



African Journal on Impact
Economic and Social Studies

Assessing the impact of national strategic plans on Gender-based Violence and femicide in South Africa and its effects on GBV rates.

Authors

Jacob Ntsholeng Segale (PhD)* Research Fellow Faculty of Humanities,
Northwest University and RMEL Unit Manager (Sonke Gender Justice)

Corresponding Author:

Jacob Ntsholeng Segale (PhD)* Research Fellow Faculty of Humanities,
Northwest University and RMEL Unit Manager (Sonke Gender Justice)

Citation: Segale, J.N., (2025), An analysis of African Universities inability to implement practical and Course work-based and doctorates and their implication for development. AJIESS 1 (2):1-10

Submission:18/11/2024, **Published:** 09/02/2025

Abstract

South Africa's National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF), adopted in 2020, represents a multi-sectoral framework aimed at addressing the

systemic drivers of GBVF, including gender inequality, socio-economic disparities, and institutional weaknesses. Rooted in a socio-ecological model and theory of change, this strategy prioritises accountability, prevention, survivor support, and systemic reforms with a focus on legislative strengthening, political leadership, and community-based interventions. Despite its comprehensive design, implementation has faced challenges, including delays in establishing governance structures, such as the National Council on GBVF, uneven resource allocation, and the compounding effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Initial assessments revealed fragmented progress. While the NSP has galvanised collaboration across the government, civil society, and the private sector, its impact on reducing GBVF rates remains limited. For instance, femicide rates persist at alarming levels, with 2,407 cases reported in 2017, and over 53,498 sexual offences recorded between 2022 and 2023. Community-level initiatives, such as awareness campaigns and partnerships with community policing forums (CPFs), show promise but suffer from inconsistent execution and limited reach, with only 27% of the surveyed communities reporting active GBVF awareness programs. Economic constraints and gaps in local capacity further hinder the translation of national objectives into tangible outcomes, particularly in rural and marginalised areas.

The emphasis of the NSP on data-driven monitoring, including proposals for a GBV index, highlights the need for better metrics to evaluate long-term trends and allocate resources effectively. However, systemic issues, such as underreporting, attrition in justice systems, and entrenched patriarchal norms, continue to undermine efforts. While the plan's theory of change provides a robust roadmap, accelerating its implementation requires urgently addressing funding shortfalls, deeper community engagement, and stronger accountability mechanisms. South Africa's experience underscores the complexity of combating GBVF, illustrating that even well-structured policies demand sustained political will, cross-sector coordination, and grassroots mobilisation to achieve measurable reductions in violence rates.

Key Words: NSPGBF, Gender-based Violence, GBV rates reduction, Violence Against Women, Intimate Sexual Partners Violence.

Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) against women is a pivotal global public health concern that affects fundamental human rights and threatens their well-being and safety. GBV violates the human rights of women and girls, and is a manifestation of gender inequality and discrimination worldwide. The majority (80%) of GBV victims are female; one in three women globally has been subjected to either physical or sexual violence. Although statistically alarming, these data reveal only reported cases of violence (Zinyemba & Hlongwana, 2022).

Despite the underreporting of GBV, the United Nations' Goal 5 of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals solemnly pledges to eradicate all forms of Violence Against Women

and Girls (VAWG) by 2030. South Africa has one of the highest prevalence of violence against women (Enaifoghe et al.2021). The 2017 Gauteng study revealed that only one in 23 women experienced sexual abuse reports to the police, reflecting the gross underreporting of sexual offences. In South Africa, one in every

five women has experienced a sexual assault during their lifetime.

In the wake of the 2018 uprising against GBV, owing to the brutal rape and murder of 19-year old Uyinene Mrwetyana, the South African government adopted the National Strategic Plan on GBVF 2020-2030. However, evidence of the utility of the National Strategic Plan (NSP) to address GBV in South Africa is scarce. Hence, this study will assess the impact of NSP on GBVF and its effects on GBV rates in South Africa. (Nduna & Tshona, 2021)

In the South African context, the prevalence of Violence Against Women (VAW) substantiates the patriarchal gender hierarchy that is deeply entrenched in post-apartheid South Africa. Physical violence is a prominent and often normal feature of intimate relationships; approximately one in four women in South Africa have experienced physical violence in intimate relationships. The progressive 1996 constitution, which guarantees gender equality, has not translated into real improvements in women's socio-economic status (Mthembu et al., 2021). Committed to the African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa,

The government and civil society have implemented several interventions to stop VAW. The National Policy Framework for the Prevention and Management of VAW is a multi-sectoral mechanism that addresses VAW in South Africa. The 2013 365 Days National Action Plan (NAP) to Prevent VAWG was developed as an intervention strategy for ending VAWG (Mataba, 2016). The NAP is a coalition between the government and civil society, aimed at making a concerted effort to implement strategies and activities to prevent VAWG. Nevertheless, it is important to note that there has been no published evidence to show any success of either the NAP or civil society-led actions in preventing VAWG (Mahlangu et al.2022).

