



UNMASKING THE SILENCED VOICES OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND FEMICIDES IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

JK Lekganyane¹, LO Mphela², K Chiwarawara³, Witness Maluleke⁴

^{1,2,4}University of Limpopo

³University Johannesburg

Email : lekganyane@gmail.com¹, lesibamphelela17@gmail.com², kchiwarawara@gmail.com³, witness.maluleke@ul.ac.za⁴

Abstract

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and femicides within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are pervasive, yet often overlooked, problems affecting students and faculty worldwide. The objectives of this study were three-folded, namely; 1) The effects of GBV on victims/survivors, 2) The global recent trends of Gender-Based Violence and femicides, and; 3) The connection between GBV, sexual abuse and silenced students on campus. This qualitative study adopted the non-empirical research design: Systematic review to presents a comprehensive literature study on this phenomenon. The sample data was restricted from 2010 to 2024 (not in sequence). The inductive Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) analysed the collected data, to identified the two (02) study themes, emanating from the reviewed literature studies and the applied theoretical framework (Rational Choice Theory - RTC). This was done to shed light on its multifaceted nature, encompassing physical, psychological, financial and sexual abuse. This study confirmed the alarming cases of GBV and femicides cases within the South African HEIs, the complex dynamics perpetuating various violence were uncovered, including the institutional complicity, power imbalances, and systemic failures. This study also emphasises enduring trauma experienced by survivors and the urgent need for support and failing justice. It is recommended that proactive recommendations for policy reform and awareness campaigns remains essential to enforce efficient campus culture that actively condemns GBV and femicide against students. It is envisaged that by bringing the existing issues forefront can possibly stimulate dialogue, and change can be inducted to ultimately create safe and inclusive educational environments for all interested stakeholders.

Keywords: *Gender-Based Violence, Campus, Femicides, Higher Education Institutions, Policy reform, South Africa*

INTRODUCTION

Students from various geographical areas, including international locations, gravitate towards HEIs to expand their understanding across a range of academic disciplines (Lekganyane *et al.*, 2023). The gravitations happen with the hopes of securing a safer academic environment that will shape various career path and further aid in other opportunities due to the nature of diversity in academic settings (Lakshminarayanan, & Košir, 2024). However, recently academic setting has become a concerning environment where students are subjected to victimisation, and female students are victims of GBV. According to Gardiner & Finn (2023) the HEIs have experienced rapid rise in cases of GBV taking place inside and outside various campuses, which sparks questions pertaining to safety of students residing on and off campuses. Interestingly, Harper *et al.* (2022) assert that the perpetuation of GBV cases and femicide has led to unsettling academic activities which leads to disruptions due to protests against GBV, as students seek a more conducive academic environment. In essence, the GBV is increasingly recognised

UNMASKING THE SILENCED VOICES OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND FEMICIDES IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

JK Lekganyane¹, LO Mphela², K Chiwarawara³, Witness Maluleke⁴

as a serious concern in HEIs across South Africa and in the world. Instances of GBV in South Africa includes the statistic reported by the South Africa Police Services (SAPS) which revealed that in 2019/2020, 42,289 rapes and 7,749 sexual assaults cases were recorded (Department of Police, 2020).

In August 2019, Uyinene Mrwetyana, a 19-year-old student, went to pick up a parcel at a Cape Town post office just before closing time. A post office worker raped and murdered her inside the building; the perpetrator later ferried her corpse to a nearby open field before burning it (Lyster, 2019; Etheridge, 2019). Recently, between July and September of 2023, the SAPS received reports of 10,516 rape occurrences (Cele, 2023). As many as 4 726 rape instances occurred at either the victim's or the perpetrator's house, where the victim knows someone, such as a family member, an acquaintance, or a neighbour. On the 11th of November 2023, a student at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in South Africa repeatedly stabbed his partner 11 times; the survivor is a student at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology [CPUT] (Tshwete, 2023).

The viral video recorded by students who overlooked from their rooms, shows the survivor unsuccessfully trying to block her attacker. The survivor was rescued by other male students but after sustaining severe injuries. The rescuers allegedly turned on the perpetrator and thoroughly assaulted him (Tshwete, 2023). Following this, the former South African Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr. Blade Nzimande urged the HEIs to implement programmes that address sexual and GBV. In less than 02 weeks later, another student was allegedly murdered by her alleged boyfriend at the University of Limpopo (UL). The invitation to a protest the UL put out is worth reciting:

It is with sadness that I announce the death of one of our students here at [the] UL, who goes by the name of Ms. Kgadima MV, [who] was allegedly murdered by her alleged boyfriend. The Students' Representative Council (SRC) gender, health and wellness office would like to invite everyone to join in the protest to raise awareness of the alarming rates of GBV in our country and have a candle lighting ceremony. This is a call to action for our university to support one another, and to call for an end to GBV (Diale & Mohale, 2023).

