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Submission date: 30-Mar-2023 12:30PM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 2050725191

File name: 59-80.pdf (451.29K)

Word count: 11809

Character count: 68082

Exploration of the Gaps in the Enactment and Implementation of the Domestic Violence Act of South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence (DV) by women against men is as rife as violence by men against women. This paper argues that viewing DV as a crime committed only by men against women and never by women against men is wrong. The study explored the existence of domestic abuse against men and the gender neutrality of the Domestic Violence Act of South Africa using a mixed-methods research strategy. The Gauteng, Limpopo, and KwaZulu-Natal provinces in South Africa were used for data collection. A sample size of roughly 200 represents quantitative aspects. Open invitations were also extended to 30 people to participate in semi-structured one-on-one interviews for the qualitative research component, while questionnaires were sent to approximately 170 respondents. Participants and respondents included South African Police Service members who deal with gender-based violence (GBV); the Department of Social Development; the Commission for Gender Equality; non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in three selected provinces that deal with DV against men, namely Aka Sosha, Moshate, Matrix, and Real Men; male survivors of DV; religious leaders; members of the Department of Social Development; houses of traditional leaders; members of Families South Africa (Famsa); social workers; a psychologist; and members of Sonke (a GBV support group). The results revealed that South African men often experience domestic abuse. Secondly, the police do not treat male abuse victims in the same manner as female victims. Thirdly, there are no support services for male victims in South Africa. The study recommends the fair implementation of the law and legal support. Although the Domestic Violence Act of 1998 (as amended) is gender-neutral, its implementation is not. There is a need for healthcare professionals, mental healthcare workers (including psychologists and certified counsellors as community workers), police officials, legal personnel (including court administrators), and religious leaders to receive training on men's issues. This training will aid in providing care, protection, and counselling to male victims of DV.

Keywords: Domestic Violence Act, Intimate partner violence, Domestic violence, Abuse, Abuser, Men abuse, Physical abuse, Emotional abuse, Psychological abuse, Victim.

ABSTRAK

Kekerasan dalam rumah tangga (KDRT) oleh perempuan terhadap laki-laki sama maraknya dengan kekerasan laki-laki terhadap perempuan. Tulisan ini berpendapat bahwa memandang DV sebagai kejahatan yang hanya dilakukan oleh laki-laki terhadap perempuan adalah salah. Studi ini mengeksplorasi keberadaan kekerasan dalam rumah tangga terhadap laki-laki dan netralitas gender dari Undang-Undang Kekerasan Dalam Rumah Tangga Afrika Selatan menggunakan strategi penelitian metode campuran. Provinsi Gauteng, Limpopo, dan KwaZulu-Natal di Afrika Selatan digunakan untuk pengumpulan data. Ukuran sampel sekitar 200 mewakili aspek kuantitatif. Undangan terbuka juga diperluas hingga 30 orang untuk berpartisipasi dalam wawancara semi-terstruktur satu per satu untuk komponen penelitian kualitatif, sedangkan kuesioner dikirim ke sekitar 170 responden. Peserta dan responden termasuk anggota Kepolisian Afrika Selatan yang menangani kekerasan berbasis gender (GBV); Departemen Pembangunan Sosial; Komisi Kesetaraan Gender; lembaga swadaya masyarakat (LSM) di tiga provinsi terpilih yang menangani DV terhadap laki-laki, yaitu Aka Sosha, Moshate, Matrix, dan Real Men; laki-laki yang selamat dari DV; tokoh agama; anggota Departemen Pembangunan Sosial; rumah tokoh adat; anggota Keluarga Afrika Selatan (Famsa); pekerja sosial; seorang psikolog; dan anggota Sonke (kelompok pendukung GBV). Hasilnya mengungkapkan bahwa pria Afrika Selatan sering mengalami kekerasan dalam rumah tangga. Kedua, polisi tidak memperlakukan korban pelecehan laki-laki dengan cara yang sama seperti korban perempuan. Ketiga,

tidak ada layanan dukungan untuk korban laki-laki di Afrika Selatan. Kajian ini merekomendasikan penerapan hukum dan dukungan hukum yang adil. Meskipun Undang-Undang Kekerasan Dalam Rumah Tangga tahun 1998 (sebagaimana telah diubah) netral gender, implementasinya tidak demikian. Ada kebutuhan bagi profesional kesehatan, pekerja kesehatan mental (termasuk psikolog dan konselor bersertifikat sebagai pekerja masyarakat), petugas polisi, petugas hukum (termasuk administrator pengadilan), dan pemuka agama untuk menerima pelatihan tentang isu-isu laki-laki. Pelatihan ini akan membantu memberikan perawatan, perlindungan, dan konseling kepada laki-laki korban kekerasan seksual.

Kata kunci: Tindakan KDRT, KDRT, Pelecehan, Pelaku, Pelecehan laki-laki, Pelecehan fisik, Pelecehan emosional, Pelecehan psikis, Korban.

INTRODUCTION

Intimate partner violence (IPV), often known as domestic violence (DV), is a worldwide health and societal problem (Ogundipe et al., 2018). Historically, intimate partner abuse has been considered a female-only issue (Kgatle et al., 2021). IPV has affected men and women equally in recent years (Adebayo, 2014). Unfortunately, the literature largely disregards male DV (Mngomezulu et al., 2019). South Africa has the highest DV rate in the world (Graaff & Heineken, 2017), and cultural norms and gender-based customs condone and intensify the problem. Most academic discourse on DV or IPV identifies men as perpetrators and women as victims (Ratele et al., 2016). This narrative fails to recognise men as victims of IPV (Ratele et al., 2016). While the prevalence of IPV against men in South Africa is still being examined, recorded and anecdotal evidence indicates that it is common. The murder of Judge Patrick Maqubela by his wife in Cape Town in 2013 is still fresh in the populace's memories. In March 2015, a girlfriend fatally stabbed 38-year-old musician "Flabba" Nkululeko Hadebe in Alexandra, Johannesburg (eNCA, 2015).

