011: 2), the term "patriarchy" refers to the "whole structure of Father ruled society: aristocracy over servants, masters over slaves, kings over subjects, racial overlords over colonised people," in addition to the subjection of women by men. The term "misogyny" describes the way that men continue to degrade and abuse women. Men's resentment, intimidation, and mockery of women are examples of misogynistic behaviours and attitudes, which include the oppression, exploitation, and subordination of women by men (Hanyane and Ahiante, 2022). However, the concept of misogyny has developed beyond men's simple resentment towards women and has become a problem of social inequity that affects women due to their gender identity and standing in the social power structures (Hanyane and Ahiante, 2022).

Numerous studies (Mpunzana and Mofokeng, 2023; Gqola, 2021; Nzengwu, 2006) have shown that the effects of patriarchy include male dominance which encourages men to have control and authority over women. Given that men are typically regarded as the heads of their families, it is evident that the patriarchal perspective values their decisions highly. Nzengwu (2006) also states that patriarchy is about power and control – it is about the domination of men and men seeing women as objects and subordinates. In many societies, this has also been noted as the root of gender-based violence and family stereotypes. Most societies consider fathers to be the head of the household (Mpunzana and Mofokeng, 2023). To keep their control over leadership and to subjugate women, men engage in patriarchal behaviours and attitudes.

4.4 Police's Lack of Accountability and Perpetrating Violence and Sexual Offences

Research participants identified police incompetence and police handling of the GBV cases as a significant impediment to successfully fighting against GBV in post-1994 South Africa. For example, Activist A explains how the poor handling of GBV by the police and the backlog problems in the justice system that prevent the courts from efficiently prosecuting these cases lead to victims and survivors dropping and cancelling their cases:

> A lot of cases just lay dormant, like nothing happens. If you don't have connections, and obviously that's the case with a lot of different issues in our country, but if you don't have connections or somebody on the inside who's going to help you push this thing forward, it

> will stay stagnant for the longest time. We have a major DNA backlog, and I think what adds to the problem is that there's hundreds of thousands of DNA samples that haven't been processed. When you add your kits, it's to the back of the line, so at the time of my reporting, I think there was a backlog of 220 000 kits.

In the quote above, Activist A explains that many rape cases are not prosecuted in the courts, and as a result, victims like herself do not see justice. The government has the responsibility to process all the DNA samples effectively and quickly in order to allow space and time to process incoming samples to prosecute perpetrators in rape cases. It is essential to provide DNA evidence when reporting a crime, as DNA is needed to arrest the perpetrator. Moreover, Diko (2023) agrees with Activist A that there is a significant DNA backlog in South Africa, which shows some of the ineffectiveness of the systems within the police department.

According to Smith and Horne (2024), forensic laboratories experience challenges due to the growing demand for forensic DNA testing, driven by collecting DNA samples from crime scenes and an expanding number of individuals. Forensic DNA evidence must be processed promptly since it can help lawyers seeking justice, victims of crimes, and innocent people accused of crimes. However, according to Smith and Horne (2024), growing backlogs in forensic labs reduce DNA analysis effectiveness; longer wait periods reduce the technique's capacity to yield investigation leads and limit its effectiveness in court cases. Some factors that lead to backlogs are environmental conditions, a lack of resources, and financial limitations (Smith and Horne, 2024). These flaws highlight the difficulties victims encounter and their detrimental effects on the criminal justice system (Smith and Horne, 2024).

Furthermore, Activist A identified police insensitivity regarding the problem of GBV as another impediment:

> Even in reporting to the police, the police are like, how many times have they hit you in a day, in a month? So, there's a serious lack of sensitivity. Police insensitivity, I would say, for me, is one of the biggest problems … in the South African context, the police often are a site of trauma. Like the police experience for me, I felt like the attack was one thing, but then I had a whole different type of trauma that went through my case. My case was so traumatic for me that it made me feel like I shouldn't have done this in the beginning. The way the police treat you is not from a place of sensitivity or care, it's a very mental, like

> what were you doing? Why were you there? Who were you with? What were you wearing?

Activist G offered a solution to the police insensitivity to GBV:

> We need to professionally train our police officers, it's either that or they must somehow insert a mental health professional within their spaces when it comes to gender-based violence. There needs to be some sort of mental health professional there in the premises, or they must assign this person to someone in the hospital, because I think people clearly have showcased that they don't know how to treat people in the open.

The quotes from both Activists A and G agree that police need more training in how they handle cases of GBV. Activists A and G speak for the people in the above quotes because they work on the ground and see and hear the traumas of reporting cases and calling the police. However, Dee Smythe (2015: 6) argues that police officers contend that "… there is little that can be done to further the case if complainants do not cooperate, there is little that can be done to assist." This may be the case, and there may be the same feeling among police officers. However, Activists A and G's points are to bring about an understanding that some victims and survivors withdraw their cases because of ill-treatment from some police officers and fear of their perpetrator, who may be closely connected. For example, according to an article by UNWomen (2023), Ella Mangisa, a woman Executive Director of a women's rights group Ilitha Labantu, stated that "A woman running away from a violent situation would be told to go back and sort things out with her abuser or be told these are personal issues they need to resolve." They further argue that there may be a lack of empathy, compassion, and a lack of information on the part of the frontline officers, "Many didn't know exactly what to do when a woman comes in to report or how to treat a survivor in their most vulnerable position." (UNWomen, 2023).

Activist B traced the insensitivity of the police to the patriarchal nature of government institutions:

> I also find that government structures tend to be incredibly patriarchal. I do not think the police get enough gender-sensitive training, and often, when people report, it can be incredibly retraumatizing. So why would they want to go through with the report? And even if they do go through with the report, perpetrators often have a lot of support from the community. So, it's like, do you really want to go through that?

Police insensitivity reflects the broader culture that tolerates GBV. In some cases, society and some police officers refuse to get involved in cases of GBV because they argue that it is a private matter. As GBV has been normalised in some communities, some men and some police officers take advantage of victims with the idea that they have already been raped or abused, so their crime against the victim will not make a difference. Smart (2022) also states that when police officers are also the offenders, they cannot uphold protection and justice. Kati Geldenhuys (2017) stated that Minister Fikile Mbalula (former Minister of Police) emphasised the need for victim-friendly rooms in all police stations to prevent victims from being victimised there. This arguably shows the seriousness of the tolerance of GBV by society and police officers.

Activist A identified another form of police insensitivity:

> Where you go to report, and even at the police departments, police stations, and police officers, are inappropriate. So, when I was reporting, I got locked in a room by a police officer who was making advances on me. So, it's like, is it actually safe? If I'm coming to report this violence and then now, you're gonna lock me in a room and make sexual advances, then it's like, it's just a broken system where this violence and the disregard of women is in every realm. There is no safe ground.

Activists A and B state that even though they open cases, police officers are not well trained to handle their cases because of their behaviour when people go to police stations. Some authors like Mofokeng and Simelani (2024) conducted interviews with police officers and found that there is sensitivity training conducted for police officers. Even though this may be the case, some citizens would argue otherwise. Police officers may undergo training; however, not enough training is done, or it is simply not taken seriously. Without the correct and strict supervision of police officers and with the lack of government action, many victims are left to protect themselves.