In addition to this announcement, the invitation called on protesters to be silent:

In a symbolic gesture, protesters stay quiet to demonstrate disapproval. Silence is used as a form of civil disobedience and nonviolent resistance. The silent protest is intended to publicly demonstrate the silence in our communities and institutions. The SRC gender, health, and wellness office encourages you to stand with us in being active participants in the fight to end GBV. Let us contribute towards creating a culture where all people can feel safe and protected because the violence leaves survivors with long-term psychological and physical effects ... (Diale & Mohale, 2023).

The repercussions on the mental and physical well-being of survivors, both in the short and long term, can be severe and life-altering. Often, in an attempt to protect the institution's reputation and maintain student enrolment, administrators tend to discreetly handle cases of sexual violence, thereby silencing the victims (Gialopsos, 2017). Despite the challenges that reporting issues of GBV may present, it remains crucial to disclose incidents of sexual violence within South Africa's institutions of higher education. This paper appropriates the concept of silence to uncover how students are silenced on campuses of HEIs.

This study aims to unmask the silenced voices of GBV survivors and victims of femicides within South African HEIs, shedding light on the complexities of these issues and informing more effective policies and interventions. By amplifying the voices of those affected, the study seeks to contribute to existing literature and advocate for safer learning environments for all. Addressing GBV and femicides in HEIs requires a comprehensive approach that addresses cultural norms, structural inequalities, and institutional responses to create a supportive environment where survivors and victim's feel empowered to speak out and seek help. The purpose of this study guided by the-indicated study objectives, this was



done to generate evidence-based recommendations and advocacy strategies aimed at enhancing support mechanisms, strengthening institutional responses, and influencing policy reforms to address the pervasive issue of GBV and femicides within South African HEIs.

PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

This study has accordingly reviewed recent and relevant literature pertaining to GBV and femicides across the globe. In recent years, South Africa has faced worrisome trends of GBV and femicides on its HEIs campuses, putting attention on chronic social challenges founded in gender inequity and negative stereotypes. This section has explored the nuances of this distressing phenomenon, including its impact, underlying reasons, and the critical need for comprehensive ways to confront and prevent GBV and femicide, as well as minimise their catastrophic impact on the academic community.

The effects of Gender-Based Violence on victims/survivors

The GBV against women can cause diverse effects such as physical and psychological effects. Physical violence encompasses a variety of acts, including shoving, slapping, hitting, grabbing, hair pulling, cutting, biting, burning, hair pulling, and the use of weapons such as guns or knives (Lanham, Ridgeway, Dayton, Castillo, Brennan, Davis, & Rodriguez, 2019). Aside from death, morbidity and injury to women, it can lead to sexually transmitted infections, mental illnesses, unplanned pregnancies and associated health risks (World Bank, 2019; Thus, Seelinger and Koenig, 2012; Mehta, 2004). Such violence does not only affect an individual but can have short-term and long-term harm to families, children and communities, Office on Women's Health [OASH] (2021).

The physical effects of violence in the short term include cuts, bruises, vaginal bleeding, pelvic pain, broken bones, injuries to, or loss of, internal and external body parts, difficulties with sleeping or having nightmares (OASH, 2021). While some injuries are evident for all to see, some require x-rays and other scans by medical professionals. Long-term health effects that ensue from sexual violence include chronic heart pain, asthma, arthritis, heart problems, stress, pain during sexual intercourse, weakened immune system, ulcers, nightmares, migraine headaches, and irritable bowel syndrome (OASH, 2021). While the physical effects are easily recognisable, GBV also poses many psychological effects on survivors.

The GBV is increasingly recognised as a serious concern in South Africa and across the world. Investigating the psychological impact of GBV is a continuing concern with the criminal justice system of South Africa due to lack of sufficient studies aiming to probe the psychological impact of GBV victims (Opanasenko *et al.*, 2021). According to Gevers and Dartnell (2014), the term 'GBV' is often used to refer to any act that results or is likely to result in psychological, physical, or sexual harm perpetrated against a person's will, and that is a result of gendered power inequalities. Bryant *et al.*, (2017) indicate that recent developments in the rise of GBV cases in higher institutions of learning have heightened the need for psychological intervention to victims of GBV and perpetrators to understand the psychological root of such behaviours. Equally, primary interventions to prevent sexual and gender violence need to address male depression, anxiety and other psychosomatic symptoms (Gevers & Dartnell, 2014).