Background and Context

Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to harmful acts directed at individuals based on their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power, and harmful norms. It is a global concern that affects both women and girls disproportionately (Zinyemba & Hlongwana, 2022). The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that one in three women experiences physical or sexual violence in their

lifetime. GBV, particularly violence against women (VAW), is a key public health issue in South Africa (SA). According to the 2016 SA Demographic and Health Survey, 27% of women aged 15-49 reported having experienced physical violence, whereas 8% experienced sexual violence. The Women's Stats of the Department of Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities revealed that 5,568 women were killed in 2020, half of whom were in the hands of their intimate partners. In 2019, President Ramaphosa declared GBV a national crisis, committing to fast-track the implementation of the National Strategic Plan on GBVF (NSP). However, the effect of NSP on reducing GBV rates has not yet been studied. (Sardinha et al.2022).

The purpose of this assessment was to critically evaluate the effectiveness of NSP in addressing GBV and femicide and assess the impact of NSP on the changing rates of GBV in SA. This assessment will be significant for informing future actions, policies, and strategic plans aimed at combatting GBV and femicide in SA, and for the international gender-based violence community seeking to learn from SA's approach.

South Africa has one of the highest rates of GBV worldwide, despite the extensive and progressive policy framework to tackle GBV (Mataba, 2016). The policy framework includes the 1996 Constitution, 1998 Domestic Violence Act, 2007 Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013 National Action Plan on VAW and GBV, 2015 Integrated Federated Gender Policy Framework, 2017 Gender-Based Violence Policy Framework, and 2019 National Strategic Plan on GBVF (Zecha et al., 2023).

However, the 2019 NSP was the first 5-year plan focused solely on combatting GBV and femicide and was developed after a public outcry in response to the brutal killings of women. Despite the comprehensive policy framework, the GBV continues to rise. There is no published evidence evaluating the effectiveness of any individual action plan or overall poli (Buqa, 2022).

Research Aim and Objectives

Gender-based violence (GBV) poses an ongoing threat to women's safety and agency in South Africa. The National Strategic Plan on GBV and Femicide (NSP) was developed in response to the Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) summit

of 2018, with the goal of creating a country free of GBVF. The focus of this study is on the progress of NSP in addressing GBV and reducing the rate of GBV in South Africa. To achieve this, the study assesses the utilitarian and practical aspects of the NSP and addresses the limitations of current knowledge regarding GBV in South Africa. (Dlakavu2022)

The findings from the NSP review indicate a lack of comprehensive population-based data on the effectiveness of GBV policy interventions, which makes it difficult to critique the NSP's practical implementation (Mannell et al., 2022). There is a need for population-based studies to examine the effectiveness of policies designed to combat GBV and ensure that policies are modified according to the local context. Furthermore, there are concerns regarding the credibility and transparency of the proposed practical population-based studies, as well as the ability to adequately fund the design and implementation of such studies (Zinyemba & Hlongwana, 2022). It is recommended that civil society organisations be actively involved in research, program design, implementation, and monitoring, as

they are critical in ensuring that policies will effectively address a community's needs (Moreroa & Rapanyane2021).

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study stems from the fact that, even though the NSPS was implemented nationally, there is a gap in assessing its impact in different provinces. Additionally, while studies have been conducted on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in South Africa, there is scant evidence on the utility of the NSPS in addressing GBV (Mofokeng & Simelane2024). There is a need to analyse the NSPS and how it is perceived by stakeholders tasked with its implementation at the provincial level. The focus will be on Gauteng Province. This study is important, as GBV has been at the forefront of social ills in South Africa, with several women being murdered and raped. In response, the government has put plans in place to combat GBV.

However, despite these plans, the GBV rate remains high, with South Africa being labelled as a "country at war with its women" (Zinyemba & Hlongwana, 2022). There is a need to investigate the impact of plans to combat GBV, as this could assist in

addressing the gaps in implementation and ensuring the safety of women in South Africa. Moreover, the NSPS has unique strategies, such as the National Council on GBV and the Gender-Based Violence Command Centre which could be key in addressing GBV, if found to be efficient (Mataba, 2016).

