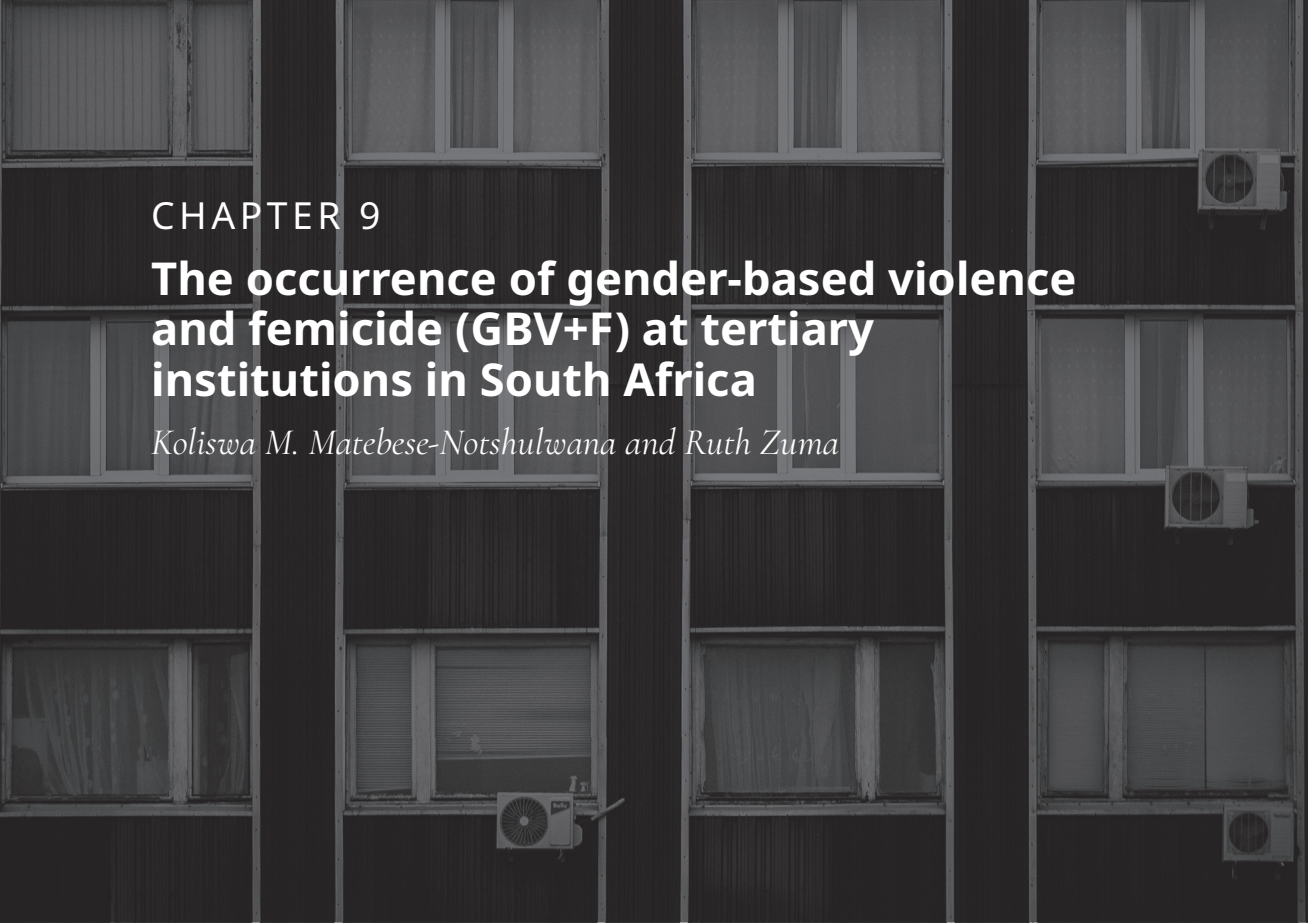




CHAPTER 9

The occurrence of gender-based violence and femicide (GBV+F) at tertiary institutions in South Africa