It is also reported that men who commit acts of violence against their female partners score higher than the norm on depression and anxiety subscales (Rees *et al.*, 2011). In the past decade, studies of GBV were generally centred on the psychological wellbeing of women, thus recent studies suggest that the primary interventions to prevent sexual and gender violence need to address male depression, anxiety and other psychosomatic symptoms (Gevers & Dartnell, 2014). A study conducted by Bryant *et al.*, (2017) report that men who commit acts of violence against their female partners score higher than the norm on depression and anxiety subscales. Additionally, Davis *et al.*, (2023) postulate that Multiple and inter-related risk and protective factors for GBV perpetration by males operate interdependently at the level of

UNMASKING THE SILENCED VOICES OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND FEMICIDES IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

JK Lekganyane¹, LO Mphela², K Chiwarawara³, Witness Maluleke⁴

the individual, the community and the wider society. As a result, at the individual level, psychological distress, including chronic anxiety and depression, has been shown to lead to risky sexual behaviours.

The global recent trends of Gender-Based Violence and femicides

The GBV is a global phenomenon. In the European Union, 1 in 3 women experienced sexual and or physical violence, 1 in 2 women experienced sexual harassment, 1 in 20 women was raped, 1 in 5 women was stalked and 95% of individuals trafficked for sexual exploitation in the European Union (EU) are women (Eurostat, 2015; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014). The terrible occurrence of a deadly assault on a female student at the entrance of Mansoura University in Egypt on 20 June 2022, allegedly as a result of her rejection of a marriage proposal from her boyfriend, highlights the critical role of academic institutions in combating the epidemic of GBV and providing important mental health and socio-emotional support services to their student populations (Sawahel, 2022).

This terrible tragedy serves as a painful reminder of the importance of universities not only enforcing settings of academic inquiry and advancement but also actively engaging in the protection and well-being of their student population (Sawahel, 2022). Similarly, a lecturer at the University of Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has been suspended following accusations of rape and sexual harassment involving a female student from the university (Sadiki, 2024). Therefore, the researchers contends that individual in question, who taught economic sciences and management at the university's faculty of economic sciences and management, was reportedly discovered with a first-year student at a hotel, according to university officials.

In October 2021, the 'Federal Polytechnic' in Bauchii terminated the contracts of 02 lecturers after identical charges, while an academic at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education was fired for allegedly impregnating a female student (Bolaji, 2022). Universities are communities of knowledge production, sharing, and possible behavioural change. The hanging question is; *'how is it that such communities are engaged in acts of GBV and femicide?'* Acts of GBV persist at South African universities, despite the presence of national and institutional policies and interventions addressing this issue (Mahabeer, 2021). Whether the researchers are addressing sexual assault, sexual coercion, intimate partner or dating violence, sexual harassment, or stalking, it is impossible to overlook the frequency and seriousness of sexual violence incidents (Thompson, Sitterle, Clay, & Kingree, 2007; Gialopsos, 2017). Notably, in the South African context, some of the notable selected cases that attracted media coverage are:

- **Rhodes University "silent protest"**: In 2016, students at Rhodes University staged a "Silent Protest" to raise awareness about sexual violence on campus after a list naming alleged rapists at the university surfaced on social media (Mail and Guardian, 2017).
- **University of Cape Town (UCT) protests**: In 2019, a series of protests erupted at UCT following the murder of a female student, Uyinene Mrwetyana, by a Post Office employee (detailed before). The incident sparked nationwide outrage and highlighted the prevalence of GBV in South Africa (Petersen, 2019).
- **University of Fort Hare (UFH) protests**: It is alleged that in 2021, Nosiselo Mtebeni, a female student, was murdered by her boyfriend. Her mutilated body was discovered, with some pieces in a black plastic bag and others in a suitcase (Maphanga, 2021).
- **University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) student assault**: In 2023, a female student at UKZN was allegedly raped by three males on her way to the campus. The incident prompted calls for increased safety measures and awareness campaigns (Marriah-Maharaj, 2023).
- **Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), Soshanguve South campus**: On February 02, 2023, Ntokozo Xaba, a 20-year-old female student, was fatally stabbed at the Ekhaya Junction campus residence. It is purported that her X boyfriend stabbed her (Masilela, 2023).