According to former Gauteng Minister of Social Development, Nandi Mayathula-Khoza, three out of 10 victims of gender-based violence (GBV) are men. According to the South African Police Service (SAPS) data, 31 girlfriends murdered 47 males between April and June of 2020. Ten cases of males being raped (perpetrator unknown), 67 attempted murders (female partners), 951 assaults with serious physical harm (131 girlfriends; 61 wives), common assault (116 girlfriends; 95 wives), and contempt of court (58 wives; 45 ex-girlfriends) were reported (SAPS, 2021). Thobejane (2018) asserts that male victims of DV fear ridicule from family, peers, and law enforcement. Barkhuizen (2010) researched the physical and emotional victimisation of the male partner in heterosexual marriage or cohabitation from a criminological perspective. Msomi (2011) investigated GBV against men in Clermont Township, while Maubane (2016) investigated men's accounts of DV in Gauteng. Thobejane (2018) and Luthada (2018) evaluated the trend of male victims of DV in the Vhembe district of the Limpopo province. Male DV victims have often been disregarded in studies of intimate partner abuse (Laskey, 2019; Lysova et al., 2020). This study aims to explore Gaps in Enactment and Implementation of South Africa's Domestic Violence Act. Apart from that, this research also tries to make up for the shortcomings of previous research, especially from the perspective of the application of the Law on Domestic Violence.

LITERATURE STUDY

Domestic Violence (DV) and Legal Frameworks: A Conceptual Framework

Post-apartheid South Africa has democratic values and a constitution that safeguards human rights, such as freedom and safety. International human rights law strengthened these clauses. The government

of South Africa regulates crime through policies, strategies, and programmes (Mahl & Van Wyk, 2013). The South African government has enacted the required legislation to address DV. The Domestic Violence Act (No. 116 of 1998) improved the Prevention of Family Violence Act (No. 133 of 1993). Vetten (2005) asserted that this Act was amended because the Prevention of Family Violence Act disregarded the right of men to a fair hearing. The 1996 Constitution of South Africa forbids violence against men. The Bill of Rights was enshrined in the South African Constitution of 1996. In January 1993, South Africa ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in the spirit of this Bill, which had been under consideration for years (and ratified CEDAW under a fully democratic government in December 1995). However, no explicit legislation exists to eradicate discrimination against men. In South Africa, the Domestic Violence Act of 1998 and the Gender Equity Bill of 2000 deal with GBV and gender inequality.

The Bill of Rights in the 1996 South African Constitution promises equal legal protection and freedom from discrimination. Although these policies are vital, legislation alone cannot produce lasting change. The South African Constitution outlines the rights and duties of citizens as civilians and defines the government structure. It also protects against unfair discrimination and ensures human rights. According to Bendall (2010), the South African Constitution appears to protect victims of DV. Section 9 of the Bill of Rights emphasises the equality of persons, whereas subsection (1) states that everyone is treated equally under the law. Section 12 of the Constitution promotes individual liberty and safety. Everyone has the right to liberty and security, including the right (c) to be free from all forms of public and private violence (Bendall, 2010). Subsection (d) reiterates the prohibition against torture. By the Constitution, the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development's (2006) victim's charter provides rights and services to victims of violence. To prevent secondary victimisation, all criminal justice departments must treat victims fairly, respectfully, and with discretion—article 10 of the Bill of Rights mandates respecting and protecting human dignity. State services must educate victims of violence and include them in criminal procedures. To ensure comprehension, victims must have access to information in their language. Section 32 of the Constitution supports access to information.

Everyone has the right to access (a) state information and (b) other people's information necessary to defend rights, as stated in subsection (1). The government should protect victims. The government will provide victims with social, health, and counselling support as necessary. Occasionally, victims of violence require assistance in obtaining and executing compensation orders. Human rights are included in the Bill of Rights in Chapter 2 of the Constitution. The Bill of Rights ensures liberty and safety for everyone, including male victims of IPV. They are safeguarded against all forms of aggression, including secondary victimisation (a process or actions that further victimise a person who experiences IPV). Everyone is entitled to physiological and psychological integrity, safety, and body control (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

The Domestic Violence Act (No. 116 of 1998)

According to Lien and Lorentzen (2019), DV was once considered a private matter in South Africa. High incidences of IPV in South Africa spurred the passage of the Domestic Violence Act. The Act acknowledges that cohabiting and married couples might engage in DV in various ways. DV encompasses male victims because it indicates a domestic relationship. IPV victims can seek protection orders. The Act allows male victims of IPV perpetrated by female partners to secure a protective order. The Domestic Violence Act defines DV as physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, psychological, and economic abuse and

intimidation. Sections 2, 3, and 8 of the Domestic Violence Act outline the responsibilities of SAPS members while treating IPV cases to promote fairness for all IPV victims, including abused men. Section 3 requires the police to make warrantless arrests when they suspect violence. In South Africa, officials are sworn to protect victims of IPV of all sexes, frequently victimising male victims who report incidents to the police. When a man reports female IPV, it is always deemed self-defence without a thorough inquiry (Lien & Lorentzen, 2019).

Synopsis of the Domestic Violence Act of 1998 in South Africa

The 1998 Domestic Violence Act provides vital remedies for victims of DV in South Africa. The Act's prologue acknowledges that DV is prevalent in South Africa and that its victims are among the most vulnerable members of society. The South African Constitution ensures equality, liberty, and safety. DV victims must be effectively protected. CEDAW and the Rights of the Child oblige the government of South Africa to eliminate violence against women and children.

The Domestic Violence Act was enacted "to afford victims of domestic violence the maximum protection from domestic abuse that the law can provide; and to introduce measures to ensure that the relevant organs of state give full effect to the provisions of this Act, thereby conveying that the State is committed to the elimination of domestic violence" (Durfee, 2009, Bendall, 2010). Unfortunately, those responsible for eradicating DV in South Africa are overprotective of women against men, contrary to national and international victim protection regulations. According to the researcher, the drafters of the South African Domestic Violence Act meant for "victims of GBV" to include both men and women. The Act focuses on issuing and enforcing protection orders to prevent DV. Victims of DV may request a protective order. The term "domestic relationship" is defined by the Act to include married, divorced, same-sex, and cohabiting couples.

In cases of violence, men are regarded differently than women. Many nations ignore female violence. The judicial system and society have different perspectives of GBV perpetrated by women. Typically, a third party reports DV against women to the authorities, but no one does so when the victim is a man (Vertommen et al., 2017, p. 173). The stereotypes of law enforcement and the justice system accentuate this issue. Male domestic abuse is disregarded. Feminists and male oppressors conceal themselves behind men's physiques (Vertommen et al., 2017). They assert that men can defend themselves, but if they do so, they are imprisoned. According to research, the majority of women who assault men escape arrest. As a result of DV, law enforcement and the courts view female abusers as victims (Vertommen et al., 2017).