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Introduction

Globally, gender-based violence and femicide, hereafter referred to as GBV+F, has become a pandemic, and it is indisputable that it is among the major social ills affecting the world. In South Africa, no social space is immune to GBV+F incidence, including tertiary institutions. Research demonstrates increasing incidents of gender-based violence reportedly perpetrated within and around campuses of higher education institutions across the country (Finchilescu & Dugard, 2021; Davids, 2020). Furthermore, the literature indicates that on-campus instances of GBV are rarely reported to authorities, making it challenging to accurately gauge the prevalence of this problem (Mutinta, 2022; Finchilescu & Dugard, 2021; Mahabeer, 2021; Davids, 2019). There is also consensus that female students are often victims of GBV in public universities in South Africa. Then again, research demonstrates that besides the physical violence that most students endure, they also experience emotional or verbal violence and sexual violence and assaults such as rape. While major strides have been taken to address the

escalating prevalence in South Africa, such as the National Development Plan, GBV still prevails at high rates.

This chapter examines the landscape of gender-based violence (GBV) and the subsequent femicide that permeates tertiary institutions in South Africa. The country is noted for having one of the highest rates of GVB globally, encompassing femicide, rape and intimate partner violence (Matzopoulos et al., 2019). According to the United Nations (UN), GBV transcends racial, cultural, religious, geographical and economic boundaries (Chalira & Ndimurwimo, 2019). As a pervasive global issue, the scourge of GBV has been underscored in numerous studies, with statistics indicating a rise rather than a decline. South Africa's tertiary sector is among the country's most severely impacted by this pandemic (Abrahams et al., 2013; Nduna & Nene, 2014).

The occurrence of GBV in South Africa is unacceptably high due to cultural, religious, social, and economic factors. South Africa has made significant strides in uplifting women and advancing gender equality and women's rights. The country is ranked second in Africa, after Rwanda, in terms of female parliament representatives (StatsSA, 2011). These strides align with Goal 3 of the UN Millennium Development Goals, which advocates for gender equality and the empowerment of women. International declarations and local legislation point to the GBV phenomenon as a major obstacle to the achievement of gender equality, development and peace, as the resultant violence impairs women's ability to enjoy basic human rights and freedoms as enshrined in various policies and conventions, such as the 1995 Beijing Declaration (UN Women, 1995).

Considering the above, this chapter aims to critically discuss the causes and occurrence of GBV+F at tertiary institutions in South Africa, so that effective interventions can be developed to address it. South Africa continues to suffer the scourge, suggesting that previous efforts have proven futile. Such interventions and their impact, or lack thereof, require careful consideration. This is also because, in 2018, South Africa held a presidential summit on GBV+F, which informed the establishment of the Interim GBV and Femicide Steering Committee (IGBVP-SC) and the National Strategic Plan (NSP) 2020-2030. According to this committee, femicide – a portmanteau of the words 'femina' and 'homicide' – is generally understood to involve the intentional murder of women simply because they are women. However, broader definitions include any killing of women or girls.

Such interventions are also critical because, in 1993, the United Nations General Assembly met in Vienna and adopted the Declaration on the

Elimination of Violence against Women. This was the first step in addressing the scourge of GBV. According to the UN General Assembly (1993), GBV is not limited to physical or sexual violence; however, it also defines equally sinister forms of violence against girls, such as economically coerced sex, sexual harassment, demeaning language that undermines self-esteem, and even assigning girls to perform domestic tasks at school while boys continue with their studies. Therefore, the conception of GBV is diverse in its form and meaning (United Nations General Assembly, 1993).