There seems to be a high rate of GBV against women in higher institutions of learning, which is a huge concern for the department of higher education and other related departments in South Africa (Enaifoghe, 2019; Sawahel, 2022). The high rate places an overwhelming weight on the wellbeing and criminal equity frameworks and renders numerous survivors unfit to work in the public eye (Albertus, 2010). The GBV and femicides in South African HEIs are complex and varied issues that highlight the urgent need for comprehensive prevention, awareness, and victim assistance approaches. Within this perspective, the selected publications offer significant insights into various aspects of GBV in educational contexts. Seldom are incidents of GBV on college campuses reported to the police.

This complicates the assessment of the problem, which in turn influences preventative measures (Finchilescu & Dugard, 2021). Literature revealed that students were the most common victims of GBV; men were the most common perpetrators; and rapes happened most frequently while the victim or survivor was under the influence of alcohol or drugs (Finchilescu & Dugard, 2021; Lekganyane *et al.*, 2023). In support, the study conducted by the Georgetown University survey (2016), which was completed by 51% of students (7,926), reported that 31% of female undergraduate students had encountered nonconsensual sexual contact (defined as vaginal, oral, or anal sexual penetration) or sexual touching (kissing, caressing, grasping, groping, or rubbing in a sexual way) as a consequence of physical force or incapacitation (due to drugs and/or alcohol) since attending Georgetown (Sexual Assault and Misconduct Task Force, 2016). Sexual violence on college campuses, as outlined by Hembree, Rauch, Grunfeld, Yadin, and Cahill (2009), has serious negative effects on students' well-being. The consequences of GBV include but are not limited to the:

- Academic problems like lower grades and difficulty concentrating.
- Increased likelihood of alcohol and drug abuse.
- Emotional challenges such as feeling sad, lonely, or depressed.
- Physical health issues like pain, high blood pressure, reproductive problems, and risk of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).
- Development of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), leading to ongoing stress and difficulty coping.
- Risk of experiencing sexual violence again, contributing to ongoing trauma and struggles for survivors.

The connection between Gender-Based Violence, sexual abuse and silenced students on campus

Kwanele (2023) presents that an organisation that advocates to “bring justice for men and women in South Africa who have been sexually abused and ignored, claims that one of the universities in the Western Cape is grappling with unaddressed GBV allegations, revealing *a troubling silence* from the institution” (Kwanele, 2023). The GBV at HEIs is not peculiar to South Africa though. In the United States of America (USA), Castellanos and Huyler's (2018) study highlighted a concerning statistic: each year, over 20% of females and 11% of males enrolled in undergraduate programs become victims of sexual assault. This alarming trend can profoundly impact survivors, affecting their academic performance and even leading to the unfortunate outcome of dropping out of school. To provide context, the term 'silenced on campus' commonly describes the situation in which individuals, particularly students, find themselves discouraged or unable to speak out or report incidents of sexual assault or harassment within college campuses. This phenomenon is often attributed to factors associated with the HEIs' response or lack thereof.

METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL AXIS

This study relied on Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA), by employing the non-empirical research design: Systematic review, heavily relying on secondary sources, extracted from previously

UNMASKING THE SILENCED VOICES OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND FEMICIDES IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS*JK Lekganyane¹, LO Mphela², K Chiwarawara³, Witness Maluleke⁴*

scholarly works. This research design involves analysis of existing literature studies, reports, and scholarly contemporary studies related to sexual victimisations in South African HEIs, restricted to 2010-2024 [not in sequence], this process identifies, describes available research literature using systematic and explicit accountable methods and pre-specified formalised tools for searching and integrating literature (Maluleke, 2016; Gough, Oliver & Thomas, 2012; Liamputtong, 2013, Punch, 2014). In support to this research design, Creswell (2014) provides that a qualitative researcher may collect qualitative documents, like the 'public documents, such as newspapers, minutes of meetings or official documents, furthermore, one can ask questions of documents in the same ways as one might ask questions of research respondents (Matthews & Ross, 2010).