Men are reluctant to report abuse, which misrepresents society (Bjrnholt & Hjemdal, 2018, p. 466). Women than men report more incidences of DV. Men who report their wives or female partners are sometimes ridiculed or arrested despite being the victims (Bjrnholt & Hjemdal, 2018, p. 466). This study sought to offer a uniquely South African viewpoint. DV campaigns only target women, and many organisations assist mistreated women but not men (Tshoane, 2022).

Due to the cultural belief that women are ideal victims, the legal system frequently fails to distinguish between male victims and female perpetrators. Due to underreporting, national statistics indicate that women assault men less frequently than men assault women. Historically, males have raped women (Russell & Sturgeon, 2019, p. 35). Most men raped and mistreated by women struggle with this belief. Society does not recognise that men are abused and raped, and feminists are cruel to men (Russell & Sturgeon, 2019, p. 35). DV against males is pervasive because society acknowledges that a woman's constant anger against her partner indicates that she loves him excessively (Schulz, 2018, p. 538). The

judicial system promotes gender inequality (Schulz, 2018, p. 538). The treatment of abused women and men should be identical (Tshoane, 2022).

A Brief History of DV Against Men in South Africa

Multiple international studies have investigated male disclosure of female-perpetrated DV (Wallace et al., 2019; National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2015; Dutton & White, 2013; British Psychological Society, 2011), but narrative research on male DV victims is rare. In other words, the academic literature lacks narrative research on male victims of female-perpetrated DV and its disclosure.

Barkhuizen (2015) discovered that in post-Renaissance France and England, spouses believed to be emotionally and/or physically abused by their wives were mocked and humiliated by society. He adds that in France, for instance, officials paraded a "battered" spouse through town riding a donkey backwards while clinging onto its tail and being compelled to wear a strange outfit. These post-Renaissance ceremonies were boisterous demonstrations meant to embarrass and humiliate "wayward men" (the victims) in public and were often known as the "Charivari". The husband beater was also punished by riding backwards on a donkey, sipping wine, and wiping her mouth with its tail. In Paris during the 17th century, victims skissed at al horns decorated with ribbons (Barkhuizen 2015).

Abused husbands in England were tied to a cart and paraded about town, suffering public ridicule. Brandmaier (2015) states that patriarchal values demand husbands to govern and punish their wives. The fact that communities penalised males who did not follow patriarchy implies that wives may physically and emotionally assault their husbands. However, recent history has not supported such a possibility. Instead, cartoons presented men as victims of marital violence, such as "Andy Capp", who was humiliated and abused by his powerful wife (Brandmaier, 2015). Brandmaier (2015) comments about comic strips by claiming that a common topic is a parody of spouses and wives in which the man deviates from the ideal image of being strong, self-assertive, and clever and takes on feminine traits. These comics' women are justified in dominating their husbands and chastising them for not performing their customary tasks (Brandmaier, 2015).

According to Cook (2009), the public has only witnessed one side of DV and marital abuse. Given the legal and societal history of discrimination and oppression against women in many cases, this misrepresentation of spousal abuse was appropriate because it highlighted DV as a serious social problem; however, it is no longer appropriate to depict only the female victims of DV. The author believes it has become a "we" (men) against "them" (women) struggle. Domestic abuse is difficult to police. Some men are abused and beaten, but mainstream society finds it amusing or unbelievable. Men who have been abused and beaten should not be relegated to historical footnotes. Cook (2009) reiterates that women must believe what they claim in surveys: they initiate one-fourth of the violence, men initiate one-fourth, and the remaining 50% is mutual antagonism. Until this reality is acknowledged, women seeking assistance with anger management, lesbians and gay men in violent relationships, and heterosexual men who are mistreated will continue to be discriminated against and told their problems are not legitimate, despite the fact that data indicate otherwise. This study reveals that if we fail to treat DV as a whole rather than focusing on one part, we exacerbate group-against-group conflict, which harms all victims.

Our culture has long condoned violence against men but has never been made public. Numerous critics state that women only use violence in self-defence or in retaliation, so we should only handle violence against men (Munirkazmi & Mohyuddin, 2012). Wallace (2015) wrote that abuse by wives is never mentioned. This issue has not been publicised or funded since it has not been identified as a problem.

According to Tsui (2014), "the majority of tales circulating in the public press and scholarly publications have portrayed the issue as essentially a masculine kind of assaultive behaviour, therefore imprinting a false and inaccurate picture of the situation in the national consciousness".

It was argued that "the public perception of domestic violence contributes to men's greater legal and social defencelessness, as well as societal policies that impede domestic violence prevention. Domestic violence awareness campaigns have effectively targeted men as abusers" (Tsui, 2014). According to studies, most people link DV with two images: a traditional marriage with a husband and a wife, and women as victims and men as perpetrators (Wallace, 2015).

As a result of the exclusive focus on women as victims of DV, men have become an unrecognised, underserved, and unprotected class of domestic abuse victims. Society and aid agencies, such as shelters, law enforcement, and the government, have acted too slowly for men enduring DV. "Shockingly, society has not yet changed to provide men with the same services as women" (Drijber et al., 2013). Lester (2018) found that DV affects 1.9 million British adults aged 16 to 59, including over 700 000 men. There are no statistics on DV against South African men. This long history of indifference has produced many social, legal, cultural, and traditional beliefs and attitudes that current societies have been unable to erase despite attempts to do so. After each year, South Africa has 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children as a major event. Numerous initiatives teach women and children about their rights and reveal disturbing statistics on child abuse. What about male domestic and sexual violence victims? Our societal, cultural, and psychological impediments distract us from the fact that women victimise men. Gender inequality is the leading cause of violence. The researcher believes people should participate in the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Men and Children campaign.

Most men fear incarceration after assaulting their partners (Thobejane, 2018). Still, men typically do not report DV against them by women because they believe it is barbaric for a woman to strike a man in an intimate relationship (Thobejane, 2018).

Factors That Enhance DV Against Men in South Africa

The assumptions of DV marginalise men. DV campaigns are aimed at women (Wallace, 2015), and men are portrayed as abusive partners (Tsui, 2014). Men who are victims of DV are underserved because women are prioritised. For men experiencing DV, society, shelters, police enforcement, the government, and the legal system do little. "Astonishingly, society is not yet prepared to provide men with the same services as women" (Vernon, 2017).