The consequence of poor handling of GBV cases by the police, combined with police insensitivity and police incompetence and the DNA backlog in the justice system, has led to few rape victims reporting GBV crimes to the police, with even fewer of those instances ending in an indictment. This was confirmed by Activist A, when she stated:

> When I was reporting it, people on duty were like to me, honestly, you would rather save your time and not do this. Just don't do it because it's not happening … the system is broken, there's no momentum. And then, like, my case ended up being closed because they said that it'd been too long of a time and there had seen no progressions, but there was also nothing done.

Activist A brings forward the concern that the social justice system, including the police, has no momentum in successfully closing cases. Given the criminal justice system's stereotypes about what sexual offences are and who may legitimately claim to have been victimised, most cases exit the system well before any court date (Smythe, 2015). Smythe (2015) further states that it is implausible for victims of sexual assault to receive justice through the criminal justice system. Smart (2022) also states that police corruption extends beyond accepting bribes; it can also involve manipulating dockets, leaving investigations unfinished, or declining to charge an offender because they are connected to the investigating officer. Corrupt police officers who disregard cases of gender-based violence are more favourable to men and are frequently prepared to look the other way for an inducement (Smart, 2022).

Activist E explained how unhelpful some police are towards victims of GBV:

> We have police stations, especially in the townships; you call for a police van, sometimes at night it comes and sometimes it does not, and when the van arrives, they will tell you that the perpetrator hit and hurt you, go to the hospital, they do not say get in the car so we can take you to the hospital, they say go to the hospital, implying that you must go on your own, by yourself. So, you have to ask them to take you to the hospital; those are the challenges women face. Meantime, when that incident (abuse) happened, they do not know what to do and how to attend to your situation. You call the police; the police do not come.

Activist F added:

> Also, the police need to pick up their socks, *abanyuse amasokisi amapoyisa*, I feel like they also need to find a way to. … You can't dismiss me because I am emotionally abused, invalidating my pain. I know that when I arrive there, I am sworn at and my confidence is at an all-time low, and if I wanna complain about that ... they tell you I can't assist at all so I think that they can offer counselling in the police station after opening a case perhaps that

> is something they can look into. I think also just to be at service, I also feel like the police can employ others because South Africa has a lot of people and a lot of crime against a few people that are employed, you see.

Activists E and F highlight a challenge that many people in townships face daily. Police vehicles barely enter townships, and victims wait a long time for ambulances and police vans to arrive if they arrive at all. This results in social injustice – even though all citizens of South Africa have the right to security and health when they require those services, those rights are rejected. It is essential to have effective police stations accessible to all (Smythe, 2015). According to Mothibi Kholofelo and Happy Tirivangasi (2021), the SAPS's shortage of workers restricts women's access to justice. Multiple studies from the public and private sectors suggest that improving SAPS members' capacity through training and workshops can be achieved, provided that the training is conducted following the Training Needs Analysis or Skills Audit (Kholofelo and Tirivangasi, 2021).

The quotes in this theme highlight that all the participants agree that the initial point of contact for victims seeking assistance for GBV is SAPS. Hence, it is important to have a police force that is responsible, responsive, sensitive, and competent and that handles cases with care. It is unfair for police to blame victims for withdrawing GBV cases they had opened because there are many pushing factors that lead them to withdraw. The government and the police department need to work on DNA backlogs because they negatively impact the lives of victims and survivors.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter critically examined the data using three themes. The discussion began with the theme labelled 'motivation to fight against GBV', highlighting the various reasons women are driven to combat gender-based violence. For instance, some participants got involved due to specific personal experiences, while others were motivated by broader social concerns. The involvement of the participants shows how, whether a victim/survivor, bystander, or whistle-blower, GBV has affected all the people of South Africa, and people no longer want to stay quiet and are no longer afraid to speak up.

The second theme discussed in this chapter was ‘origins of GBV’. Data analysis under this theme suggested various contributing factors, including societal norms and historical contexts. Most participants argued that one of the sources of GBV is gender inequality, which leads to high volumes of patriarchy and toxic masculinity. On the other hand, the participants argued that some people have made it a norm that GBV exists in South Africa to the point that some men become entitled, where they feel the power and need to control and have access to women’s bodies without consent. These findings are in line with previous scholars like Pumla Gqola (2021), who argued that GBV silencing has led to some men feeling entitled to women’s bodies and that it is a shock when someone intervenes or attempts to correct the actions of the perpetrator.

The final theme is ‘police’s lack of accountability and perpetrating violence and sexual offences.’ The analysis under this theme indicated significant concerns with how police handle GBV cases, suggesting a need for systemic changes. Without the correct and strict supervision of police officers and with the lack of government action, many victims are left fearful of reporting cases of violence and not getting justice. Moreover, in some cases, it is highly unlikely that victims of sexual assault will receive justice through the criminal justice system.

Overall, the findings discussed in this chapter align with existing research in the field (Gqola, 2021; Diko, 2023; Le Roux, 2022; Mazana, 2022). For example, one finding of this study – that the motivations for fighting GBV are diverse and complex – corroborates long-standing research by Gqola (2007, 2021) and others (Lekalakala, 2015; Mofokeng, 2024). The push of activists and the use of hashtags and marches to stop/prevent GBV allow the spread of awareness of the actions that need to be taken in terms of helping the police system to be more sensitive when dealing with GBV cases and the legal system to prosecute all GBV cases with honesty and equality.

Chapter Five: Exploring the Role of Activism and the Government in Addressing and Combating GBV

5.1 Introduction

This chapter continues to analyse data. To that end, this chapter aims to discuss the campaign work of activists against GBV and gauge the campaigns against GBV's positive impact on people in general, with a particular focus on men. This chapter is divided into three themes, namely, GBV is not a woman's issue, the impact of activism, and the role of the government. Data analysis begins by discussing the theme 'GBV is not a woman's issue.'

5.2 GBV Is Not a Woman's Issue

Activists G, D, and F expressed similar sentiments regarding who in society is responsible for preventing GBV. For instance, all three participants are of the view that the understanding and the prevention of GBV is not a woman's only issue and responsibility in post-1994 South Africa. Activist G argues:

> I want boys and men to recognise that this is not a woman's issue. Interface violence and femicide are not a woman's issue. It affects the greater community. It affects all of us, literally. Because it will impact, number one, the individual and then the individual's family and kinship in terms of loved ones. And then that's affecting their community, and this extends to the economy.

Likewise, Activist D further argues:

> Other than to basically have a sense of awareness to that which is an ego issue in themselves (i.e. men), it changes if someone has an acceptance of the awareness and not denial to the issue and the idea that if they (i.e. men) have a system, equally as we want white people to understand their privilege, we want men and boys to understand their own privilege.

In the above quote, Activist D argues that men need to develop a political and social consciousness about how GBV functions and that men have an essential role in the fight against

GBV. When Activist D refers to a system that men might have, she is referencing a patriarchal system that encourages and rewards men who dominate women. She then makes an analogy between white privilege and patriarchal privilege, basically noting that much like Black people want white people to understand and divest their white privilege, Black women would like to see Black men disavow and divest their patriarchal privilege.