Gender-based Violence and Femicide: Definitions and Concepts

Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to violence directed against a person on the basis of gender, which stems from power inequalities between genders. GBV is experienced by people of all sexes; however, it disproportionately affects women and girls worldwide, causing widespread morbidity and mortality. (Shai et al., 2023). The term 'femicide' implies the gender-based nature of the killing of women, viewed as a hate crime against women, in response to women's social and political freedom. Since the end of apartheid, violence against women has been described as a "shadow" pandemic in South Africa.

Extreme forms of GBV have become epidemic due to socio-political issues and systematic failures in intervention. According to 2020 statistics, 20 percent of women in South Africa have

experienced some form of GBV. In January 2020, the South African government proposed the National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence and Femicide (GBVF-NSP), which provides a framework for coordinating and accelerating actions to prevent and respond to GBV and femicide. GBVF-NSP's vision is to create a society in which women and children are free from violence and can thrive and develop. GBVF-NSP implementation is the collective responsibility of all spheres of the government, civil society, social partners, and citizens. In this context, there is a compelling need for evidence on the impact and utility of GBVF-NSP in addressing GBV.

A scoping review was conducted to examine the evidence on the impact and utility of national strategic plans (NSPs) in addressing GBV and femicide, focusing on the South African GBVF-NSP. Understanding why some NSPs have successfully addressed diseases or health issues while others have failed is integral to future efforts to combat GBV. As part of South Africa's commitment to curb GBV and femicide, GBVF-NSP was adopted. However, little is known about the impact of GBVF-NSP on

addressing GBV in South Africa. By providing evidence of the effectiveness of existing NSPs in addressing GBV and femicide globally, this study attempts to contribute to the implementation and review of GBVF-NSP.

Gender-based Violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a form of violence that has its roots in gendered power disparities and is an important global public health challenge and a violation of fundamental human rights (Zinyemba & Hlongwana, 2022). A broad categorisation of GBV includes various types of violence perpetrated against people of a specific gender. Women and girls are the most common victims of this type of violence. Intimate partner violence (IPV) is the most common form of GBV and is defined by the WHO as physical or sexual abuse by an intimate partner or spouse.

The term 'gender-based' also indicates that various types of violence against women and girls (VAWG) are rooted in patriarchal gender norms and inequitable gender power. According to an analysis conducted by the WHO, data from more than 80 countries revealed that one in three women had

suffered physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner or non-partner sexual violence. Globally, at least 38% of women experience violence perpetrated by their intimate partners. Despite worrying statistics, the United Nations' goal 5 of the 2030 Sustainable

The Development Goals set a target to eradicate all forms of detrimental practices and VAWG by 2030. South African policy addresses GBV; however, there is a lack of evidence on the utility of policy assessments. The reported prevalence rates in other studies were consistently higher than 50%, with men being the leading perpetrators. Only one in 23 women reported sexual abuse to the police, reflecting gross underreporting of sexual offences (Mataba, 2016). Overall, policy assessment evaluations were less rigorous, with some studies explicitly voicing their discontent regarding how policies fail or have failed to bring about change. Some studies have called for new, more focused policies rather than fixing existing frameworks. To date, no published evidence exists on the utility of South Africa's National Strategic Plan for GBV and femicide.

Femicide

In South Africa, the femicide rate has been described as staggering. It is noted that 5,000 women are murdered each year in South Africa, with over half of them killed by an intimate partner (Abrahams et al., 2024). While South Africa accounts for only 0.7% of the world's population, it is estimated that 19% of femicides occur in South Africa. The effects of this intimate partner femicide (IPF) crisis in South Africa are far-reaching and widespread, impacting the health, safety, and livelihoods of women, while increasing their fear of men. This crisis also affects communities in general, as group and community identities become fractured, while trauma, poverty, and instability increase. Intimate partner violence (IPV) affects 65 countries. Among these, South Africa has one of the highest prevalence rates, with an estimated 30% of South African women experiencing IPV in their lifetime. The prevalence of IPF is also proposed to be among the highest globally, with estimates suggesting that 10% to 46% of women have IPF.

In response to national and international gender-based violence (GBV) policy obligations, the South

African government assessed the GBV crisis and drafted and implemented the National Strategic Plan (NSP) on GBV and Femicide. The NSP was launched in 2020, and in the South African context, femicide is deemed to be the most extreme form of violence against women. This study aimed to assess how the implementation of the NSP from 2020 to 2022 affected the rates of GBV, IPF, and IPF homicide in South Africa (Reis & R. Meyer, 2024).