This paper emphasises that many organisations that address marital violence solely assist women. These organisations may not identify male victims of DV. The feminist movement politicises DV, making identifying male victims more difficult. Consequently, mental health experts may be antagonistic to male victims. Additionally, stereotypes make women victims. Mental health experts and politicians occasionally criticise male domestic abuse victims due to gender preconceptions. Men are guardians and household heads, making accepting male domestic abuse victims difficult. Espinoza and Warner (2016) discovered no male IPV programmes in Asia, Australia, or New Zealand. Their investigation discovered no male victimisation campaigns in South Africa. Instead, DV campaigns show males as abusers using the phrase "not in my name". This alienates male victims. Espinoza and Warner (2016) believe that advocating one gender's fight at the price of or neglecting the other impedes solutions; the interests and welfare of both genders must be handled equally while recognising their distinctions.

The government and society assist abused women but rarely abuse men (Muthaka, 2018, p. 249). Abusive males are shunned, but women are not. Women are the leaders of sexism. After being abused by

a man, she recruits women and creates caricatures of men. The media controls education on social concerns, and the media culture influences how individuals think and behave, perceive themselves and others and construct their identities (Barkhuizen, 2015). Barkhuizen (2015) claims that newspapers, magazines, films, television broadcasts, movies, and talk shows develop, debate, and reproduce images of domestic abuse. These resources aid in the definition of normalcy. According to Barkhuizen (2015), all social interactions are governed by background expectations.

Background expectations assist individuals in justifying decisions and discovering credible answers. According to Barkhuizen (2015), several studies demonstrate how the media and popular culture exaggerate societal issues such as crime and violence. Researchers feel that this is one of the reasons why men as DV victims in South Africa have received inconsistent and minimal attention. This form of DV has received little media attention; the South African public therefore, has few "images" of abused men from which to form their perceptions regarding whether it is a social problem that requires support from the public, healthcare professionals, social organisations, and the police. This issue has not been publicised or funded since it has not been identified as a concern.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted mixed methods; in other words, it used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodology. Exploratory research presumes that a social issue is inadequately understood; the researcher must therefore "dig deep" into phenomena to uncover what is hidden. For this study, 30 persons were interviewed:

Gauteng: Two members of the SAPS, one member of Aka Sosha, one member of Moshate, one member of Matrix, one member of Families South Africa (Famsa), one community member, two members of the Commission for Gender Equality, and two members of the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL Rights Commission).

Limpopo: Two members of the SAPS, one member of the House of Traditional Leaders, one member of Real Men, two members of the Department of Social Development, two members of Munna Ndi Nnyi, one community member, and two members of Famsa.

KwaZulu-Natal: Two SAPS members, two community members, two members of Open Doors, and two members of Famsa. Face-to-face interviews were held with each participant. The interview questions posed to the participants/respondents varied.

Additionally, 170 questionnaires were distributed in the selected provinces:

Gauteng: Five SAPS members, ten members of Aka Sosha, 22 members of Moshate, 12 members of Matrix, 10 Famsa members, ten community members, ten members of the Commission for Gender Equality, and eight members of the CRL Rights Commission.

Limpopo: Five SAPS members, eight members of the House of Traditional Leaders, seven members of Real Men, six members of the Department of Social Development, 10 Munna Ndi Nnyi members, 12 community members, and five members of Famsa.

KwaZulu-Natal: Five SAPS members, ten community members, seven members of Open Doors, and 10 Famsa members. The authors of this paper emphasise that the Tshwane University Central Research Committee approved this sample before data were collected for the study.

Questionnaires were distributed to respondents to evaluate the following study hypotheses:

1. The Domestic Violence Act of 1998 (as amended) is not neutral regarding gender.
2. The reporting of DV by men is ineffectual in South Africa.

3. The SAPS is not trained to deal with male DV victims.
4. South Africa can learn lessons from other countries with low rates of DV.

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were used to obtain valuable information from the study participants. The interviews were held between June 2019 and December 2021 (the COVID-19 pandemic contributed immensely to the longer timeframe for data collection). Before the interviews, SAPS participants were notified about the study through the police institution. Although the study participants in the police comprised employees from junior, middle, and senior management levels, the researchers focused on those with a minimum of five years of experience in the service. Each interview was documented and, in some instances, audio recorded after securing the permission of the participants to do so. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. The following are some of the interview questions:

1. Is the South African Domestic Violence Act (as amended), No. 116 of 1998, gender neutral?
2. How effective is men's reporting of DV incidents?
3. What is the nature of DV that males experience?
4. How does the SAPS approach male DV victims?
5. What can South Africa learn from international countries with the lowest DV rates?

The overall research question that guided this study was: Is the South African Domestic Violence Act, No. 116 of 1998 (as amended) gender neutral?

Data Analysis

A mixed-methods research approach was utilised in this study for qualitative interviews and surveys/questionnaires for quantitative data collection. Cronbach's alpha, Fischer's exact tests for ordinal data, and component analysis were utilised to analyse the collected data. For open-ended enquiries, qualitative analysis verbalises numerical data. The letter R and a number indicate the views of each of the selected participants. Version 14 of STATA was utilised for quantitative research. The letter P and a number indicate the responses of each participant.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

⁴⁵ The Domestic Violence Act of 1998 (As Amended) Is Not Neutral Regarding Gender

From their responses, 147 out of 170 respondents understood the Domestic Violence Act well, and 88.55% strongly agreed/agreed that it was not gender neutral, whereas 11.45% (19) were undecided/disagreed/strongly disagreed.

The Reporting of DV by Men Is Ineffectual in South Africa

Of the participants, 11.45% disagreed, strongly opposed, or hesitated regarding the gender neutrality of the Domestic Violence Act of 1998. More men than women agreed/strongly agreed that the Act was not gender neutral (65.3% versus 34.4%; $p=0.004$). Married respondents were more likely to assert that the Domestic Violence Act was not gender-neutral. The respondents' knowledge on the subject matter was assessed. For the latent variable, ineffective reporting, almost all the study respondents (98.2%) agreed/strongly agreed that there was ineffective reporting of abuse of men. There was no statistically significant difference in the percentage of respondents who agreed/strongly agreed that there was ineffective reporting of abuse of men regarding the gender, age group, marital status, race, and education of the respondents or the province of the study respondents (table 1 and figure 1).