Activist F adds to this, pointing out that women expect men to come out publicly to demand and end GBV:

> They must be active not just a thing of, stop gender-based violence, but it ends there. When you see something, do something about it. We have toll-free numbers where you can anonymously report … like also you, take a stand, don't be neutral, don't be you see ... actively participate. There is this one million petition that men are signing; these are men that are saying, not in my name, I am not going to perpetuate violence ... so initiatives like that where you are holding someone responsible for their actions.

In essence, Activists G, D, and F argue that GBV is a societal problem rather than a women's problem. For this reason, men and women have to participate in the fight against GBV actively. Men have to understand that women do not perpetrate GBV on themselves. In other words, men, as a social group, must understand that GBV begins with them and that it will stop when they decide to oppose it. Participants were insistent that men, in general, need to develop this social consciousness. Participants' stance on this particular issue aligns with the research literature. For instance, Banda (2019: 8) states, "Charity begins at home." This means that in order to prevent GBV in post-1994 South Africa, as people, we need to look within our communities, friend groups, and families. We need to correct the behaviours of the people we know and connect with; first, we must hold each other accountable before we can look to legislation to prevent GBV. Banda (2019) further states that when women acquire confidence, trust and security from their immediate surroundings at home, community, and work, they will connect and engage with men with less mistrust, resulting in positive kinship relationships.

Activist G adds another layer to the conversation, observing how both men and women are negatively affected by rampant violence in post-1994 South Africa.

> We need more men in the conversation. I think more men recognising that, one, this is bigger than us, because if we're being honest, I've spoken to many people, mostly activists, but not just activists, boys and men themselves are also scared to walk at night … I know that they're the ones that take us home when it's late. They are the ones who drop us off; you know, they are our protection. But honestly, I'm telling you for a fact, like for me, two of my guy friends who are the bravest people I know, they tell me they will walk the girls home no matter how late it may be. But when it's time for them to turn around and go back to their homes, they run, and they want to get home safely. And then that in itself should make you recognise that you know what, your safety, as well as a man and boy, is also in jeopardy. (Activist G).

What Activist G is identifying in the above quote is that violence negatively impacts everyone in post-1994 South Africa. According to David Bruce from Mail & Guardian's report (2019), as much as men are "…overwhelmingly the perpetrators of violence," they are "… also victims of it." The report shows that "Official figures are that men, including male children, account for 85% of victims of murder, upwards of 80% of victims of attempted murder, and more than 70% of victims of assault with grievous bodily harm." (Bruce, 2019).

The literature confirms these research findings. For example, Majola et al. (2023) state that all genders can experience any violence either as victims/survivors or perpetrators. Strebel et al. (2006) also state that men also become victims of violence in many cases, whether as young boys in the setting of gangs or violence committed against them by women. Strebel et al. (2006) state that many men encounter various sorts of violence, and often that violence gets ingrained in men's identity. Thusi and Mlambo (2023) also state that GBV frequently involves patriarchy, and men who desire control and power against their victims, including both men and women, perpetuate it.

Be that as it may, Activist G made the following appeal:

> Young boys and men, we need you in this conversation. We need you to stand up and also need you to take responsibility for your friends. Because as much as we're going to blame the government for things like bail, we're also looking at you young men and boys that are still friends with people who are abusers and predators … If you really love this person, love them enough to rebuke them and say what you did wasn't cool. When your friend has

> catcalled someone, don't laugh along with the joke and join in. No, say, that's not how you speak about women. That's not how you do things.

The point that Activist G makes in the above quote is that boys and men need to hold each other accountable. Research shows peer pressure affects the behaviour of many boys and men. Nicole De Kwaadsteiniet (2017) argues that some men's views regarding their sexuality are impacted by their peers' ideas concerning gender expectations and masculinity, with greater openness towards and defence over violence against their partners if their friends further endorse violence against women. This is supported by De Kwaadsteniet's (2017: 64) research showing that men are more inclined to commit Intimate Partner Violence or GBV if they are involved in "influential" male peer group relationships. For instance, De Kwaadsreniet (2027: 64) states:

> Men are more likely to develop hardened attitudes that support violence against women due to their conformity to social norms and the bonds they formed in patriarchal and violence- supporting environments.

With that backdrop, if men were to influence their friends with values of respecting women and pressure them to stop perpetuating GBV, that would be the first step to preventing GBV. Patricia De Lille (2022), the leader of the GOOD political party, in her speech, stated a point relating to Activist G's point:

> We need the men in our communities to join us. Not just the male leaders who need to be at the forefront of this fight, but every single man and boy can play a role, you can make a difference by not shutting up! I need to highlight that this means also speaking out when you hear abusive comments or disrespectful jokes, when you receive inappropriate pictures, or when you find yourself part of catcalling "among the boys" on the street.

5.2.1 Societal institutions have a role to play too

A recurring motif throughout participants' interviews was that schools ought to have the responsibility of educating boys and the public about GBV. For instance, Activist G remarked:

> I don't want to point fingers and blame the parents. I'm just talking about the lack of education at home as well as at school. I think that subjects like our life orientation. We are

> limiting our children; you would assume that is where you will learn things, and I think there is a huge lack of anti-GBV education in our schooling systems; some children still do not know what consent is.

Activist G's claim about the lack of anti-GBV training at schools is consistent with the research literature on this topic. For example, according to Mayeza and Vincent (2019: 477), "… given high levels of unplanned teenage pregnancies and HIV among young people in South Africa…" sexuality education is taught at South African schools "in a manner that seeks to address these challenges." In South Africa, sex education is offered "through what is termed a life orientation syllabus, and its mandate includes empowering learners to be aware of themselves and their roles in their communities and develop responsible citizenship" (Ngabaza and Shefer, 2019: 422). The government has made life orientation "a compulsory learning area for all learners in South African schools" (Mayeza and Vincent, 2019: 472). Life orientation has been criticised by gender scholars as "comprising a series of gendered and moralistic messages about learners' sexuality" (Mayeza and Vincent, 2019: 477).

Meanwhile, "ending gender violence against girls in South African schools is an ongoing challenge" (Mayeza et al., 2022: 165). In their 2022 journal article, Mayeza et al. (2022: 165) found that the "normalisation of violence instigated by boys against girls" is widespread in South African schools.

> Girls were sexually harassed, subjected to violence and sexual coercion by their male peers in different spaces at school. Beyond simplistic binary positions through which girls are constructed as mere victims, some girls in the study engaged in the problematic discourse of victim-blaming; girls who frequent school spaces dominated by boys and girls who use drugs, such as dagga, were often stigmatised and blamed for the violence they experienced. (Mayeza et al., 2022: 165)

Research shows that girls who experience sexual harassment and gender-based violence at school "often present with higher rates of poor academic performance, regular school absenteeism, anxiety and depression, drug and alcohol use, psychological trauma, and dropping out of school" (Mayeza et al., 2022: 166). Some studies have found that girls are raped or "forced to engage in unprotected sex" at South African schools "and suffer consequences that may further disrupt their schooling and taint their future" (Mayeza et al., 2022: 166). According

to Mayeza et al. (2022: 166), the persistence of gender-based violence at South African schools is partly due to the failure of "school interventions and policies" that "often fail to engage properly with the gendered and sexualized meanings that learners attach to the violence they experience at school."