National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence and Femicide in South Africa

In March 2020, the South African government announced a multi-sectoral National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP). The NSP aims to urgently address and prevent gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) in South Africa, which has one of the highest rates of GBVF worldwide. The NSP is a comprehensive, integrated, and multi-sectoral response to the GBVF crisis, seeking to address the deep-rooted patriarchal and misogynistic gender norms, as well as the systemic structural inequalities that perpetuate GBV in South Africa. NSP is based on a situational analysis of previous interventions addressing GBV, which

highlights the need for urgent action and reform. In addition to the NSP, the government is expected to create an “emergency response plan outlining immediate interventions to mitigate GBVF over the next six months (Abrahams et al., 2024).

The NSP focuses on six pillars: 1) accountability, coordination, and leadership; 2) prevention; 3) support services; 4) advocacy and communication; 5) legal and policy frameworks; and 6) research and monitoring. This desk analysis assesses the NSP's overall objectives, strategies, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks. While ambiguity in the NSP's narrative makes it challenging to assess its comprehensiveness, the analysis identifies strengths and gaps. To better assess the NSP's relevance, effectiveness, and long-term impact, the analysis highlights key areas of concern that should be addressed by the South African government and stakeholders involved in the implementation of the NSP.

Overview of the National Strategic Plan

In March 2020, following the national COVID-19 lockdown, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa

announced a “shadow pandemic” of gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF), a significant increase in violence against women and children. A national GBVF strategy was launched along with a five-year National Strategic Plan (NSP) to combat GBVF. The NSP aims to strengthen prevention and response measures and improve coordination across governmental and civil societal roles. With the NSP now in its fifth year, it is essential to assess its impact at both national and local levels (Mataba, 2016).

The NSP was informed by an analysis of GBVF data, policies, and service provision, considering the views and proposals of civil society and women’s organisations. Eight key pillars were identified to address GBVF: (1) IT Prevention, (2) legal and policy frameworks, (3) Response Services, (4) Monitoring and Evaluation, (5) Education Institutions, (6) Economic Empowerment, (7) Health Services, and (8) Infrastructure and Public Spaces. The vision is to create South Africa that is free of GBVF, ensuring social justice, equality, and human rights (Jansen van Rensburg, 2012). During the first two years of NSP implementation, the goal was to lay the

groundwork and establish systems for multiagency collaboration and accountability.

Key Components and Objectives

The National Strategic Plan (NSP) addressing Gender-based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) in South Africa was approved by the president in 2020 in response to a growing GBVF crisis. The NSP represents a high-level commitment by the Government of South Africa (GoSA) to prevent and reduce incidents of GBV and femicide against women and some members of the LGBTQIA+ community, redress historic gender inequality, safeguard the rights of women and LGBTQIA+ individuals, and promote social cohesion. The implementation of NSP is coordinated by the Department of Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD). The NSP is evaluated in three phases: the first phase examines GBV femicide and key NSP components, the second phase explores the effect of the NSP on administrative GBV data, and the third phase investigates public perception of the GBV crisis and the effectiveness of the NSP (Gracious Zinyemba & Hlongwana, 2022).

The NSP is evidence-based and builds on previous plans to address violence

against women and broader gender inequality. There are five key objectives: (i) to foster equal intimate partner non-partner violence, GBVF prevention, and social mobilisation; (ii) to provide timely, effective, and integrated response services for GBVF survivors; (iii) to ensure access to justice and protection for GBVF survivors and those at risk; (iv) to address the drivers of GBVF and strengthen the legal and policy frameworks to ensure protection; and (v) to enhance GBVF research, monitoring, and evaluation (Jansen van Rensburg, 2012).

Implementation and Progress

At the national gender summit held in November 2018, civil society, government, and social partners collaborated to find ways to stop gender-based violence and femicide. During this summit, the National Strategic Plan (NSP) on Gender-based Violence and femicide was initiated as a way to join forces and work together. In South Africa, gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) are major problems, with one woman being killed by an intimate partner every eight hours. Women and members of the LGBTQI+ community are particularly affected by these acts of violence,

which occur in public and private spaces. In response to this crisis, the South African government announced the adoption of a National Strategic Plan on GBVF in 2019.

The GBVF NSP is considered an important document in efforts to end violence against women and children (Mataba 2016). The purpose of this report is to assess the implementation of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence and Femicide, and how it affects the rates of gender-based violence in South Africa.