Problem statement

There are several definitions of GBV+F. This chapter defines GBV as violence directed at both men and women precisely because of their gender identity. This definition also includes violence that disproportionately affects people of certain genders or sexual orientations (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2023). Furthermore, the term GBV has come to include intentional acts of violence against LGBTQIA+ populations, particularly when such acts are motivated by dominant conceptions of masculinity, femininity, and established gender norms. LGBTQIA+ is an abbreviation for people who fall into the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex and asexual collective classification. Although GBV does not discriminate based on age, colour, or social class, its impact is more intensely felt by women and children.

Given this definition, GBV is not a problem limited to victims and perpetrators. Rather, it is a scourge that undermines the safety and well-being of everyone (Davids, 2020). It is part of a range of hegemonic factors because it targets that which is constructed as weakness, as in femininity, or non-normative sexual orientation, or otherness (Davids, 2020). This chapter further argues that GBV can take many forms and may inflict lasting pain, such as mental, emotional, sexual, psychological and/or physical. Although both men and women can be victims as well as perpetrators of GBV+F, it is most often committed against women, with more men tending to be perpetrators of this atrocity (Kayuni, 2009).

Davids (2019) argues that, despite ongoing incidences of GBV, there is a lack of research on the matter, which only contributes to the problem. This is especially so of GBV incidences against LGBTQIA+ communities within university settings. She attributes this lack to the enduring misconception as well as misunderstanding of research on GBV as a social ill, including its prevalence, root causes, and enabling contexts.

In recent times, particularly around 2016, there have been widespread protests around South Africa concerned with sexual violence on campus. Sexual violence, like other forms of violence, causes profound harm and lasting consequences for victims. These protests foregrounded an issue that had persisted for decades and had gone unaddressed in a serious manner. Historically, students have actively challenged this violence as early as the 1980s. However, GBV is taking place in other spaces outside tertiary institutions; high-profile cases of rape and femicide have been reported, which act as constant reminders that brutal violence against women continues (Shefer, 2013). Chalira and Ndimurwimo (2019) maintain that violence against women is entrenched in the social, religious and moral fibres of society. Mahlori et al. (2018) assert that GBV is one of the most pressing social issues affecting South Africa, and tertiary institutions are no exception.

Pursuant to the above issues, this chapter employed a qualitative approach, using desktop research as the main data collection tool, which allowed us to analyse existing literature on the topic. Time limitations inform the use of a single data collection method, but this has been augmented by extensive literature reviews but designed to avoid repetition. This is because, with slight modification, most literature concurs on the prevalence, causes and ramifications of GBV. Thus, GBV within university settings should include violence against LGBTQIA+ communities, although this is often overlooked or remains unclear in practice.

The chapter seeks to address how, as one of the countries experiencing the highest rates of GBV in the world, including femicide, rape, and intimate partner violence at tertiary institutions, South Africa's justice system is failing women and children in dealing with GBV+F, despite efforts and condemnation by human rights activist organisations. This widespread problem affects almost every aspect of life, but it has a profound impact on women. StatsSA (2018) asserts that "in general, crime impedes the activities of women more than it does those of men, though marginally in some cases." The universal human rights framework, on which the South African Constitution (Act No. 108 of 1996) is based, regards GBV as a serious crime that violates the right to life, equality, human dignity, freedom, and security of the person. The right to human dignity is always violated in cases of GBV.

Theoretical framework

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (R.S.A. Const., 1996) gives mandate as an enduring pillar, upholding the core principles of human dignity,

equality, and the advancement of human rights and freedom. Central to this fundamental framework is section 12(1)(c), which solidifies the right to freedom and security, encompassing the inherent entitlement to live free from all forms of violence. Accordingly, the South African government has adopted several mechanisms to combat GBV, although progress remains unsatisfactory (Musetsho et al., 2021). Despite this unsatisfactory progress, it is essential that the constitutional commitment be maintained as the foundation for safeguarding the rights and well-being of all individuals within the nation. In its sustained efforts to curb the country's persistently high rates of GBV, the South African government adopted the third set of GBV Amendment Acts as recently as 14 April 2023.