Another societal institution that participants discussed as being important in the fight against gender-based violence is the Boy Scout initiative. Activists F spoke positively about this initiative:

> …there is an initiative called *Boy* Scouts, so this is where boys gather in intimate groups, and they are taught life skills and where they are able to talk about anything and everything, so *kuyakhiwana lapho* (they teach each other there) … they are taught things like, this is how you treat someone. … My colleague runs men and boys programmes on weekends … where they want to discuss these issues on their own ... but eventually we need the men to connect with the women so that the issues are able to be addressed properly and together.

Activist F speaks of the importance of teaching young men and boys what positive masculinity is, how to be a man, and how to treat women. She speaks about having Boy Scouts and how they are beneficial. Even though Boy Scouts excluded girls before the establishment of Girl Scouts, the study says that they are effective in helping young people unlearn toxic behaviours of GBV that they may have learnt in society (Crankshaw et al., 2015). Crankshaw et al. (2015) also give an example of the impact of boy's and girl's scouts, using Kenya as an example. This example of Kenya allows South African communities to see data from other countries on possible actions that can be taken to prevent GBV. Crankshaw et al. (2015) state that at the 12-month follow-up after the Boy's and Girl Scouts camping programme, boys' self-reported acts of violence against their romantic partners during the previous six months before attending scouts had substantially decreased. The number of girls reporting violence in their romantic relationships decreased, although not by much. The percentage of young men who reported using condoms rose from 34% to 47%. Girl Scouts reported higher levels of self-esteem and confidence. The scouts were encouraged to participate in gender-related activities through the gender-equity-focused programme. The percentage of girls who said they were able to prevent and refuse sexual activity rose from 62% to 80% (Crankshaw et al., 2015).

Similarly, research into masculinities in post-1994 South Africa has identified the

encouragement of more men to become Foundational Phase teachers as a "critical way of stimulating greater male involvement with young children while also promoting caring and nurturing masculinities" (Moosa and Bhana, 2020: 52).

> We argue that supporting men's involvement in caring performances such as the teaching of young children can do much to destabilise homogenised notions of men as harmful and violent. Additionally, it can increase opportunities for boys and girls to interact with more caring versions of masculinities (Moosa and Bhana, 2020: 53).

With GBV being such a big concern that continues to persist in post-1994 South Africa and women activists pushing for men to join them in the fight, some male groups have also been involved in the fight against GBV. Take Dean Peacock and Andrew Levack (2004), who researched the Men as Partners Program, who organise workshops for men to educate and create strategies to prevent violence against women and the spread of HIV. Their workshops work at challenging attitudes toward GBV and women, knowledge, and behaviours, that help these men take action in society and their communities (Peacock and Levack, 2004). Activist F was referring to this kind of programme that both boys and men could form and be part of to help fight the spread of GBV.

All participants had an understanding that even though there are not enough men and boys fighting against GBV and stopping their brothers and friends from violating and abusing women and children, there are some men who have joined the conversation and the fight against GBV. The activists argue that there is more that these men can do, and that is to speak out loud in their communities – that they should not keep the conversation in the activism spaces only. However, when they go to their homes, they need to stop their brothers, fathers, and neighbours from perpetrating GBV and infringing on the rights of women. In the words of Dr Elaine Salo (2005: 8), the participants in this research would say, "You want action? – start it!"

5.3 The Impact of Activism

Activism includes implementing action to promote social or political transformation (Amaechi et al., 2021). For example, activism includes campaigns, political demonstrations, and lobbying the government to do something about GBV (Mkwananzi and Nathane-Taulele, 2024). Feminists fighting against GBV have historically used campaigns to help bring attention to the

problem of GBV worldwide (Amaechi et al., 2021). For instance, Activist C speaks on #TheTotalShutDown and how being part of that campaign helped her impact people's lives:

> As a group of activists, we gathered around the country and took different pledges under #TheTotalshutdown, though I later dropped out due to political reasons, that is what gave me the exposure. … We actually got the president and made the government aware and to take it seriously. GBV was something that was neglected, it is not like it was something that was not there, it was ignored, and we were not taking it that seriously, but that is when the government came down and talked to us on August 1st. I remember it was the most exciting time for us. I remember we had most civil societies under one roof. Even the LGBTQIA+ group came on board because most of the victims we found were girls who identified themselves as lesbians.

Activist C and other activists through the #TheTotalShutDown movement have managed to make the government of South Africa listen to their demands and see GBV as a life-threatening problem. In addition to Activist C's experience in the movement, Le Roux (2022) from Ford Foundation stated that following the meeting #TheTotalShutDown movement activists had with President Cyril Ramaphosa, representatives from the presidency's office, civil society organisations, and the organisers of #TheTotalShutdown came together to form a coordinating group, marking it the first time that they would work together to stop gender-based violence. President Cyril Ramaphosa met the first of the 24 demands of the #TheTotalShutdown movement just over a month after the march in November when he held South Africa's first presidential summit to end gender-based violence and femicide, acknowledging it as a national crisis and pledging to implement a national plan to end it (Le Roux, 2022).

Eighteen months after the #TheTotalShutDown march, the South African government also presented the most extensive and inclusive governmental approach ever presented in South Africa, the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence & Femicide, which was unveiled in April 2020 (Le Roux, 2022). This plan is a conjunction of strategies to end GBVF in South Africa (Le Roux, 2022). The campaigning by Activist C and other feminist activists shows the power activism has and that with the correct steps taken and if the government and its institutions work well with the people of South Africa, there is a better chance of preventing GBV. This impact of the movement led to,

> the government introducing targeted interventions tailored to the needs of victims such as the three pieces of legislation signed into law, Thuthuzela Care Centres, GBV Command Centre, and so forth. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 13 of 2022, the Criminal and Related Matters Amendment Act 12 of 2022, and the Domestic Violence Amendment Act 14 of 2022 are key interventions of the National Strategic Plan on Gender- Based Violence & Femicide. (Soci, 2024)

Like the other participants in this research study, Activist C has positively impacted victims and survivors of violence. Her activism has saved many women's lives, and even though she is no longer part of the #TheTotalShutDown movement, her activism is still helping many people. In light of the activism work done by Activist C, Bazaanah and Ngcobo (2024) also speak on the history of women's activism in South Africa and state that feminist forums actively participate in campaigning, awareness-raising, and policy reforms. The activism seeks to change prevailing societal perspectives, contest discriminatory legislation, and cultivate a more comprehensive, balanced environment for women in South Africa (Bazzanah and Ngcobo, 2023). Women's rights movements and activists' battles against gender-based violence in South Africa show a vibrant activity characterised by the persistence of many people and organisations.

Activist B furthers the argument on activism in that she speaks of the importance of online activism and how activists use it to help many people who are unable to report cases of violence:

> We often get people who tell stories through our page and message our page and say, hey, I didn't think of it this way, or this has become such a safe space for me. We also do these like question sticker posts where we just allow survivors to sort of tell their stories and share them anonymously and the amount of people who would say... I'm glad to see it, I'm not alone.