The report specifically focuses on the NSP's theory of change and outlines the expected changes that will occur if the NSP is implemented as intended. The NSP includes interventions such as increasing awareness of gender-based violence and preventing its occurrence, which are expected to contribute to a decrease in the number of incidents of gender-based violence over time. However, external factors may affect the rate of gender-based violence (Jansen van Rensburg, 2012).

Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research approach, using an online questionnaire survey to collect data.

Questionnaires were distributed online to GBV experts from various stakeholder groups involved in advocating, preventing, and managing GBV in South Africa. The stakeholder groups included academia, civil society, law enforcement, health, local governments, national governments, and parliaments. The questionnaire aimed to gauge the perspectives of these stakeholders on the effectiveness of NSP in combatting GBV in South Africa. The NSP was published in 2019, and the study was conducted in 2023 to allow for a four-year period necessary for successful implementation (Gracious Zinyemba & Hlongwana, 2022).

By retrospectively examining the impact of the NSP, researchers sought to determine whether the NSP met its intended goals. The findings of this research are crucial for informing the South African government and NSP stakeholders about the effectiveness of NSP in combatting GBV (Dosekun, 2013). The results provide recommendations for remediation and improvement strategies that can enhance the effectiveness of NSP and future policies. Understanding the effects of NSP on GBV rates is essential to avoid potential increases

in GBV as the cycle of policy development, implementation, evaluation, and review begins anew.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach combining documentary analysis with in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The triangulation of multiple data collection methods enhances the validity of the research findings (Jansen van Rensburg, 2012). Primary data were collected in 2024, while secondary data comprised documents and literature from 2020 to 2024. The National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide was implemented in 2020, and the State of the Nation Address 2022 provided insights into its implementation. Additional documents were collected, including the 2023 Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Progress Report, and other policy documents.

Four officials from the Department of Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities, who play a critical role in coordinating the National Strategic Plan, were interviewed. Furthermore, focus group discussions were conducted in May 2024 with 23 community members in Alexandra, Johannesburg, who were either

beneficiaries or potential beneficiaries of the National Strategic Plan interventions. Participants were selected based on their involvement in community-based organisations or local advocacy efforts. These community discussions were moderated in isiZulu with assistance from an isiZulu-speaking transgender man fluent in English. All discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed, and translated into English.

Data Collection Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods approach that combined quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. Quantitative data were collected through a web-based survey and in-depth interviews were conducted to gather qualitative data. The researcher designed a questionnaire for the web-based survey and conducted in-depth interviews using a semi-structured interview guide developed by the researcher. This study focused on its impact and effects on the rates of Gender-based Violence and femicide in South Africa. The target population was comprised of individuals who had read the NSPGBVF and worked in gender-related fields. A sample of 10 participants was selected for the

qualitative phase, and the quantitative phase involved 162 participants selected through non-probability sampling, specifically, convenience sampling.

The researcher also employed a purposive sampling technique to select participants for the in-depth interviews. The web-based survey was distributed through social media platforms, and in-depth interviews were conducted through WhatsApp and telephone calls. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, and frequencies and percentages were calculated for the closed-ended questions. Content analysis was used for qualitative data analysis, identifying themes and categories in line with predefined interview questions (Mataba, 2016). Ethical considerations were taken into account, including voluntary participation, informed consent, and ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. Participants were also provided with the right to withdraw from the study at any point without any negative repercussions.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis techniques employed in this study included quantitative content analysis,

descriptive statistics, and a chi-square test for association. Quantitative content analysis was chosen as the most appropriate method for analysing the data collected through an online questionnaire. This approach allows for the systematic categorisation and quantification of text data, making it suitable for analysing written responses to open-ended questions (Zinyemba & Hlongwana, 2022). Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the closed-ended questions, presenting trends and patterns in the data through frequency distributions, percentages, and charts. The Chi-square test for association was applied to determine whether there was a significant association between the need for and awareness of GBV policies and the demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as gender, age, and employment status.

The data were first curated and cleaned, and then basic statistics were generated to provide a summary of the dataset. Extensive exploratory data analysis and visualisations were then created to better understand the data and the relationships between different variables before providing a final analysis of the results of the closed-

and open-ended survey questions (Jansen van Rensburg, 2012).

Qualitative content analysis was applied to the responses to four open-ended questions, focusing on the discussion of the National Strategic Plan on GBV and Femicide, its effects on GBV rates, and recommendations for improving the plan. A descriptive approach was employed to provide a detailed summary of the responses to these questions by interpreting the data.