GBV is particularly rife in countries facing socio-economic challenges such as inequality and violence perpetuated by discriminatory and prejudiced structures, statistical categories in which South Africa ranks highly. The severity of GBV+F in South Africa, specifically within the higher education sector, suggests its causes are deeply ingrained at all levels of society. As aspirational and unique as they can seem in their operations, particularly to first-timers, tertiary institutions are microcosms of that society, therefore what occurs in the latter is mirrored in the former.

Social learning theory posits that individuals learn behaviours by observing others (Bandura, 1971). This goes some way in explaining this recurring scourge and the difficulty of managing and eliminating it: students may observe and imitate violent behaviours if they see them being rewarded or going unpunished within their environment. Bandura (1971) proposed that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and modelling and is influenced by factors such as attention, motivation, attitudes, and emotions. He emphasises the importance of observing, modelling, and imitating the behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others (Bandura, 1971). Therefore, the theory considers how environmental and cognitive factors interact to influence human learning and behaviours. Furthermore, norms, attitudes, expectations, and beliefs emerge from an individual's interaction with their cultural or social environment. According to Lyons and Berge (2012), this theory posits that humans learn from observing others' actions and the consequences that follow. By doing so, individuals can learn to imitate the observed behaviour, and thus reap the rewards, or they can learn not to imitate a particular action and thereby avoid the disagreeable consequences. Often seen as a bridge between behaviourist and cognitive learning theories, social learning theory involves reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioural, and environmental influences (Anderson et al., 2007).

Moreover, feminist theory explores how patriarchal structures within tertiary institutions perpetuate violence against women and other marginalised genders and sexual orientations. While the rate of GBV indicates a high rise, it is widely acknowledged that many GBV incidences in institutions of higher learning go unreported. Again, research demonstrates that women and other marginalised groups are most vulnerable to GBV. So, feminism explains the subjugation of women by their male counterparts as an indication of how masculinity takes precedence over femininity in our communities. Since South Africa is a patriarchal country, for a long time, things have been done to benefit men, to the detriment of women. As such, communities have learnt to normalise women's subservience and suppression by men, which further escalates to accepting and tolerating pain. The gender disparity within our social structures is a result of the favouring of men in terms of access to education and opportunities, as well as participation in decision-making platforms, which is less likely for women. Furthermore, with the already learnt behaviours, factors like these are likely to influence students in their violent behaviours against others.

Literature review: GBV+F in South Africa and at South African tertiary institutions

Globally, literature shows that GBV+F affects people in all facets of life across demographic lines (Chalira & Ndimurwimo, 2018). According to Mahlori et al. (2018), it is necessary to acknowledge that the GBV footprint extends to the educational context, encompassing schools and universities. Although the alarming rise in GBV grossly affects both men and women in tertiary institutions (Chalira & Ndimurwimo, 2018), women and children are the worst affected. It tends to limit benefits to households in areas such as education, health, and socio-economic well-being, among others (Wilson, 2006). The greater effect on women and children may be due to their socially accepted perception as gender and age 'other', respectively, and their previously disadvantaged position in society (Wilson, 2006). These effects exist despite the growing efforts to transform women's status in society.

The landscape of GBV is complex and multifaceted, encompassing various forms of violence that occur in different contexts and affect diverse populations. Some studies have shown that violence is a learned behaviour for both men and women (Holt et al., 2008; Krug et al., 2002). These studies explain that young people who grow up in households characterised by

violence are more likely to normalise violence in their relationships later in life. However, it is not always the case that children who observe parents fighting will automatically become violent. Sometimes, there are mediating protective factors that result in these children not becoming violent or staying in violent relationships. However, many studies still confirm this link (Ndlovu et al., 2020; Chalira & Ndimurwimo, 2018; Weil, 2016). For example, it has been reported that men who commit domestic violence in intimate relationships are 3.5 times as likely to have experienced physical abuse in their homes and 4 times as likely to have witnessed violence between their parents as men who do not commit domestic violence (Gass et al., 2010). Women who reported perpetrating violence were three times as likely to have been exposed to childhood physical abuse and to have witnessed violence between their parents or primary caregivers (Gass et al., 2010).