Table 1. Responses of the Respondents to the Gender Non-Neutrality of the Domestic Violence Act

Gender Non-Neutrality	% (n)
Undecided/Disagree/Strongly Disagree	11.45% (19)
Strongly Agree/Agree	88.55% (147)

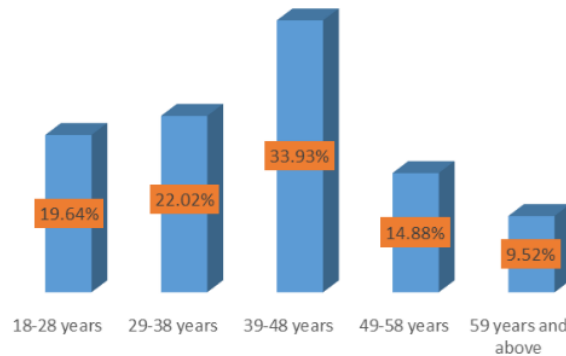


Figure 1. Age Distribution of Respondents

9

The South African Police (SAPS) Are Not Trained to Deal with Male DV Victims

Most of the study respondents (96.4%) agreed/strongly agreed that the SAPS is not equipped on how to handle men as victims of DV. More male respondents than female respondents agreed/strongly agreed that the SAPS is not equipped to handle men as victims of DV.

South Africa Can Learn Lessons from Other Countries with Low Rates of DV

Most of the study respondents agreed/strongly agreed that amending the Domestic Violence Act of 1998 to accommodate male victims and having effective shelters to safeguard male victims of DV were strategies used in international countries with minimal DV, which can be adopted by South Africa. Most of the respondents who agreed/strongly agreed that amending the Domestic Violence Act of 1998 can be adopted by South Africa were 39- to 48-year-olds (36.1%), black Africans (80.5%), and from Gauteng (46.6%).

Summary Of Quantitative Results

The following deductions can be drawn from the above analysis, particularly in relation to incidences of domestic abuse against men in South Africa:

1. South African men often experience domestic abuse.
2. Wives often abuse husbands.
3. Society ignores DV against men.
4. Families ignore male domestic abuse.
5. Communities often abuse men.

The following deductions can be drawn from the above analysis, particularly in relation to perceptions of abuse of men in South Africa:

1. Men experience abuse in their intimate relationships.

2. Men are frequently abused in their intimate relationships.
3. Men encounter verbal abuse in their intimate relationships.
4. Men experience physical abuse in their intimate relationships.
5. Men experience financial abuse in their intimate relationships.
6. Men suffer abuse from intimate relationships in silence.
7. It is difficult for men to leave an abusive partner.

26

The following deductions can be drawn from the above analysis in relation to the Domestic Violence Act of 1998:

1. The 1998 Domestic Violence Act is advantageous to women and girls.
2. The 1998 Domestic Violence Act is not gender neutral.
3. Men and boys are marginalised by the interpretation of the 1998 Domestic Violence Act.

The following deductions can be drawn from the above analysis about the reporting of male victims of DV to the police:

1. Male victims do not report abuse to authorities.
2. The participants indicated they found it difficult to report abuse to the police.
3. The participants further indicated that the police do not treat male abuse victims in the same manner as female victims.
4. The police do not believe male victims of DV.
5. The police frequently take male abuse victims less seriously. Additionally, the police do not believe men can be domestic abuse victims. Moreover, male victims are hesitant to seek expert assistance because they feel that they will not be given the same attention as female victims.
6. The participants claimed that when male victims of domestic abuse file complaints, the police victimise them.
7. The participants further alluded that in reporting DV, male victims are stigmatised by the police.

The following inferences can be derived from the data presented above, particularly in terms of the police having adequate resources to deal with male victims of DV:

1. Police officers are insufficiently trained in dealing with male DV victims.
2. Police lack the training that is essential to assist male victims of DV.
3. They lack the necessary resources to aid male victims and do not adequately safeguard male DV victims.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the preceding analysis regarding the societal perspective of the abuse of men:

1. Violence by men is not tolerated in South African society.
2. Society focuses on the abuse of women while ignoring the abuse of men.
3. Society has established social unfairness regarding male DV victims.
4. There are no support services for male victims in South African society.
5. Male abuse awareness programmes do not exist.
6. Men are socialised by society to not show their emotions or sentiments or to view themselves as victims.
7. Male victims also need assistance from society.

Regarding South Africa's adoption of tactics employed by foreign nations with the lowest rates of DV, the following quantitative conclusions can be drawn involving men as part of a holistic solution to decrease DV in South Africa:

1. The South African government should recognise that men are also victims of DV. South Africans should provide services for male DV victims.
2. The Domestic Violence Act of 1998 must be amended to accommodate male victims.
3. South Africa should provide viable shelters for male victims of DV.

Qualitative Analysis

The process of data analysis was driven by five research questions derived directly from the research goals, namely:

1. Is the South African Domestic Violence Act, No. 116 of 1998 (as amended), gender neutral?
2. How effective is men's reporting of DV incidents?
3. What is the nature of DV that males experience?
4. How does the SAPS approach male DV victims?
5. What can South Africa learn from international countries with the lowest DV rates?

The qualitative data for this paper were analysed using thematic verbatim guided by the concepts of data saturation, and the themes, subthemes, and in vivo codes were provided.

Is the South African Domestic Violence Act Neutral about Gender?

P1, P2, and P5, among others, thought that the South African Domestic Violence Act exists to protect all DV victims regardless of gender. Some participants, like P7, P9, and P10, believed that the Act mostly protects women and children as victims of DV. P8 noted that it protects both DV perpetrators and DV victims.

The Domestic Violence Act was considered a fair and considerate Act that took both genders into cognisance by P1, P2, P6, and P15, among others. According to P15, it was fair to both genders because:

"It does not say women or children. It says victims of domestic violence. The Domestic Violence Act covers every victim. An interim protection order is issued immediately" (P15).

P18 was among the participants who considered the Act to be severely unfair to men and with catastrophic consequences:

"No, it is not fair because I think men are left out and have nowhere to go. I believe it is why men resort to killing themselves, their partners, and at times their children as well" (P18).

This view on the Act's unfairness was also shared by others, such as P4, P7, P9, P10, and P16. While P7 complained that "priority is given to women and children, and men are not catered for", P8 asserted that this situation was appropriate. This was because the Act was designed and implemented to protect both genders, although its primary focus is on women and children, who had been shown to be the majority of GBV victims:

"No, I do not think they are fair; however, I think the Act itself is biased based on the view that even from the implementation [how it was brought into existence as law] of the Act itself within communities, it is perceived as a law which protects women or law dealing violence against women, not as law which protects everyone including men. In addition, even looking at the Gender Equality Commission, when it was introduced, it was implemented to readdress or relieve the suppression women were under, so it is unfair how the Act has been implemented" (P8).