By utilising secondary data, the researchers uncovered hidden narratives, patterns, and trends surrounding this subject, while guided by the 03 study objectives. The used research design and methodology allowed the researchers to offer a comprehensive analysis of this research topic, this was done by drawing adequate sources for a wealth of existing literature studies to inform understanding and facilitation of evidence-based interventions aimed at addressing and reshaping the South African HEIs. The six (06) of the inductive TCA was adopted for data analysis, namely: 1) Familiarisation with data, 2) Generating codes, 3) Identifying the study themes; 4) Reviewing the study themes, 5) Defining the study themes, and; 6) Report (article) writing, Mokwena, Motsepe, Maluleke and Shandu (2020); Braun and Clarke (2014), and Clarke and Braun (2017).

Theoretically, the RCT was adopted to best guide this study due to its nature of believing that the criminal justice system is too lenient with offenders. The theory takes as its starting point the principle that humans are rational beings who exercise free will in deciding on a course of action (Paternoster *et al.*, 2017). The RCT is important for this study as it provides a plausible explanation for a wide range of criminal activities at the individual, group, and societal levels. And further helps us understand why people make decisions that appear to be less than perfect. According to Hayward (2017), the RCT is based on the classic notion that people will try to achieve the greatest benefits for themselves at the least cost. Moreover, even crimes that at first glance appear purely impulsive or pathological are influenced by rational elements, such as the limits of time and personal abilities or skills as well as the availability of relevant information and victims. Each offender has specific individual needs and skills which intersect with situational factors to affect the decision to commit a crime (Paternoster *et al.*, 2015).

Therefore, to prevent crime then, societies must make the costs outweigh the benefits; that is, the punishment for the crime must be severe enough to deter the potential criminal [an idea known as the deterrence principle] (Akers, 2017). In this regard, the theory is relevant to this paper due to its nature of unpacking the implication of criminal behaviour towards victims and the impact of the criminal justice being lenient. The researchers submit that potential perpetrators of GBV at South African HEIs frequently see rewards such as exercising power and control, preserving social standing, or fulfilling personal goals. These apparent benefits might exceed perceived costs, such as punishment or social exclusion, particularly when regulations are not enforced or cultural norms are lax. Similarly, colleges may consider the costs and advantages of combating GBV. Taking harsh action against violators might cost money, harm the institution's reputation, or result in legal disputes. In contrast, failure to address these concerns can result in unfavourable publicity, loss of student confidence, and significant long-term damage to the institution's status.

IDENTIFIED STUDY THEMES AND DISCUSSIONS

This section deals with the discussion of the main study themes extracted from the consulted previous literature demarcated to GBV and femicides; as well as the unveiling the silenced voices, to excessively explore GBV and femicides in South African HEIs; effects of GBV on victims/survivors. In



recent years (2024), South Africa has been forced to address a painful reality within its HEIs and the prevalence of GBV and femicides are widespread. Despite efforts to address these concerns, many voices go unheard, and many tales go unreported. This section aims to reveal the repressed narratives surrounding GBV and femicides in South African universities by investigating their core causes, manifestations, and consequences for the academic community.

Theme 01: Silenced victims and limited reporting methods

The possible victims of GBV on South African HEIs are frequently confronted with difficult decision-making processes driven by a cost-benefit analysis. Reporting an occurrence might have serious personal consequences, such as fear of reprisal, social censure, or emotional distress. If the apparent advantages of reporting, such as obtaining justice or preventing more abuse, outweigh the risks, victims may opt to keep silent. This silence is frequently exacerbated by a lack of faith in institutional support networks and a fear of not being accepted or treated seriously. Thus, improving the perceived advantages and lowering the costs of reporting are critical in persuading victims to come forward.

Theme 02: Uncovering Silenced Narratives

The GBV and femicides are common in South African universities and or colleges, but they are generally hidden. Prior literature shows that victims may fear stigma, reprisal, or disbelief, resulting in underreporting and a lack of exposure (Sable *et al.*, 2006; Thomson *et al.*, 2007; Stern *et al.*, 2016; Gialopsos, 2017). This invisibility continues to feed the cycle of violence, allowing perpetrators to act with impunity while leaving survivors isolated and unsupported (Shah & Storch, 2022). By elevating these repressed voices, we can begin to understand the full scope of the problem and push for genuine change. Most importantly, it is crucial to comprehend the extent of underreporting and the factors that contribute to it to accurately assess the magnitude of the issue. The current researchers argue that qualitative research collection methods, like the in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and narrative analysis, amongst others can offer valuable insights into the lived experiences of survivors and the obstacles they encounter when seeking justice and support. Additionally, examining the impact of bystander intervention and community attitudes towards GBV could provide insight into the broader social dynamics that perpetuate silence and allow perpetrators to act without facing consequences.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In *conclusion*, the narratives of GBV victims/survivors and victims of femicides within South African HEIs often remain concealed due to various factors such as fear and institutional barriers. Uncovering these silenced narratives is crucial to understanding the true extent of the problem and its impact on individuals and the broader academic community. By amplifying these voices, we can raise awareness, foster empathy, and advocate for meaningful change within HEIs. To effectively address GBV and femicides in HEIs, it is essential to delve into the root causes underlying these pervasive issues. Factors such as entrenched patriarchal norms, gender inequalities, and systemic failures contribute to the perpetuation of violence within academic settings. Understanding these root causes is paramount in developing comprehensive strategies that tackle the problem at its core. By addressing the structural and cultural factors that enable GBV and femicides, HEIs can create environments that promote equality, respect, and safety for all members of the community.