Many women experience abuse in the presence of their children (Chalira & Ndimurwimo, 2018; Dlamini, 2021; Gass et al., 2010; Weil, 2016). This type of violence is likely to be replicated by the next generation either through their behaviour or by influencing children negatively. This can happen when children learn GBV as a normal way of life as they observe it through their parents, or when, in their adult life, children struggle to face the world's challenges owing to what they have been exposed to early in their development stages.

Violence that involves verbal abuse, threats, intimidation and other behaviours that result in emotional harm constitutes emotional and psychological violence. Beyond the physical and verbal nature of violence against women, studies reveal that South African women are subjected to various forms of violence, such as sexual violence, domestic violence, harmful cultural practices (*ukuthwala*, or bride kidnapping) and violations of their maternal healthcare and reproductive rights. Violence that encompasses rape, sexual assault and other non-consensual sexual activity is considered sexual violence. Ironically, South Africa is party to most of the international and national human rights instruments protecting the rights of both women and girls. According to Johnson (2004), the effects of GBV are harmful to victims, family members, perpetrators, communities, and nations. They are deeply affected on emotional, physical, psychological, and economic levels. Recent studies, including those by Beyene et al. (2019), consider GBV a public health issue.

Femicide is a subcategory of homicide wherein the main victims are killed because they are female. It is gender-based violence in its purest form, which reflects differences in power between men and women. The South African Constitution guarantees the right to equality for everyone, regardless of sex,

gender, or other differences, such as race, language, culture and sexual orientation. This anti-discrimination clause presupposes that the South African government implemented policies and laws to redress GBV. However, official reports have shown that incidents of GBV in South Africa are forever increasing. The murder rates of women are highest among the 30 to 44 years age cluster and are commonly done in private and dubious surroundings (Ndlovu et al., 2020). Lately, more murder cases are gradually trending among lower age clusters and are committed in 'seemingly' safe spaces such as homes and public arenas like tertiary institutions. This behaviour disrupts students' study progress and causes their lives to be cut short, leaving behind families whose hopes for a better future were tied to these students.

Dlamini (2021) emphasises how the effects of GBV go beyond the personal, as the country's economy is affected by an estimated 3.7% rise in some countries. Besides, such gruesome killing of women in tertiary institutions is a drawback on almost all facets of life for these students and their families. Therefore, the discussion of GBV as a plight only for women makes it seem as if they are the only ones who are affected when the entire population, including men, people with disabilities and the LGBTQIA+ community, is also affected. This claim resonates with the lack of literature covering these groups.

Historical background of violence and violence against women in South Africa

The history of GBV+F in South Africa can be traced back to centuries of oppression and exploitation during colonial apartheid and through the struggle against apartheid proper and the country's transition to democracy (Chalira & Ndimurwimo, 2018). This was when the country was embroiled in high levels of violence and crime due to the crime against humanity that was apartheid which divided the country along racial lines and stripped black South Africans, the majority indigenous group, of their human rights. Since the dawn of democracy in 1994, several policies have been introduced to address the racial and gender inequalities brought about by the discriminatory laws imposed during the apartheid era. South Africa's 1996 Constitution, the country's supreme law, laid the foundation for policies to address gender inequality and promote women's rights. Appropriately, the president of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, has expressed his concern about "the unacceptably high levels of gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa," which "are a blight on our national conscience, and a betrayal of our constitutional order for which

so many fought, and for which so many gave their lives” (Ramaphosa, 2020). There has been notable progress in restoring the dignity of the people; however, GBV+F appears to be an insurmountable issue.