The data show conflicting views on the Act's fairness, with firm convictions on fairness and unfairness arguments. These differences are also exhibited in how some view it as a law to protect women, while others see it as a law to protect society against DV.

How Well Do Males Disclose Incidents of DV?

DV against men is a grossly underreported crime because of various factors, including the fear of stigmatisation, the view that one will not be believed, shame, and humiliation. Because of this underreporting it is difficult to ascertain the number of male victims affected, as stated by P3, P6, and P11:

"Well, because of the lack of men abused statistics, I would not be sure of the extent" (P3).

"Not all crimes are reported to the police. The so-called dark figure of crime refers to that half of crimes being committed that are never reported to the police and thus never become part of crime statistics" (P6).

"That is hard to say because the phenomenon is underreported in South Africa for reasons stated above in Question 10, but I suspect the numbers are far more astronomical than meets the eye" (P11).

Because DV against men is poorly reported, its extent is difficult to ascertain. Nonetheless, there is evidence that this was a major societal problem. Some reports of DV against women tend to reveal the reported or accused men as victims rather than perpetrators.

"Upon a woman reporting a domestic violence case, we pick it up during our investigation that the majority of these women who report these cases are the instigators of domestic violence, and when men defend themselves, they come running to report such cases. As of it, SAPS do not have the statistics on men abuse" (P15).

The researcher opines that a lack of adequate, reliable statistics on the amount of abuse affects the implementation of equally adequate measures against DV against men. Underreporting also creates the incorrect impression that DV against men is not widespread in South Africa.

What Is the Nature of the DV That Men Experience?

Emotional Abuse. According to the responses, men suffer various forms of psychological and physical DV from their partners. P3 was among the participants who opined that men mostly suffered from emotional abuse rather than physical abuse:

"Yes, there are men who are subjected to domestic violence within their circles or homes. This often happens in the form of emotional abuse" (P3).

P8 commented that the societal perception shadowed men's exposure to emotional abuse that abuse is physical and not psychological. This creates an environment where one becomes a victim of unacknowledged yet consequential psychological abuse:

"Society views domestic violence as a physical encounter rather than an emotional and psychological encounter ... hence that perception gives room for it to continue happening while nothing is done about it" (P8).

Financial Abuse. Emotional abuse was further unpacked, with financial abuse being highlighted by P9. P9 provided his experiences as an abused partner when he could not provide any income for the household. His partner made him feel worthless and unwelcome and also neglected him:

"Yes, I did, and no one would help me. I was left to fend for myself" (P9).

The same participant also highlighted how the Domestic Violence Act could not help. The whole scenario creates a situation.

"where one gender feels worthless, were left without options and is destroying families due to the unequal treatment" (P9).

P7 also noted how men like P9, who at one point or another had had to rely on their partner for economic survival, were often the prime target of financial abuse:

"Yes, especially those men who are not working [and] depending on their partner" (P7).

Such abuse is often in the form of deprecation of means of survival and open humiliation that make one feel "worthless". Financial abuse can also include being denied access to and appropriate control of one's money, as mentioned by P17:

"Most men suffer economic and emotional abuse. Their partners disrespect them. Some men work, but their partners take away their money and leave them with nothing" (P17).

Verbal Abuse. The same participants added verbal abuse of men as a common occurrence in South African households alongside physical abuse:

"Many women abuse men daily in homes, financially, verbally, economically, and physically" (P13).

Physical Abuse. Physical violence includes acts of assaulting one's partner, which was commonly experienced by men, with women being the perpetrators. P4 attributed this to being in a relationship with a female partner who had a violent character:

"Some females are violent, e.g. occasionally slapping your partner. I also think it's because violence towards men, domestically, has yet to be defined comprehensively in this country; hence people can't pinpoint it when it happens" (P4).

Some violent actions are harmful to the unfortunate male partner, and, as observed by P5, there are "many men whose intimate partner is injured".

The above view highlights emotional abuse within the same physical abuse environment. Some participants, however, mostly focused on physical rather than psychological abuse as occurring to men.

Reproductive/Sexual Abuse. Some participants, including P1, P2, P12, and P16, either mentioned reproductive or sexual abuse as a form of DV that male partners were exposed to by their female partners. This form of violence manifested through men being denied their sexual rights within otherwise sexual relationships. P16 went further and defined sexual abuse as a situation in which.

"men are denied the right to access their marital rights".

P1 used the term "reproductive abuse", implying that one might not be given options and choices about reproduction.

P3 and P4 also mentioned verbal abuse and asserted that it is probably the most common form of abuse men in South Africa endure. P4 stated that "the general nature of abuse is verbal", and P3 stated that "verbal abuse is one of the most acts of violence committed against men". As highlighted earlier, verbal abuse also came with emotional abuse connotations.

Legal Abuse. Some participants also discussed what they termed "legal abuse". This concept was mostly explained rather than defined by the participants. According to P8, this occurred as follows:

"Men are garnished because they could not pay child support, irrespective of the man elaborating on his challenges because he's unemployed. However, while the man pays the maintenance, men are still denied contact and care of the child/children" (P8).

P9 explained as follows:

"If you go to a court, they always say that you should sort it out yourself, but when a woman goes to court, they give her a protection order against you, thus destroying your future and the relationship with your children, thus starting a new fatherless generation" (P9).

P12 expressed the view that women use children as a tool to abuse their partners, who are often denied custodial rights:

"Most women use their children to make men suffer, forgetting that both have rights to the kids" (P12).

How Does the SAPS Approach Male DV Victims?

The interviews probed whether any measures were put in place by the SAPS to deal with male DV or GBV victims effectively. The interviewees were also asked to share their thoughts on law enforcement's stigmatisation of male DV victims ("Do you think male victims of gender violence face any stigma when reporting their cases to the police?").

A short story by P9 highlights the levels of discrimination, lack of support, and subjection to the humiliation of men who go to police stations as victims of DV. In this narrative, the Victim went to the police station in the company of an NGO supporting men's rights against DV and abuse. Below is the Victim's story as told by P9:

"Women and children are viewed as human beings with more rights than men are. However, I think it is more of the attitude upon reporting such cases from our law officials. This view, which says a man is a perpetrator and a woman is a victim, is a stigma. When society and government view men as perpetrators only, not victims, that is discrimination against men. For example, Moshate had a case of a husband being locked outside the house by his wife at night. When Moshate took that man to certain police, upon arrival, Moshate requested that they offer the bed to the man because the police station had beds for victims of domestic violence; their response was these beds were for women. The fact is that South Africa lacks shelters for men to date. It says there is a perception that men do not encounter abuse. The only shelter I am aware of is for homeless people, in which one pays every night to be given a bed for a night."