The absence of adequate supporting and reporting structures within HEIs exacerbates the silence surrounding GBV and femicides. Victims often face numerous barriers when seeking help or reporting incidents, including lack of awareness, fear of retaliation, and mistrust in institutional responses. To break this cycle of silence, HEIs must establish robust support systems, including confidential reporting mechanisms, counselling services, and survivor-centred policies. By empowering victims to come forward and providing them with the necessary support, HEIs can begin to address GBV and femicides effectively. Therefore, unmasking repressed narratives, recognising core causes, and addressing the lack

UNMASKING THE SILENCED VOICES OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND FEMICIDES IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

JK Lekganyane¹, LO Mphela², K Chiwarawara³, Witness Maluleke⁴

of support and reporting procedures are critical steps in combating GBV and femicide in South African HEIs. By honouring and amplifying the perspectives of survivors and victims, HEIs may help to create safer, more inclusive settings in which people can thrive without fear of violence or prejudice. To bring about significant change and guarantee that every member of the academic community is treated with dignity and respect, all stakeholders, including institutions, policymakers, and the broader community, must work together.

For *recommendations*, the incidences of GBV and femicides in South African HEIs have far-reaching consequences for the academic community. They undermine attempts to build inclusive and safe learning environments, endanger students' and teachers' physical and mental health, and perpetuate trauma and fear cycles. However, despite these hurdles, there are paths forward. HEIs may start to remove the systems that permit violence by prioritising survivor-centred methods, developing strong preventive and response processes, and cultivating an accountability and respect culture. Furthermore, interdisciplinary collaboration, community engagement, and advocacy initiatives are crucial for driving systemic change and establishing a future in which every member of the academic community can thrive without fear and violence. Addressing the consequences of GBV and femicides necessitates a multifaceted strategy that includes prevention, intervention, and support. Comprehensive prevention strategies, such as education, awareness-raising, and bystander intervention programs, are critical for challenging harmful attitudes and behaviours while also fostering a culture of respect and consent. Furthermore, improving the victims/survivors support services, reporting mechanisms, and holding perpetrators accountable are all critical components of an effective GBV response in universities.

REFERENCES

- Akers, R.L. 2017. Rational choice, deterrence, and social learning theory in criminology: The path not taken. In *Crime Opportunity Theories* (pp. 299-322). Routledge: United Kingdom.
- Albertus, C. 2010. *Offender reintegration in South Africa: A complimentary crime prevention measure*. Pinelands: The Criminal Justice Initiative of Open Society for South Africa.
- Bolaji A. 2022. Questions over delay to enact sex for grades bill. 24 November 24, *University World News: Africa Edition* [Online]. Retrieved from: <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20221122082314309>.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. 2014. What can “thematic analysis” offer health and wellbeing researchers? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, 9(1), 1-2.
- Bryant, R.A., Schafer, A., Dawson, K.S., Anjuri, D., Mulili, C., Ndogoni, L., Koyiet, P., Sijbrandij, M., Ulate, J., Harper Shehadeh, M., Hadzi-Pavlovic, D & Van Ommeren, M. 2017. Effectiveness of a brief behavioural intervention on psychological distress among women with a history of gender-based violence in urban Kenya: A randomised clinical trial. *PLoS Medicine*, 14(8), 1-20.
- Clarke, V. & Braun, V. 2017. Thematic analysis. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12(3), 1-2.
- Creswell, J.W. 2014. *Research design -Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Davis, C., Kuhudzai, A & Dalal, K. 2023. Knowledge, perceptions, beliefs, and opinions of the employees about GBV: A national online study in South Africa. *BMC Women's Health*, 23(1), 565, 1-10.
- Department of Police. 2019. *Crime Stats 2019/2020*. Retrieved from: <https://www.saps.gov.za/services/crimestats.php>.