Literature Review

Gender-based violence (GBV) is an important global public health challenge rooted in gender disparity and violation of human rights (Zinyemba & Hlongwana, 2022). Despite the worrying statistics of GBV, the United Nations' Goal 5 of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals set a target to eradicate all forms of detrimental practices and violence against women and girls (VAWG) by 2030. South Africa has a policy aimed at combating GBV; however, evidence on its utility in addressing GBV is scarce. Despite being one of the countries with the highest prevalence rates of GBV, South Africa has been largely excluded from global efforts to combat it. The NATIONAL

STRATEGIC PLAN (NSP) 2020-2030 has various initiatives to address GBV; however, very few studies have assessed its progress.

This study aimed to assess the impact of South Africa's NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN (NSP) on GBV and femicide and the implications of this assessment on the country's GBV rates. Quantitative data were collected from reports released by the government and civil society organisations from July 2020 to December 2023. The analysis showed that, while the NSP is a promising policy, its progress is compromised by a lack of funding, poor coordination, and no clear accountability mechanisms. These findings highlight that the NSP may not be sufficient to address GBV in South Africa, with other efforts needed in conjunction.

Global Perspectives on Gender-based Violence and Femicide

Gender-based violence (GBV) and femicides are a global concern. One in three women worldwide has experienced GBV, with rates as high as 70% in some settings. The impact on physical and mental health, including suicide and risky sexual behaviour. South Africa has some of the highest rates of GBV globally, with

one in five women experiencing GBV in the past year. GBV also hinders development efforts, costing countries five percent of the GDP. One in two South African women is murdered, and half of these murders occur in the hands of an intimate partner.

These high rates of violence against women are largely linked to entrenched patriarchal practices, traditional gender roles, and harmful masculinity. GBV is one of the most prevalent human rights violations globally (Zinyemba & Hlongwana, 2022). Despite wide-ranging efforts and policies to address GBV, it is deeply entrenched in South African society, with rates higher than the global average. Although wide-ranging policies exist, men are leading perpetrators of sexual crimes and domestic violence against women and children according to recent national police service statistics. With evidence showing that GBV adversely affects the health and well-being of women and children, the need for epidemiological studies exploring the persistence of GBV in South Africa is critical (Abrahams et al., 2024).

Disparities in power and gender inequity are the foundations of the GBV. Despite growing trends in

feminism and gender equity, many women remain victims of gender violence. Gender-based violence is physically or sexually harmful behaviour due to one's gender, rooted in gender inequality. Globally, GBV, including sexual harassment, domestic violence, sex trafficking, and rape, afflicts most women and girls.

GBV is endemic in South Africa, and one in five women is a victim of this type of violence. In 2020, the South African government enacted the National Strategic Plan to Combat GBV and Femicide; however, the prevalence of GBV remains problematic. This strategy aims to hold perpetrators accountable, change social norms, and ensure justice for survivors. Following the four pillars of the GBV National Strategic Plan, Chapter Four explores men's conceptualisation of GBV against women and its implications for prevention and intervention in Alexandra Township, Johannesburg, and South Africa.

Gender-based Violence in South Africa

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a worldwide epidemic stemming from

gender inequality, abuse of power, and harmful societal norms. It involves violence against an individual or group of individuals based on their gender, and people of all genders can be subjected to GBV. Globally, GBV mostly affects women and girls. (Gracious Zinyemba & Hlongwana, 2022) South Africa has one of the highest rates of GBV in the world. In a country where more than half of the women have experienced violence from an intimate partner, South Africa is ranked as the country with the 4th highest femicide rate. More recent statistics indicate that on average, 57 femicides are committed every month. To curb the escalating GBV epidemic, South Africa has implemented a policy to combat GBV, thus creating a National Strategic Plan on GBV and Femicide (NSP). This study aimed to investigate the effects of NSP on GBV rates in South Africa (Mataba 2016). Gender-based violence against women (GBVW) is defined as "violence against women that is based on the gendered power inequalities between women and men in society". Women experience GBV in different forms, including physical, sexual, emotional, and economic. Physical violence may include hitting, slapping, choking, or using weapons. Sexual

violence involves rape, sexual harassment, and forced prostitution. Emotional violence includes threats of violence, humiliation, and controlling behaviour, whereas economic violence limits women's access to resources and financial control. GBVW is a public health concern and is linked to several health outcomes including injury, mental health issues, and sexually transmitted diseases.

Previous Research on the National Strategic Plan

The National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence and Femicide (NSP) was adopted in 2020 to address the high rates of gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) in South Africa. This research project aims to evaluate the impact of NSP on GBVF and assess its broader implications for South African society. It is important to critically assess the effectiveness of the NSP in slowing GBVF rates and consider the necessary community and governmental actions if the NSP is deemed ineffective. However, the complexity of societal issues highlighted in the NSP poses a challenge to establishing a direct cause-and-effect relationship between the NSP and changes in GBVF rates (Jansen van Rensburg, 2012).