The police, like most of general society, tend to look down upon abused men, blame them for being abused and offer little or no support. Various respondents, including P5, P7, P15, and P19, also echoed these views.

"Yes, I think they do face stigma. Most male victims indicated that they were judged when reporting their cases. They are laughed at. They are labelled as weak. Their cases are not taken seriously like those of the opposite gender" (P19).

At police stations, victims experienced one or more of the following actions: being humiliated and laughed at, unfairly treated and discriminated against compared to women, and being stereotypically judged. The overall consequence of such actions was desisting from reporting cases of DV against men. The above assertions take the analysis back to the application and enforcement of the Domestic Violence Act. The interviews gave broad perspectives of this Act as a law for the protection of DV victims regardless of gender (P1, P2, P5, P6, P16, and P17) and the protection of women and children as GBV victims (P7, P9, P10, P13, and P18). From the interviews, the discrimination, humiliation, and stereotyping of men and

their consequential reluctance to report DV can be viewed as partial or incorrect enforcement of this Act. Police officers, despite being law enforcement professionals, are mostly observed as carrying forward the stigmas and stereotypes common in society to the disadvantage of domestically abused men. Also, the reluctance with which men seek professional assistance as victims of DV is similar to their reluctance to seek help from law enforcement.

What Types of Assistance Are Available to Male Victims of DV?

While some participants mentioned that there was no government support for men who are victims of DV, some participants stated that the government, including through the SAPS, offered varying levels of support to such victims.

The government was seen as not doing enough to support men as its focus was mainly on women and children. The government had put in place various initiatives to detect and prevent DV against women and post-event support services that include counselling and safety shelters. These are not available to men. P3 observed:

"No, the focus is mainly on women and children" (P3).

P1, P2, P4, and P9 further corroborated this. P12 believed that the government was doing something for men who were DV victims, but it was not as extensive as what it is doing for women:

"Yes, they are, but not like the way they are doing for women. There are no shelters for abused men yet."

While the government has initiated some programmes on DV against men, the implementation is challenging. There is a limited commitment to putting DV programmes for men into effect compared to programmes for women. There is thus a huge implementation gap regarding programmes that were reportedly launched:

"No, the government is not doing enough to protect men victims. Many programmes were launched but never implemented" (P18).

P8 elaborated that some government structures were intensively affected by bureaucracy and inefficiencies that reduced the effectiveness of available support. Government departments and powerful individuals act as a disruptive force that either minimises or completely disables any attempts and programmes to support DV against men.

"In terms of the legislation itself, the government is doing something; however, the implementation by certain individuals within certain departments diverts from what is needed or required to be done to assist and empower male victims because of their interests or attitude. The government might be trying to solve the problem by implementing the Act; however, how the Act is applied is a different theory, based on individuals dealing with it within societies" (P8).

Several ceremonial programmes have not done much to rescue men from their plight, including gender activism days. These are not effective in reducing DV against men because of their ceremonial nature:

"The only initiative I know is that November is men's month, which the government implemented. Apart from that, there is nothing" (P8).

Some participants also believed that events like the 16 Days of Gender Activism focus only on women and children. The government, therefore, loses opportunities of bringing DV against men to

society's attention. If it became gender-neutral and inclusive, it would afford the government the ability to reach out to society on the problem of DV against men:

"No, as the 16 days of activism focuses mainly on women and children. Only if it could be inclusive of every person encountering domestic violence" (P14).

Others believed that the government had implemented some measures to deal with the problem, mostly through law enforcement. The Domestic Violence Act was also discussed as one such measure, as stated in the following extract:

"The services that are offered by SAPS are open to all South African citizens" (P6).

The dominant discourse was that the government was either doing nothing or not doing enough to prevent DV against men or to assist victims of this form of violence.

What Can South Africa Learn from Nations With Low DV Rates?

There was a view that South Africa could learn from collaborative awareness campaigns on DV against men in India. These involved the government and NGOs:

"Yes, South Africa can learn from India that government and NGOs should embark on awareness campaigns to teach society about the law and its functions regarding domestic violence against men" (P17).

Another important aspect that P14 believed should be benchmarked from countries that have been able to reduce DV was data collection of DV cases against men to help in rolling out direct interventions. The challenge was that for this to happen, men needed to be confident enough to report DV cases:

"The only thing South Africa can learn from countries with minimum statistics is how to get the statistics of abused men, and then further research how those countries have dealt with the scourge of domestic violence against men" (P14).

Common views were that the government should consider learning from any country that has instilled equality in the treatment of DV. This equal treatment, among others, includes imposing harsh penalties for both male and female perpetrators. It also challenges law enforcement to react to all DV cases without considering the issue of gender:

"I think cases of domestic violence need to be dealt with accordingly. Many perpetrators go free after committing the crime. I think South Africa should stop favouritism when it comes to domestic violence cases" (P18).

In the view of P13, South Africa could go back to the root causes of DV against men, mostly the social effects of poor economic and financial circumstances among men. The participant reiterated that poverty is a common cause of DV against men:

"South Africa can learn that communities in poverty situations, lack education, and or have low economic growth will likely experience domestic violence because citizens will be more vulnerable and disadvantaged. In other words, job creation and education are needed" (P13).

This resonates well with the general discussion that men in poor financial circumstances are more prone to abuse in relationships and that poverty creates tension that manifests as DV in relationships. The government can thus address the dire economic circumstances that men find themselves in by growing the economy and creating jobs.

Another important lesson that South Africa can learn from other countries is the need to conduct extensive data collection and reporting of DV as a way of enhancing stakeholder awareness of this problem:

"South Africa should do more research like other countries, to firstly get the figures of male victims and practise equality like other countries" (P7).

"Conduct further research regarding domestic violence against men and re-evaluate their implementation strategy of the Domestic Violence Act and how it is practised" (P10).

P10 believed that such research should further guide necessary changes in implementing the Domestic Violence Act.

DISCUSSION

This article explores the apparent deficiencies of South Africa's Domestic Violence Act, No. 116 of 1998, in protecting men whose female partners engage in DV (abuse). It asserts that to attain gender equality and balance, DV concerns must be addressed objectively and constructively. This article analysed men's unwillingness to report their partners' emotional, psychological, and physical abuse, as influenced by the criminal justice system, African cultural norms, and patriarchal societal expectations.