Activist B speaks of the fears and silence that occur among victims and survivors of GBV and how impactful online activism is when it comes to unmasking confessions of GBV experiences. Online platforms become a tool to help victims and survivors open up about their experiences and share their stories with other victims and survivors. Similar to the point made by Activist B, Amaechi et al. (2021) state that women now have a voice on social media to speak out against their harsh environments. Hashtags help draw global attention to significant topics

among millions of internet users. In its basic form, hashtag activism has become one of the most effective modes of protest for feminist groups (Amaechi et al., 2021). It allows victims and survivors to connect and to be part of a society that does not judge them for the abuse they have endured. Instead, it is a community with people that have similar experiences. Research shows that social media gives activists access to previously unknown or difficult-to- find ideas, viewpoints, and resources (Kangere et al., 2017). For example, feminist concepts are now easily accessible on smartphones, and organisations can continue to receive frequent exposure to ideas carefully selected from various sources (Kangere et al., 2017).

Activist C shared some activism work that allowed her to change a lot of people's lives:

> I remember in 2022; I helped a lady. She had relocated from Bronkhorstspruit out of fear of her husband and went to live in Tembisa. When the story came to me, we were talking about a mother of three who has been through a lot. And her abuse was so bad because she was a victim of a road accident, and she got funds from the Road Accident Fund. The accident left her partially impaired, which lowered her self-esteem, that she accepted any man that came in her life for the sake of longing for love. She lost her value and compensated it for settling for something that is not her worth, and through that is when she endured the abuse for such a long time. Up until such a time where her life was at risk, and it had to take her children to actually shout out, they are the ones who reached out to me. Their story touched me, and I worked on it for about six years. Unfortunately, I lost contact with the family late last year, but we had already placed them in a shelter; we got the guy an interdict, stopping him from being around them.

As with other activists, Activist C's activism has significantly impacted people's lives. This action was also possible because of the collaboration of activists and safety homes. With more women opening cases and receiving assistance from social workers, more women can feel safe, allowing activists to take action. Take, for example, Activist E's role as a GBV ambassador:

> As a GBV ambassador, we refer victims to the police station, to social workers, but we have a safe house where when we see that the situation is really bad, we can refer the victim there to go and stay there. It would not be for a long period but at least that 6–9 months you are staying there can make a difference, so you can start your life afresh.

In the case stated by Activist E, measures need to be taken, such as the position that Activist E holds of GBV ambassadors who help victims and refer them to social workers who are trained and ready to assist victims and survivors. This support is essential because it helps calm down victims so they can report their cases accurately. Netshitenzhe (2024) adds to the point Activist E made that in addition to offering short- to medium-term shelters based on the victim's conditions, citizenship, and space, shelters can also provide psychosocial help and skill development. In contrast, the Vodacom Foundation established a victim and survivor empowerment programme centred on technological innovation in certain shelters to offer digital literacy training to end the cycle of violence (Netshitenzhe, 2024).

With increased internet access across the world, feminist activists in post-1994 South Africa have been given an innovative tool in their struggle, the mobilisation of the women's movement. Activists have recognised that significant adjustments to how women's rights are viewed are necessary before women's empowerment in post-1994 South Africa can be accomplished. By taking charge of the societal creation of ideas and discourses concerning topics like GBV/VAW, activists have made the most of the new opportunities provided by social media and the internet to further their causes.

5.4 The Role of the Government

The South African government has made efforts to create laws and legislations that should help protect the rights and safety of women in South Africa, from the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) to the different acts and amended acts addressed in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

Some of the laws that the South African government put in place post-1994 include the one in 1995 when the South African government approved the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (Meyiwa et al., 2017). In addition, some of the legislation created to address GBV and gender inequality in South Africa include the Domestic Violence Act (No. 116 of 1998), which was amended to the Domestic Violence Amendment Act 14 of 2022. This Act includes victims of abuse in all forms of romantic relationships, marriages, and sexual interactions (Soci, 2024). Mlaba (2020) speaks of The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 13 of 2022 and states that this Act recognises sexual intimidation as an official offence under the law. This indicates

that if one feels frightened by another person's verbal or physical actions, they have the right to report them and pursue legal action (Mlaba, 2020). The public's uproar against alleged criminals receiving quick bail and only receiving minimum penalties for severe crimes prompted the introduction of the Criminal and Related Matters Amendment Act 12 of 2022 (Soci, 2024). This Act aims to increase the protection of victims of gender-based violence and femicide and further prevent perpetrators from escaping justice (Soci, 2024). Soci (2024) argues that these acts "are key interventions of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence & Femicide."

According to Activist F:

> I think the government can never get tired of making and organising awareness programmes. I think also we need to have a broader perspective on GBV. It should not just end at forms of GBV are this and that, but we also need to now incorporate cyberbullying, for example, that Spar lady whose romantic partner released a sex tape of them on social media … If I am in a relationship with you and I get violated by you using technology, what are you able to do as the government? So, I think this is what we call legislature as well. We need them to be more active in providing solutions that are long term as well.

In response to Activist F's statement, laws have been established to protect victims from cybercrimes. For example, Schoeman-Louw (2023) highlights that there are many ways for people to take legal action for cyberbullying in South Africa; for example, there is the Cybercrimes Act 19 of 2020, which was recently passed in South Africa as a means of addressing the problem of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is one of the many types of cybercrime that are made illegal. It also calls for SAPS to create an entirely separate cybercrime unit to investigate and prosecute cybercrime cases, including cyberbullying (Schoeman-Louw, 2023). Schoeman-Louw (2023) states that among other agencies, victims can lodge a complaint with "… the South African Human Rights Commission, the Film and Publication Board, or the SAPS." They could also file a civil court lawsuit (Schoeman-Louw, 2023). The government is responsible for ensuring these resources continue to assist the victims of these violations.

For instance, Bhengu (2022) from News24 writes on the case of Free State speaker Zanele Sifuba, whose sexually explicit video was circulated on social media. She had launched a civil case. Bhengu (2022) stated:

> Social media expert Emma Sadleir said people who shared the video were as guilty of the crime as the source of the leak. They can be charged and prosecuted under several laws, including the Cyber Crimes Act, and can be fined or sentenced to three years in prison. Under the Films and Publications Amendment Act, distributors of private sexual images and videos could be fined R300 000 or sentenced to four years in prison.

Even though once unwanted and unconsented sexual content is released on social media, it is difficult to control, one can open a case against the perpetrator, and that individual can be addressed by a court of law (Bhengu, 2022). Schoeman-Louw (2023) further states that according to the Electronic Communications and Transactions Act 25 of 2002 ("ECTA"), it is against the law to use electronic communications to abuse or degrade another individual. Popovac and Leoschut (2012) also highlight how, in South Africa, several laws and policies have been implemented to protect young people from damaging media content (for example, restricting certain content from being viewed by children without adult supervision). Although it does not address online safety directly, the government implemented the Films and Publications Act (No. 65 of 1996), which monitors and examines other media to determine its appropriateness for different audiences (Popovac and Leoschut, 2012).

Another concern identified by participants was the matter of legislation inclusivity. For instance, Activist E brings up another point when she states that:

> ...laws are published, but they are not being used efficiently. … They need to change laws so that it is not a long process to get to court. That when you go to court, you need witnesses to stand for your case that, yes, you were actually abused. … If they can change some laws. You know that a person is abusing you, but the person knows that they will get arrested today and tomorrow they will be out on bail, and I think that is the reason why GBV is persisting today in South Africa, or the case becomes a trial that does not end and is forever going.