A comparative study of South Africa and Malawi indicates that in these countries, like many of their counterparts in sub-Saharan Africa, women and girls are subjected to various forms of violence, such as sexual violence, domestic violence, harmful cultural practices, and violence in the contexts of maternal healthcare and reproductive rights (Chalira & Ndimurwimo, 2018). These forms of violence make women and girls vulnerable and at risk of fatal harm. Yet, according to feminist scholars, research into and discourse on femicide remains either scarce or invisible compared to other forms of GBV (Weil, 2016). This blurs the reality that femicide is as much a problem as GBV and the fact that the two are often inseparable. Weil (2016) maintains that femicide rates are social facts worthy of sociological attention. Equally, Fuentes (2014) offers an overlooked characteristic of femicide, which is its incidence primarily in *post-conflict* societies. She further states that it is a rare occurrence where a case of femicide does not bear sexual violence.

Chalira and Ndimurwimo (2018) state that violence against women is among the world’s most systematic and universal human rights violations. Thus, making violence against women an international issue. These authors contend that violence against women is deeply rooted in the social, religious, and moral fibres of society. Similarly, Weil (2016) maintains that women’s subjugation is supported by patriarchal practices that use violence to control women and influence the ability of young women to live wholesome lives. According to Kayuni (2009), in contemporary organisations, including tertiary institutions, the issue of sexual harassment, which is a part of GBV+F, has become the centre of discussion. This observation was also confirmed by Chalira and Ndimurwimo (2018), who note that sexual harassment has been a problem since there has been interaction between men and women. They further assert that as long as there is sexual attraction between the sexes and that the attraction is not mutual, there will be cases of sexual harassment.

GBV+F on South African campuses: Prevalence and incidence

Gender-based violence and the subsequent femicide remain significant subjects in South African universities that have, up to now, not been resolved. Despite different strides through legislative measures and international protocols aimed at combating GBV, incidents continue to occur frequently within institutions of higher learning in South Africa. Most incidents are prevalent

on campuses, with many cases going unreported mostly due to the stigma attached to it, lack of training from GBV case handlers that is dominated by bias and the attitudes that institutions hold in exposing their GBV status to the public, thus tarnishing the reputation of the institution. South African tertiary institutions have seen cases of GBV escalate from low to high extremes with devastating results. Gathering precise statistics on GBV+F at tertiary institutions in South Africa is challenging due to underreporting and the changing nature of data collection methods.

A pertinent question is, to what extent can female students, within their capacity, withstand the wide-ranging effects of GBV? Gordon and Collins (2013) argue that through victim-blaming, women are made to feel responsible for protecting themselves against GBV. The implications here are that women are as answerable for the GBV enacted on them as their perpetrators and, therefore, are expected to develop and follow 'precautionary' strategies to avoid attacks launched against their bodies, such as being dressed *appropriately*.

The upsurge in killings of female students in institutions of higher learning in South Africa is gendered, as the alleged perpetrators are usually men. This assertion does not intend to rule out the occurrence of the reverse (i.e. the murder of men by women), nor is it an indication that only heterosexuals are affected by femicide. Acts of GBV affect everyone, including marginalised groups such as the LGBTQTIA+ community and people living with disabilities, and they often result in femicide. This shocking experience leaves doubts about the once presumably safe university space. Femicide cases in South Africa happen in most tertiary institutions such as TVET colleges, technikons and universities.

Gruesome and violent murders of female university students have been among the GBV+F incidents in South African tertiary institutions in the last decade, notably in the year 2019. Sexual violence as a form of GBV is rated among the major causes of femicide in heterosexual relationships. Ndlovu et al. (2020) observe a rise in reported deliberate, gruesome killing of women in public spaces, such as in institutions of higher learning in South Africa. Experiences of sexual violence in tertiary institutions include rape, violence against women in higher education institutions, domestic violence, harmful cultural practices, and violence related to maternal healthcare and reproductive rights (Chalira & Ndimurwimo, 2018; Johnson, 2004). Alcohol and drug consumption, in addition to problematic gendered norms related to drinking culture, increase the risk of sexual violence.