- Diale, M.S & Mohale, L. 2023. *Student Representation Council (SCR) office – Gender Health and Wellness: Invitation to a peaceful protest*. 22 November, University of Limpopo: Sovenga.
- Enaifoghe, A.O. 2019. Gender Based Violence and the global gendered viewpoint approach mechanisms in building a peaceful world. *Journal of Social and Development Sciences*, 10(2), 15-25.
- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. 2014. *Violence against women: An EU-wide* Retrieved from: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/violence-against-women-eu-wide-survey-main-results-report>
- Eurostat. 2015. *Trafficking in human beings*. Retrieved from: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3888793/6648090/KS-TC-14-008-EN-1.pdf/b0315d39-e7bd-4da5-8285-854f37bb8801?t=1424684734000>
- Finchilescu, G & Dugard, J. 2021. Experiences of gender-based violence at a South African university: prevalence and effect on rape myth acceptance. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(5-6), 1-24.
- Gardiner, R.A & Finn, H. 2023. Implementing gender-based violence policies in the neoliberal university: challenges and contradictions. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 38(2), 215-229.
- Gevers, A & Dartnall, E. 2014. The role of mental health in primary prevention of sexual and gender-based violence. *Global Health Action*, 7(1), 1-5.
- Gialopsos, B.M. 2017. Sexual violence in academia: Policy, theory, and prevention considerations. *Journal of School Violence*, 16(1), 141-147.
- Gough, D., Oliver, S & Thomas, J. 2012. *An introduction to systematic reviews*. Sage: London.
- Harper, C., Marcus, R., Rodriguez, D.J.T & Tant, E. 2022. *Is no space safe? Working to end gender-based violence in the public sphere*. Retrieved from: <https://odi.org/en/publications/is-no-space-safe-working-to-end-gender-based-violence-in-the-public-sphere/>
- Hayward, K. 2017. Situational crime prevention and its discontents: Rational Choice Theory versus the ‘culture of now,’ In: *Crime opportunity theories* (Pp. 323-341). Routledge: United Kingdom.
- Hembree, E., Rauch, S.A.M., Grunfeld, E.E., Yadin, E & Cahill, P. 2009. Changes in reported physical health symptoms and social function with prolonged exposure therapy for chronic posttraumatic stress disorder. *Depression and Anxiety*, 26(8):732-738.
- Kwanele South Africa 2023. *Unveiling a culture of silence: GBV crisis and rape culture at UWC*. Retrieved from: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/kwanele-bringing-women-justice_unveiling-a-culture-of-silence-gbv-crisisactivity...
- Lakshminarayanan, R & Košir, S. 2024. Gender violence and sexual harassment against women within academic spaces: challenges and constraints. *Violence and Gender*, 11(1), 1-13.
- Lanham, M., Ridgeway, K., Dayton, R., Castillo, B.M., Brennan, C., Davis, D.A & Rodriguez, B. 2019. We’re going to leave you for last, because of how you are: Transgender women's experiences of gender-based violence in healthcare, education, and police encounters in Latin America and the Caribbean. *Violence and Gender*, 6(1), 37-46.
- Lekganyane, J. K., Maluleke, W & Barkhuizen, J. 2023. Exploring perceptions of students on safety and security from selected South African historically disadvantaged institutions. *ScienceRise: Juridical Science*, 4(26), 49-58.
- Liamputtong, P. 2013. *Qualitative research methods*. Oxford: Victoria.
- Maluleke, W. 2020. The African scare of Fall Armyworm: Are South African farmers immune? *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Studies*, 12(1), 207-221.
- Maphanga C. 2021. Gender commission says Fort Hare student's killing has ‘darkened the meaning of Women's Month.’ August 23, *News24 [Online]*. Retrieved from: <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/gender-commission-says-fort-hare-students-killing-has-darkened-the-meaning-of-womens-month-20210823>.