Activist E brings a different stance and point of view when she argues that some laws must be modified to be accessible to all citizens. She speaks of how laws that are implemented disadvantage some people and how in some cases of GBV, the laws are practised negatively affect some victims and survivors of GBV. Because some of the victims may not have witnesses who witnessed the violence inflicted on them. She states that sometimes, some cases

take too long because of the procedures that some laws require. Some victims may not have the financial ability to keep up with a case that would take many years. Hence, Williamson et al. (2017) discuss the Bill of Rights and state that the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) serves as a fundamental principle of human rights for all; it strives to ensure equal protection from the law and freedom from all forms of discrimination.

However, while putting in place these policies is essential, legislation alone, without the correct implementation and implementation with care and respect, may not have a long-term effective change for some victims. Therefore, implementation of the policies must be initiated with caution (Williamson et al., 2017). Some participants in this study highlight that the South African government has implemented laws and policies that should assist victims of GBV while Activist A perceives the role of the government as looking at post-violence and abuse.

> I think the first thing they must work on is women's safety post-fact. So, it's like when women are abused, and they are looking for a safe space, I know that there are a lot of tutors in the care centres, which are a government resource, but a lot of the time when I look, they are only in remote areas, so what happens to other people? So, across the board, are there any spaces that have access to free health care? There needs to be access to counselling, even access to free legal aid because I feel like a lot of them, it's like, okay, I want to open a case, but I don't know what I'm supposed to be doing. So those types of resources, I think that they have to prioritise victims and survivors in that way. (Activist A).

The problem Activists A brings forward is that after reporting a case, some victims cannot return home to stay with the perpetrator; therefore, they need to be allocated to safe homes/shelters. However, there are not enough safety shelters that can accommodate all the victims of GBV that need shelters. To address the increasing demand for shelter and safe homes, governments must be receptive to change. For instance, Mahtani (2020) argues that abandoned hotels and schools can be converted into certain cities or towns with insufficient shelters. Safety systems should be put in place so they can be used as safety homes for victims and survivors of GBV. Training is required for frontline staff (police officers, nurses, doctors, teachers, parents) to recognize instances of violence against women and know when to report them (Mahtani, 2020).

Activist A also speaks of the importance of providing resources to victims and survivors, which are some of the reasons there is a lack of reporting cases. Many victims do not open cases because they do not know where to start, where they should go, and who to talk to. Similarly, the Child Witness Institute (2020) researched reasons why people do not report cases of GBV and identified that the reason for not reporting is because "They did not know how. Problems of physical access to police or social workers. Fear of legal processes, including experiencing rudeness and poor treatment by the police. Fear of reliving the trauma in court and during the investigation" (Child Witness Institute, 2020: 3). Tlou (2023) also argues that some victims are unaware that they can get assistance from the police if they report their case to the SAPS. They are also unaware of what behaviours constitute GBV assaults (Tlou, 2023).

All the participants in this research project agree that the impact of law-driven response should be evaluated, and the underlying causes of the continued rise in GBV in South Africa in contradiction to official efforts should be investigated. Many laws have been passed in South Africa to protect women and children from all forms of violence, including GBV. These regulations made GBV illegal and gave South Africans a sense of obligation to defend everyone's rights. Regardless of government actions, legislative changes, and women-focused response systems that serve as a support system for survivors, South Africa continues to be a country with higher rates of violence and GBV than other countries.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter critically analysed the data using three themes. This chapter first discussed the theme titled 'GBV is not a woman's issue', demonstrating that GBV is a widespread problem in South Africa; however, the responsibility to prevent it from occurring should not only lie on women. The responsibility should be on all the citizens, including boys, men, girls, women, organisations, businesses, and the government. To illustrate, some participants argued that GBV does not only affect women and children in society but affects the economy as well and that GBV also affects men. This is in line with the study by Strebel et al. (2006) that men are also affected by GBV because violence does not only remain in the home but is also perpetrated in the streets by men.

The second theme discussed 'the impact of activism'. The data gathered in this theme exposed the impacts of activism in South Africa. It brought to light the availability of GBV activists to

assist victims and survivors of violence. This theme encourages victims and survivors to speak up and seek help, letting them know they are not alone. The participants shared their stories of activism. One participant shared her experience in the involvement of the #TotalShutDown movement and how they impacted the President of South Africa by bringing more awareness to the issue of GBV. Another participant spoke about how she uses social media to help victims and survivors of GBV to connect with other victims and survivors and help them share their stories.

The last theme in this chapter, titled 'The Role of the Government', focused on criticising the government's efforts to prevent GBV. In doing that, it highlighted the work put in by the government in the fight against GBV and looked at possible changes that the government needs to consider regarding their implementation of legislation. Some participants argued that the government should not slow down in implementing legislation. In contrast, another participant argued that legislation should be re-examined to cater to all victims and survivors, those who can afford legal aid and those who cannot.

The findings in this chapter highlight the need for a united South Africa when it comes to eliminating GBV. In South Africa, gender-based violence is a persistent problem with a variety of root causes (Buqa, 2022). In order to solve this issue, both men and women must do their part to promote awareness and education and question existing gender norms. Successful solutions demand an extensive plan that includes societal, community, and individual improvements. In order to assist victims with reporting and protection while keeping offenders accountable for their crimes, government policies, legislative changes, and support services must be put into place. In the end, it is important to work towards a South African society in which people of all genders can live without fear of abuse and in which gender-based violence is not acceptable.

Chapter Six: The Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This study sought to research the various responses of Black women activists and the government to GBV in post-1994 South Africa. The research findings of this study were comprehensively analysed and discussed in Chapters Four and Five. The analysis and the discussion of these findings were framed around six themes, namely, motivation to fight against GBV, sources of GBV/VAW, police's lack of accountability and perpetrating violence and sexual offence, GBV is not a woman's issue, the impact of activism, and the role of the government. Chapter Four of the thesis specifically dealt with the first three themes, whereas Chapter Five interrogated the last three themes.

This chapter seeks to reiterate and synthesise some of the findings discussed in the data analysis chapters to highlight key themes. In addition, this chapter aims to identify discursive connections and commonalities to make them coherent and simplify them for clarity and understanding. The discussion begins by interrogating the common threads in the findings analysed in Chapter Four.

6.2 Chapter Four: Consolidating and Integrating Insights

This chapter begins by discussing some of the motivations that led activists against GBV to get involved in the struggle against GBV in post-1994 South Africa. These activists joined the fight against GBV for various reasons, including personal experience with GBV, a development of feminist consciousness, and a desire to change the justice system and how society understands GBV.

This research finding is consistent with a study by Gouws (2016), which found that GBV often leaves women with no option but to step up and fight against it by turning to civil society. Mkwananzi and Nathane-Taulela (2024) also argue that addressing GBVF in communities calls for increased community involvement, especially in coming up with proper solutions to this social problem. The involvement of community members includes individuals who work in the

field of GBV, victims, and survivors of gender violence who are willing to be part of the fight against violence, and individuals who have witnessed GBV and would like to prevent it. Gouws (2016) and Mkwananzi and Nathane-Taulela's (2024) arguments are in line with this thesis in that they highlight the importance of activism and of people in communities coming together to prevent GBV, regardless of their background (either victim, survivor, whistleblower, or a witness of GBV).