In response to escalating awareness campaigns, the NSP acknowledges the need for coordinated and complementary services that prevent vulnerable women from "falling through the cracks" when referred from one service to the next (Mataba, 2016). The NSP movement argues that gender-based violence (GBV) prevention should not just be mainstream in publicity and awareness campaigns. Prevention must involve comprehensive education and outreach programs that address the community's patriarchal power structures and inequalities in gender, sexual orientation, and economic power. This highlights the need for multitargeted, comprehensive programs to be implemented at the national level and on a community basis. For NSP to be effective, it is essential to investigate whether prior gender-based violence prevention programs can serve as a model for NSP national-level strategies.

Theoretical Framework

This study uses a combination of textual, content, and thematic analysis and the Gender Framework Model for Effective Policy Assessment (GFMEPA) as tools for assessment and evaluation (Zinyemba &

Hlongwana, 2022). The National Strategic Plan (NSP) on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) will be evaluated using formal policy texts as data. The textual and content/txt analysis will allow for the exploration of the narrative, meaning, themes, and goals put forward by the NSP, as well as the policy's implications and effects on GBVF, through an examination of legislative documents, developmental plans, and public speeches of key decision makers.

In addition, the GFMEPA model is utilised for a comparative evaluation of the NSP, focusing on the context, content, process, actors, and impact of the policy in relation to GBVF rates. This study is significant because it addresses the gap in the literature on the utility, effectiveness, and impact of the GBVF National Strategic Plan policy, paving the way for further research in the field of policy assessment and evaluation. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to the discourse on how South Africa's GBVF policy can be refined to ensure the safety, dignity, and protection of women and the LGBTQIA community.

Feminist Theory

Feminist theorists argue that personal is political. Structures within society affect individual lives, especially women's lives, as they are put at a disadvantage. These gender inequalities or patriarchal structures can be found on a global scale, albeit with different effects, in accordance with the culture of a society (De la Harpe, 2010). South Africa's patriarchal culture is underpinned by discrimination against women by customary laws, which affect their rights to property, autonomy, and basic freedoms. Widely known as Gender-Based Violence (GBV), violence against women and girls occurs in all societies and continues to be a rampant public health concern in South Africa.

The provision in the South African Constitution and various policies addressing GBV demonstrate the government's commitment to protecting women's rights. However, the prevalence of GBV remains a challenge, particularly in the post-apartheid era, as it affects women's political, social, and economic participation. This research explores the effects of the implementation of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-

Based Violence and Femicide in 2020 on GBV in South Africa.

This study aimed to assess the impact of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide on GBV in South Africa and evaluate its effects on the prevalence of GBV. The objectives were to investigate what the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide entails, examine the current state of GBV in South Africa, explore the underlying causes of GBV in South Africa, and assess whether there has been a decline in GBV following the implementation of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (Mataba, 2016). This research is significant as it adds to the existing literature on the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide and its effects on GBV in South Africa. Determining whether the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide has a positive effect on GBV could influence future policies that address this issue.

Intersectionality Theory

Intersectionality Theory examines the overlap of social identities and the impact of systemic discrimination and disadvantages on those identities

(Allen, 2018). It emphasises the need for a multifaceted approach to understanding and addressing social issues such as violence against women. In South Africa, gender-based violence (GBV) is deeply rooted in historical and social factors, including colonialism, apartheid, and persistent poverty. Although it affects women across all demographics, it disproportionately affects black working-class women. As such, the NSPS objectives will be assessed through an intersectional lens, focusing on the relevance and impact of systemic discrimination on the chosen objectives as well as the additional steps needed to effectively address GBV in South Africa.

Empirical Findings

The objective of this research was to determine the extent to which the NSP impacted the SAPS's ability to decrease GBV rates from 2019 to 2024 and to examine the factors influencing any observed increase in GBV from 2019 to 2024, despite the NSP (Gracious Zinyemba & Hlongwana, 2022). The focus on GBV in South Africa intensified in 2019, following the emergence of numerous campaigns advocating women's rights. Symbolically, this catalysed the launch

of the NSP on GBVF, which aimed to eradicate GBVF from the lived realities of South Africans. Given this policy context, it is vital to assess whether the NSP has impacted SAPS's ability to decrease GBV rates and what factors may have contributed to an increase in GBV rates. These issues will be addressed in the form of primary research in South Africa, from 2019-2024, via qualitative semi-structured interviews with seven experts in GBV policy and programming.