UNMASKING THE SILENCED VOICES OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND FEMICIDES IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

JK Lekganyane¹, LO Mphela², K Chiwarawara³, Witness Maluleke⁴

- Marriah-Mahar aj,J. 2023. UKZN student raped allegedly by three men while returning to her residence. September 23, *Independent Online News [Online]*. Retrieved from: <https://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-and-courts/ukzn-student-raped-allegedly-by-three-men-while-returning-to-her-residence-2e2b585a27b34b69bc9fe6209dc84>.
- Masilela, B. 2023. Murdered Ntokozo Xaba described as an A student who was a beacon of hope for her family. February 9, *Independent Online News [Online]*. Retrieved from: <https://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-and-courts/murdered-ntokozo-xaba-described-as-an-a-student-who-was-a-beacon-of-hope-for-her-family-6bf965200>.
- Matthews, B & Ross, L. 2010. *Research methods. A practical guide for the social sciences*. Pearson: Essex.
- Mokwena, R.J., Motsepe, L.L., Maluleke, W & Shandu, S.N. 2020. A study of land restitution to rural communities in South Africa: An analysis of traditional leaders' perpectives. *Gender and Behaviour*, 18(3), 16132-16144.
- Opanasenko, A., Lugova, H., Mon, A.A & Ivanko, O. 2021. Mental health impact of gender-based violence amid COVID-19 pandemic: A review. *Bangladesh Journal of Medical Science*, 20(5):17-25.
- Paternoster, R., Bachman, R., Bushway, S., Kerrison, E & O'Connell, D. 2015. Human agency and explanations of criminal desistance: Arguments for a Rational Choice Theory. *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology*, 1(2), 209-235.
- Paternoster, R., Jaynes, C.M & Wilson, T. 2017. Rational Choice Theory and interest in the "fortune of others." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 54(6), 847-868.
- Petersen T. 2019. Man arrested for Uyinene Mrwetyana's disappearance charged with murder, rape. September, 2, *News24 [Online]*. Retrieved from: <https://www.news24.com/news24/breaking-man-arrested-for-uyinene-mrwetyanas-disappearance-charged-with-murder-rape-20190902>.
- Punch, K.F. 2014. *Introduction to social research. Quantitative & qualitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Rees, S., Silove, D., Chey, T., Ivancic, L., Steel, Z., Creamer, M., Teesson, M., Bryant, R., McFarlane, A.C., Mills, K.L & Slade, T. 2011. Lifetime prevalence of gender-based violence in women and the relationship with mental disorders and psychosocial function. *Jama*, 306(5), 513-521.
- Sable, M.R., Danis, F., Mauzy, D.L & Gallagher, S.K. 2006. Barriers to reporting sexual assault for women and men: Perspectives of college students. *Journal of American College Health*, 55(3), 157-162.
- Sable, M. R., Danis, F., Mauzy, D. L & Gallagher, S. K. 2006. Barriers to reporting sexual assault for women and men: Perspectives of college students. *Journal of American College Health*, 55(3), 157-162.
- Sadiki, A. 2024. Lecturer suspended after allegations of sexual misconduct. February, 28, *University World News: Africa Edition [Online]*. Retrieved from: https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20240227165535942&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=AFNL0439.
- Sawahel, W. 2022. Student's murder: HE should tackle gender-based violence. June, 22, *University World News: Africa Edition [Online]*. Retrieved from: <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20220622000254338>.
- Sexual Assault and Misconduct Task Force. 2016. *Georgetown's sexual assault and misconduct climate survey*. Retrieved from <https://sexualassault.georgetown.edu/survey>.
- South African Government. 2023. *Minister Bheki Cele: Second quarter crime statistics 2023/2024*. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.za/news/speeches/minister-bheki-cele-second-quarter-crime-statistics-20232024-17-nov-2023>.



- Staff Reporter. 2017. Challenging the culture of rape at Rhodes. April 27, *Mail and Guardian [Online]*. Retrieved from: <https://mg.co.za/article/2017-04-25-00-challenging-the-culture-of-rape-at-rhodes/>.
- Stern, E., Buikema, R & Cooper, D. 2016. South African women's conceptualisations of and responses to sexual coercion in relation to hegemonic masculinities. *Global Public Health*, 11(1-2), 135-152.
- Thompson, M., Sitterle, D., Clay, G & Kingree, J. 2007. Reasons for not reporting victimisations to the police: Do they vary for physical and sexual incidents? *Journal of American College Health*, 55(5), 277-282.
- Tshwete, M. 2023. CPUT students traumatised after man openly stabbed his partner 11 times in front of students. November 13, *Cape Argus [Online]*. Retrieved from: [https://www.iol.co.za/capeargus/news/cput-students-traumatised-after-man-openly-stabbed-his-partner-11-times-in-front-of-students- ...](https://www.iol.co.za/capeargus/news/cput-students-traumatised-after-man-openly-stabbed-his-partner-11-times-in-front-of-students-...)