Findings and discussion

The findings of this chapter indicate that GBV+F remains pervasive in institutions of higher learning, making them unsafe spaces. Students are often overwhelmed by feelings of vulnerability and silenced by ignorance, fear, and powerlessness, particularly in university residential spaces, including both private and university accommodation. Students are vulnerable to violence on their way to their residences as they risk attacks by community members. Further, students comprise the majority of GBV victims, while men are usually perpetrators, and instances of rape occur mainly when the victim/survivor is under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Within tertiary institutions, hierarchies of power are evident, and relatively few instances of students being exploited by staff members have been reported. Occurrences of contrapower harassment were also reported. This chapter also found that reporting of GBV+F cases in institutions of higher learning is lacking due to students' loss of trust in university authorities. Most students are afraid of double victimisation and, therefore, opt not to report cases. Widespread victim-blaming and self-blaming do not account for the low levels of GBV reporting to officials.

Challenges associated with the occurrence of GBV

A significant challenge to combating GBV is the high rate of underreporting, which significantly contributes to the perpetuation of GBV. Coupled with institutional barriers and poor reporting procedures, underreporting results in a lack of justice. In turn, this helps institutions like universities, in particular, downplay the magnitude of the scourge of GBV on their campuses. They do so because concerns about public image and status drive them, and they are reluctant to commit to providing the necessary responses (Kiguwa et al., 2015; Gouws & Kritzinger, 2007).

More so, the experience of GBV on campus can have multiple short and long-term negative consequences for survivors. First, there are often emotional and psychological consequences to GBV victimisation. In addition to experiencing many of the negative consequences that other victims/survivors of campus violence experience, with regard to sexual violence, sexual assault victims are at risk of suffering from depression, struggling with suicidal ideation and using and abusing substances. For tertiary students, this is not just a health or social issue but also an educational one.

A study on university femicide in South Africa reveals that the intake of toxicants and nervous system depressants contributes to the deliberate killing

of women at higher education institutions (Adams, 2013; Ndlovu et al., 2020). There is a consensus that factors causing GBV+F have far-reaching effects on students at tertiary institutions (Ndlovu et al., 2020; Chalira & Ndimurwimo, 2018; Johnson, 2004). Factors such as female phobia, presumed entitlement to women's bodies by males, social conditioning and gender stereotypes; dishonesty and unfaithfulness in relationships, gender inequality; objectification and commodification of women; women's vulnerability and inability to protect themselves; and lack of trust and insecurity by male counterparts are among the causes of GBV and subsequent femicide amongst university students in South Africa. Therefore, this vulnerability to violence is not a result of inherent susceptibility; instead, it is a manifestation of deeply entrenched discrimination and power imbalances within societal and cultural frameworks. However, while awareness of the issue of GBV at tertiary institutions in South Africa is increasing, the country lacks nationally representative research that can provide a clearer understanding of this phenomenon, its nature, and overall impact. This does not bode well for sound interventions.

On another level, an ineffective justice system plays a role as one of the major challenges to eradicating GBV. According to Calvino and Matadi (2023), despite a progressive constitution and solid legislation, South Africa's GBV cases remain alarmingly high, whilst the economic and social impact of GBV is enormous. The current application of legislative arrangements is not sufficiently gender-sensitive, thus disregarding the inequality of gender roles, which is often perpetuated by police officials who are disinclined to assist victims of domestic disputes, as they often regard GBV as a private matter. In addition, studies have shown that the inaccessibility of courts and police stations, especially in rural areas, unfamiliarity with court process, and delays in processing domestic violence cases due to staff shortages and/or a lack of inter-departmental cohesion discourage victims from obtaining the necessary protection provided for in terms of the Domestic Violence Amendment (DVA) Act. Inadequate training of law enforcement, insufficient resources needed to conduct their work successfully, and a lack of accountability were central to the justice system's ineffectiveness. Thus, the consequent lack of accountability only serves to embolden abusers, as they perceive the system as permissive of their reprehensible behaviour or too overwhelmed to stop them.