Another key finding discussed in this chapter is the origins of GBV. Research participants pointed to multiple sources of GBV, such as social issues like poverty, African culture, women's liberation in post-1994 South Africa, patriarchy and toxic masculinities.

Some participants identified patriarchy and some notions of manhood as the primary reasons for violence against women. These participants explained that when some men find it challenging to support their families financially, they tend to resort to violence to assert their masculinity and power. Participants explained this behaviour by connecting it to patriarchy, which encourages "Black women or a Black child" to be submissive: "When a man speaks and a man being the father in the house we keep quiet and also our customs." Research by Sepeng et al. (2022) found that in certain instances, some African families prioritised the needs of male children because it is believed that the male child would carry on the family name. As discussed in Chapter Four, this situation encourages male children to view themselves as having social power over girls and women (Sepeng et al., 2022). Likewise, African societies have traditionally required men to be breadwinners of their families; however, in post-1994 South Africa, some women are better educated and, as a result, earn more than some men. Some men find this role reversal upsetting and resort to violence to assert their dominance. Research has shown that conflict arises over men's claim to power when high unemployment and poverty lead to more women being employed than men (Strebel et al., 2006).

Two participants were against telling children that a girl behaves a certain way compared to a boy child. They argued that the practice of telling children to behave in specific ways because of their gender causes a lot of expectations and misconceptions. Some male children may grow up to feel entitled and discriminate against people using gender stereotypes. According to Mwamwenda (2013), boys are thought to be logical, assertive, competitive, ambitious, and independent, whereas girls are thought to be submissive, nurturing, emotional, and sensitive.

A study conducted by Enaifoghe and Idowu (2021) confirms this finding. They argue that the continued existence of violence against women and girls is believed to have its roots in social norms, gender stereotypes, and discrimination based on gender. Since violence against women and girls has such a profound effect on them, initiatives have mostly focused on providing responses and services for survivors (Enaifoghe and Idowu, 2021).

Other participants argued that the lack of knowledge and understanding of GBV is another pressing challenge that adds to its being normalised – in that society, members lack an understanding of what GBV is and what it looks like. Because they have no understanding of it, society members look the other way when violence is perpetrated on women. This is in line with the study conducted by Perrin et al. (2019) that there are social norms and personal opinions that uphold and condone sexual assault and other types of GBV. These norms include "women's sexual purity, protecting family honour over women's safety, and men's authority to discipline women and children" (Perrin et al., 2019: 1). This belief stems from the community (particularly some men) not understanding what GBV is and not knowing that their actions are GBV. With this misconception, many victims remain in abusive relationships because they do not understand the consequences of GBV (Zinyemba and Hlongwana, 2022).

Many factors were argued as the cause of GBV; however, only one participant spoke of gender inequality from an economic standpoint and argued that men and women may work the same hours and duties, yet women are still not taken seriously in the workplace and are not paid equally. This suggests that some men are awarded power in the workplace by being men, and that creates the idea that men are superior to women. This aligns with data from UNWomen (2024) stating that in South Africa, the gender pay gap is a widespread aspect of the workforce. When looking at South Africa at the hourly level, the basic gender pay gap is 20.1%, and at the monthly level, it is 32.5%. Women are paid less than males in most professions and most areas (UNWomen, 2024). Women are paid less, for example, in the construction industry and as administrative workers. UNWomen (2024) argues that the gender pay gap differs with formality level. In informal employment, women earn 56.1% less than males or three times less than men; in official employment, the difference is 8.4% (UNWomen, 2024). In some instances, women's response to the pay gap or not being paid enough is staying in abusive relationships.

6.3 Chapter Five: Consolidating and Integrating Insights

This chapter discussed the campaign work of activists against GBV. In addition, this chapter sought to gauge the positive impact of the GBV campaigns on people in general, but with a particular focus on men. A key finding that emerged from the analysis of data is the idea that GBV awareness and activism are not the sole responsibility of women and girls. Participants argued that the prevention of GBV and the fight against GBV is a societal responsibility, including men and boys. The findings suggested that GBV is not only a woman's issue and that all men need to join the conversation and fight against GBV. Men need to reprimand their friends and community members when they see them abusing women and children. The participants argued that the normalisation of GBV is damaging to society. For example, research by Mkwananzi and Nathane-Taulela (2024) confirms this finding when they argue that violence is normalised in some South African communities and is represented by an unjust and constantly dreadful lifestyle in which human life is no longer valued. In South Africa, GBV is pervasive. Even though it is fought against, it seems that, in most instances, it is accepted and normalised by some communities (Mkwananzi and Nathane-Taulela, 2024).

In addition, participants argued that men need to understand that women are not the only people being affected by GBV; they are, as well as their mothers and sisters. For example, a study conducted by Thusi and Mlambo (2023) confirms that in South Africa, GBV also affects men. It is important to keep in mind that both men and women can abuse men, regardless of their masculinity. Men may be killed, attacked, or raped (Thusi and Mlambo, 2023).

The findings in this study further suggested that even though the government has implemented laws to prevent GBV and assist victims of violence, they also need to look into introducing GBV in syllabuses at schools. This is in line with Bhana et al. (2019), who state that to address sexual and reproductive health concerns while avoiding negative social, health, and educational consequences, young people need to be equipped with high-quality sex education. Bhana et al. (2019) argue that sexuality education can tackle and confront repressive heteronormativity, relationship dynamics, and gender equality and violence when it is provided within the contexts of human rights, gender, and sexual justice.

Another key finding discussed in this chapter is the positive impact of GBV activism on people's lives. For example, some participants shared their success stories, and one participant

spoke of her experience being part of the #TheTotalShutDown movement and its impact on legislation. What participants were referring to when talking about the impact of #TheTotalShutDown on the legislation, is that President Cyril Ramaphosa met with the organisers of #TheTotalShutDown which resulted in the formation of an organising committee consisting of representatives from the presidency, nonprofit groups, and the organisers of #TheTotalShutdown, who were working together for the first time to stop gender-based violence (Le Roux 2022). The National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence & Femicide was created as a "multi-sectoral strategic framework to realise a South Africa free from gender-based violence and femicide" (Ramaphosa, 2020). After that, multiple laws were created to prevent the spread of GBV. This is in line with the findings and research by the Chief Financial Officer at the Government Communication and Information System department, Gcbisa Soci (2024), who confirms that laws such as the Domestic Violence Amendment Act 14 of 2022, the Criminal and Related Matters Amendment Act 12 of 2022, and The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 13 of 2022 were promulgated as a way of preventing GBV.