The focus has been on violence against women, even though women increasingly perpetrate violence against men. The survey discovered that IPV against men is on the rise in South Africa, with 23% to 84% of the participants strongly believing it is widespread. Domestic abuse affects both genders. This conclusion is supported by the fact that 58.68% of the respondents reported that their wives frequently abused them (Mkhize, 2017). There are also incorrect perceptions that only men perpetrate intimate relationship abuse in South Africa. This research revealed that such societal stereotypes inhibit male victims of DV from getting help. Seventy per cent of the respondents agreed that DV against men is ignored in South Africa. Men are portrayed as abusers and women as victims in social narratives. Moreover, the literature (Hines & Saudino, 2003) indicates that this narrative disproves men's IPV victimisation.

Also gendered is the Domestic Violence Act of 1998. This disproves the idea of DV against men. Assault of males must be acknowledged because DV laws do not differentiate between genders. One important issue suggests that this rule is applied unfairly to male DV victims. In South Africa, a survey identified female perpetrators of IPV against men, and 66.47% of this study's participants reported that South African families and social institutions do not address DV against men. These results support the literature (Adebayo, 2014; Bates, 2014; Cook, 2009; Corbally, 2014; Hines & Douglas, 2010; Johnson et al., 2014; Morgan & Wells, 2016) that some female criminals deceive the legal system to disadvantage men.

Women employ the law to perpetuate GBV. Some men remain in violent relationships because women's legal manipulation causes them mental distress (Adebayo, 2014; Bates, 2014; Cook, 2009; Corbally, 2014; Hines & Douglas, 2010; Johnson et al., 2014; Morgan & Wells, 2016). According to this study's respondents, the legal system frequently favours women over men. Women are thus able to mistreat men.

In contrast to previous studies, this research discovered that males can be victims of IPV (Drijber et al., 2013; Maubane, 2016; Perryman & Appleton, 2016). This article demonstrated how IPV affects men differently, despite their exposure to the same types of DV as women.

More men claim psychological, emotional, and verbal abuse than women do (Drijber et al., 2013; Hines & Douglas, 2010). Coker et al. (2008) observed that more men than women reported verbal abuse.

Psychological maltreatment is also the most prevalent kind of male maltreatment. Drijber et al. (2013) analysed 372 Dutch male victims recruited online, where 67% of the respondents reported experiencing emotional and physical abuse, while 25% reported experiencing emotional abuse. Their wives physically mistreated 9% of the subjects.

This article indicated that female partners physically and psychologically abuse their partners. Men experienced emotional abuse more frequently than physical assault. The idea that emotional abuse may not be physical tends to suppress the victimisation of men by women. This allows horrific psychological abuse to occur unreported. As a result of society's perception of DV as physical contact rather than emotional and psychological, little is done to stop it. Tsui's (2014) research found psychological abuse in 67.5% of 80 male victims in the United States of America. According to a qualitative study, 258 Australian male victims of female-perpetrated abuse were subjected to various coercive, controlling, manipulative, and sexually explicit behaviours (Walker et al., 2019).

This article indicated that men also endure IPV and physical partner violence. The poll uncovered physical, financial, verbal, emotional, image-based, reproductive/sexual, and legal abuse. Barnes (2013) found that men were most frequently degraded and humiliated. Consistent with this research, Allen-Collinson (2011), Drijber et al. (2013), and Hearn et al. (2005) revealed that the most common forms of psychological abuse were bullying, ignoring, threatening, blackmailing, financial harm, scorn and ridicule, and partner infidelity. Due to this interpretation, this study views DV against men as a deficiency in South African culture and social structures and a lag in criminal justice procedures. This is not meant to imply that the criminal justice system lacks strategies to address DV but rather to highlight that many of the root causes can be traced back to specific societal and socio-institutional structures of the state that prioritise and protect one gender over the other.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the gaps in enacting and implementing the 1998 Domestic Violence Act. Some of the study participants included men whose female partners and wives have abused. The study also covered the forms of violence and their impact. The gender neutrality of the Domestic Violence Act was also explored. It also addressed the deficiencies of the criminal justice system to assist male victims of IPV; the provision of relevant support, procedures, shelters, and empowerment; and the initiatives of important stakeholders to recognise and acknowledge IPV against males. Finally, the study emphasises the importance of empowering and providing supportive measures to men who have suffered from domestic abuse and violence in the same manner that supportive measures have been given to women. To recognise IPV against males in South Africa, the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act by relevant stakeholders must take into consideration men as DV victims, and all bias in favour of women should be objectively removed because justice should be done to all in society, regardless of gender, race, or affiliation.

Recommendations

The findings of this study suggest that combatting DV against males necessitates in-depth comprehension of certain underlying causes. After discovering numerous gaps while investigating this phenomenon, the following is suggested.

1 **Fair Implementation of the Law and Legal Support**

According to this research, although the Domestic Violence Act of 1998 (as amended) is gender-neutral, its implementation is not. The justice system victimises men, which leads to further victimisation. These men know that existing policies, laws, and the system are working against them. The government should provide legal and prosecutorial assistance to mistreated men.

Training for Relevant Stakeholders

The results indicated that relevant stakeholders do not support male victims of IPV. This emphasises the vital necessity for healthcare professionals, mental healthcare workers (including psychologists and certified counsellors as community workers), police, legal personnel (including court administrators), and religious leaders to receive training on men's issues. This training will aid in providing care, protection and counselling to male victims of DV. In addition, law enforcement and other service providers must be trained to be sensitive to victims' needs and identify potential and actual male victims of IPV.

Public Education on Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Against Men to Help Clarify IPV Issues

The participants stated that awareness of IPV against men must increase. Campaigns that directly challenge ideas about who can be abused must recognise the influence of masculinity standards on help-seeking behaviour.

Training of Law Enforcement Agencies (Especially the Police)

The study recommends that the SAPS must provide training on male domestic abuse. The training of law enforcement officers should emphasise victim empowerment, the Domestic Violence Act, and their responsibility to safeguard male IPV victims. The study further suggests the following:

1. Men should also be recognised as vulnerable groups in GBV policies and service delivery to increase public services and address masculine qualities that influence men's disclosure of DV.
2. All stakeholders and professionals assisting abuse victims should adopt a gender-neutral policy.
3. Legislation and services should be gender-neutral to improve the treatment of male abuse victims.

Men, like women, should also receive specialised services, such as places of safety for abused or violated men.

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