Cultural and societal influences

Tertiary institutions play a major role in knowledge production and contribute to society through their students. At the same time, society and culture are

significantly important in influencing gender-based violence and femicide behaviours among students in tertiary institutions. South Africa is a country dominated by patriarchal beliefs that perpetuate gender inequality and differential power relations between genders. The deeply rooted patriarchal norms often manifest in power imbalances and control over women, contributing to a culture of normalising GBV.

The socialisation processes and the assigning of gender roles of children among families reinforce the idea that men are dominant and women are submissive. This socialisation bears negative effects on girls as they grow and enter institutions of learning to believe that it is normal for men to be violent towards them. This can lead to environments where male aggression and entitlement are tolerated, and females internalise their subservient subordinate position (Davids, 2019).

Recommendations

Considering the above discussion, this chapter recommends a long-term approach from all stakeholders, including human rights and humanitarian players, to ensure that efforts are made to curb and respond to this brutality. Moreover, interventions aimed at creating awareness about addressing GBV+F should be evaluated. As well as effectively counter the pervasive tide of GBV+F, it becomes paramount to prioritise and actively support women's empowerment initiatives from marginalised backgrounds, including LGBTQIA+ individuals, people with disabilities, and those from different racial and ethnic groups, to ensure that assistance reaches all those affected by GBV. This chapter further emphasises the importance of stringent mitigating measures that will be compelling to all parties within the university to curb the scourge of GBV. It argues that universities and other institutions of higher learning should be safe spaces where all citizens acquire skills and training and produce knowledge untrammelled.

Conclusion

The scourge of GBV is by no means limited to South African universities. Research confirms equally widespread prevalence of GBV across broad geopolitical contexts. A study on sexual assault on American campuses conducted by Karjane et al. (2002) found that sexual assault is widely considered to be the most underreported violent crime in America. Another

interesting finding of this problem was that associates of the victims commit most sexual assaults on campuses, and this may explain, in part, why these crimes are underreported (Belknap & Erez, 2007; Rennison & Addington, 2014). Men's sense of entitlement to sexual intercourse with their girlfriends or female partners is highlighted as a significant challenge. Accordingly, anything that men do to satisfy their sexual desires, if it is done with their girlfriends or female partners, is acceptable; thus, rendering the notion of rape within these contexts completely alien. To such people, it is inconceivable that husbands and boyfriends can rape their wives, girlfriends or female partners (Phipps et al., 2018).

Despite the provision made in the South African Constitution for the state and all its organs (including tertiary institutions) to fulfil the Bill of Rights by respecting, protecting, and promoting the rights of women and men from diverse sexual backgrounds as well as all marginalised groups in society against all forms of GBV and discrimination, GBV+F occurrence across many tertiary institutions persists. Therefore, the state's failure to implement GBV+F-related policies and legislation contributes to the problem. Unless GBV+F, a critical contributor to hampering women's and society's development, is prudently and soundly addressed, the fight for a violent, free society will remain elusive.

Given that tertiary institutions are microcosms of society, it is necessary to link the occurrence of GBV+F in tertiary institutions with the broader challenges of GBV in South African society. But this can only happen through research and discourse which, (especially the former), rely on reporting. Hence, underreporting is a key contributing factor influencing the rate at which GBV escalates and manifests itself. Underreporting also allows institutions with public reputations to underplay the prevalence of GBV+F and thus not provide adequate resources to address the issue.

In South Africa, it is not unusual for the authorities to address gendered violence on campus by focusing narrowly on sexual harassment instead of looking at various forms of GBV, which include, but are not limited to, domestic violence, intimate partner violence (IPV), rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment and homophobic bullying. While the state has a duty and responsibility to prevent and respond to GBV+F, the atrocity is a very complex phenomenon, making it difficult to provide a comprehensive understanding of the nature and prevalence of GBV+F at tertiary institutions.

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