The activism against GBV led to the introduction of these legislations, and that on its own was regarded as a victory to celebrate by research participants. While other activists may celebrate the new legislation, others criticise its implementation. For instance, Amnesty International South Africa organisation argues that:

It is a positive step towards ensuring the effective rollout of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide, which was adopted in 2020. It must also ensure adequate resources for the implementation of the National Strategic Plan; without this, the law on the national council and the strategic plan will have no real impact. (Qumbisa, 2024)

Human Rights Watch (2021) states that despite the political will to address GBV, the South African government still does not have adequate funding for GBV projects, negatively impacting the implementation of anti-GBV programmes and initiatives. Another participant spoke of social media activism's impact on victims and survivors. The participant said her organisation encourages women to "tell stories through our page and message our page and say, hey, I did not think of it this way, or this has become such a safe space for me."

Nicole Smith (2023) argues that social media and hashtag activism are increasingly important in bringing attention to social justice concerns by influencing legislation and societal norms that support injustices. Social media allows for easy access to information relevant to aid victims and survivors of GBV, for example, by simplifying legislation and providing emergency contact details. Smith (2023) argues that social media has produced a widely accessible forum for discussion and interaction about social injustices. It also gives those who might have been excluded or marginalised in the past an opportunity to interact with one another and voice their concerns (Smith, 2023). In this way, a larger community can offer victims and their families some assistance. Hence, social media can foster user solidarity for shared experiences, provide users with regular exposure to ideas that speak to them, support and strengthen offline mobilisation, and give people a platform to share thoughts in ways that are unique to them and that enrich and represent their own experiences (Smith, 2023).

The organisations that use social media for GBV activism allow victims and survivors to share their stories without feeling judged or ashamed, letting them remain anonymous. For example, Women for Change, a non-government organisation that uses social media to promote positive change and engages in various initiatives to raise awareness of the GBVF pandemic in South Africa (Women for Change, 2024). The organisation, which is active on all social media channels, shares easily accessible educational resources and highlights the experiences and results of GBVF. In addition, Women for Change builds a virtual community and offers survivors virtual and physical support (Women for Change, 2024).

6.4 Recommendations

This section considers recommendations for how GBV should be tackled in post-1994 South Africa.

The South African government needs to assign a budget for renovating and restructuring abandoned buildings to convert them into safety shelters for victims of violence because GBV is extensive, and many women and children daily are forced to remain in the same home as their perpetrators because they have nowhere else to go. Research from other countries demonstrates that the conversion of abandoned buildings into social houses for survivors of GBV or low-income families has substantial social benefits. For example,

> Habitat Great Britain has transformed three vacant properties into comfortable units with more than a dozen beds offered to people transitioning out of foster care. She expects the residents to stay for an average of 18 months before transitioning to independent living. When they move, another young person leaving foster care will take their place. (Europe Housing Forum, 2023)

Although these shelters were not renovated for victims and survivors of GBV, the point is that this is a model to emulate. The South African government can adopt the same strategy as Habitat Poland and Habitat Great Britain in renovating abandoned buildings to shelter homes for victims and survivors of GBV. Providing alternative shelter to GBV victims and survivors would empower women who find themselves in abusive situations to leave those situations.

Innovative ways need to be created to initiate and educate communities, especially in rural areas where some people cannot use social media and the internet, about what GBV is, how it can be reported, and how to prevent it. This is because GBV has been normalised, resulting in some people not reporting cases of GBV. Part of these innovative ways to deal with GBV could include using mobile containers that government employees, organisations, and social workers can use to travel to the rural areas to educate communities and provide classes focused on GBV and Femicide and channels they can take to report related crimes. For example, Witkoppen has mobile clinics that travel to different townships in Johannesburg (Witkoppen Clinic, 2024). The Witkoppen Clinic (2024) argues that there are insufficient medical clinics in informal settlements like Diepsloot, Msawawa, and Lion Park to serve the vast populations. In order to guarantee that people who cannot afford transportation still receive medical care, the Witkoppen mobile clinic visits local communities. The clinic is entirely self-sufficient and has consulting rooms that are entirely equipped (Witkoppen Clinic, 2024).

Another successful initiative and assistance to victims and survivors of GBV, for instance, is through the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) assisting in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (UNFPA, 2018). In 2017, the UNFPA worked to provide critically needed resources and services for the prevention of pregnancy, GBV, and maternity and infant health through collaboration, community involvement, and evidence-based planning. For instance, mobile clinics provided life-saving services to displaced and crisis-affected women and girls when conflict broke out in the Kasaï region (UNFPA, 2018). However, because of the high rate of civil war in the DRC, the fight against GBV is still a struggle (Centre for Preventative Action,

2024). The South African government can adapt and build on these initiatives as they may have better results (since South Africa is not prone to civil wars, adopting these initiatives from the country, as mentioned above, may yield better results). The government and organisations must ensure smooth implementations of the strategies from existing mobile clinics in South African communities and adapt strategies used in other countries by other organisations to ensure outreach to victims and survivors in rural areas.

The government needs to review teachers' curricula and how to train them to conduct sex and sexuality education effectively in schools. For instance, Mayeza and Vincent (2019) argue that life orientation sexuality education is important in that it is a mechanism that can be used to respond to different social concerns like gender violence, homophobia, unwanted teenage pregnancies, and high rates of HIV. Life orientation classes can provide educational messages about reproductive justice, safe sexual activities, sexuality diversity, and gender violence (Mayeza and Vincent, 2019). This could be done through videos with professional actors to convey what GBV looks like, the consequences, and provide information on appropriate and available responses, support and other mechanisms. Bhana (2019: 361) argues the point of implementing practical sexual education classes in that she states that:

> ...good quality sexuality education can be a vital resource to provide young people with knowledge and information to address sexual and reproductive health and to … address and challenge gender equality, oppressive heteronormativity, and relationship dynamics.

The literature (Mayeza, 2022; Bhana et al., 2019) usually addresses sexual education itself and does not analyse its implementation and how teachers are trained to conduct their classes. With effective implementation from teachers of sex and sexual education in schools, many young people will learn the principal values of gender relations and the effects of gender violence.

Counselling centres need to be more accessible in communities, especially in townships. For example, Goba (2021) wrote an article about the #NoExcuse GBV support centre in the Alexander township in Johannesburg and stated an argument by Candice Van Den Boesch, the Carling Black Label Brand Manager:

> Through the #NoExcuse Support Centre we would like to make a change in this community. The centre has two main objectives, which are to provide counselling and

> support in a safe professional environment for victims of GBV. Our second objective is to prevent GBV by providing various programmes and interventions aimed at restoring, equipping, and inspiring men to be good mentors, role models, and fathers who stand against any form of abuse. (Goba, 2021)

There would be a difference in communities where this initiative is implemented effectively as it would allow community members to feel safe to learn and unlearn the effects of GBV.

Community members need to take conversations about GBV out of the activism space to their friendship groups and homes. Conversations about GBV need to be regular conversations that families, friends, and colleagues have as general conversations. Messersmith et al. (2017) analysed the World Education Inc./Bantwana from Tanzania, which has an initiative called Community Dialogue on GBV. Messersmith et al. (2017) argue that a community dialogue provides a place for people to talk directly about challenges facing the community, pinpoint their roots and effects, and create locally relevant solutions. These dialogue sessions have been determined as the strategy to involve communities in resolving GBV issues, which aim to promote different points of view and honest discussions about GBV (Messersmith et al., 2017). This is an initiative that South African communities can embark on to create a free flow of conversations about GBV.

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