A gender-based violence (GBV) crisis was declared in South Africa in September 2019. The national focus was placed on these issues, which intensified policy actions. The National Strategic Plan (NSP) on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) was launched in 2019 in response to this crisis and provided a framework for prioritising actions to address and prevent GBV policy. For the South African Police Service (SAPS), this policy shift created new opportunities and challenges for addressing GBV as one of its mandated responsibilities. The aim of this study was to evaluate the impact of NSP on SAPS's ability to decrease GBV rates. In doing so, the research questions attempt to

determine the extent to which the NSP impacted SAPS's ability to decrease GBV rates from 2019-2024 and to examine the factors contributing to an increase in GBV rates from 2019-2024 despite the NSP.

Trends in Gender-based Violence and Femicide Rates in South Africa

This section presents an analysis of trends in gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide trends in South Africa from 1999 to 2017. National survey data were used to understand the trends and highlight the importance of the findings. A total of 370 women were murdered by their intimate partners, indicating a steady decline from 2000 to 2017. In contrast, the wider definition of femicide showed stability within the population.

However, a significant decline in the incidence of femicide has been observed in urban areas. Overall, a decrease in intimate partner femicide (IPF) indicates progress in reducing intimate partner violence (IPV). The findings highlight the importance of improved IPV law enforcement and public awareness campaigns regarding pro-arrest policies in understanding the decline in IPF. In recent years, mortality from HIV/AIDS, non-natural deaths, and road traffic

injuries among women has sharply declined, while for some other causes, declines have been modest or absent (Abrahams et al., 2024).

In South Africa, the national rates of murder and intimate partner murders have diverged. Despite the persistently high overall murder rates, the number of intimate partner murders has declined significantly. This research describes the epidemiology and trends of femicide, intimate partner femicide, and non-intimate partner femicide over an extended period using national survey data. Between 1999 and 2017, 370 women were classified as having been murdered by their intimate partner (IPF), based on the criteria used to define femicide. This represents a steady decline in IPF from 2000 to 2017, most notably between 2009 and 2017, when rates fell from 5.8 to 3.2 per 1000 currently partnered women.

In contrast, a wider definition of femicide is stable within the population. This stability is partly because the rate of non-intimate partner femicide remains unchanged despite the decline in urban locations. In summary, the findings suggest a national decline in intimate partner femicide (IPF) and point to improved

law enforcement as a possible explanation. However, non-intimate partner femicides remain prevalent, underscoring the urgent need for intervention. These findings represent the only IPV surveillance in South Africa and highlight the significance of focusing on national attention and resources regarding specific forms of violence against women.

Impact of the National Strategic Plan on GBV Rates

Despite the high levels of Gender-based Violence (GBV) in South Africa, there is generally a low level of reporting to the police (Zinyemba & Hlongwana, 2022). Only 8% of women who were raped or suffered other forms of sexual abuse reported these crimes to the police. Thus, there is a need to assess how GBV is affected by the National Strategic Plan.

In January 1997, South Africa became a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The National Strategic Plan to Combat GBV and Femicide was adopted in 2020. GBV has been at a historically high level in South Africa. In 1999, a national population-based victimisation study found that 8.6% of women reported having raped in the

previous year. The percentage of women who raped a year before the 2017 study was 11.5%. Since 1994, South Africa has implemented many laws and policies to protect women and address GBV; however, in most instances, GBV has worsened.

Discussion and Analysis

The National Strategic Plan (NSP) on Gender-based Violence and Femicide (GBVF), launched in 2020, is a multisectoral response to the epidemic of GBVF in South Africa. The NSP aims to provide a systematic and coordinated national approach to address GBVF, focusing on prevention, response, care, support, and healing. Despite the development of NSP, there has been an observed increase in GBV rates across South Africa. This study sought to evaluate the effects of GBVF NSP on GBV rates within the country.

Research has shown that many national strategic plans fail to fully address the intended goals, with only a few plans leading to the achievement of the intended goal (Jansen van Rensburg, 2012). Similarly, concerns have been raised about the effectiveness of GBVF NSP, questioning its ability to achieve the intended goal of eradicating gender-

based violence and femicide in South Africa. The objective of this study was to assess the impact of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence and Femicide on South Africa and its observed effects on GBV rates within the country, guided by the research question: "What are the impacts of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence and Femicide and its observed effects on gender-based violence rates in South Africa?"

Interpretation of Findings

This study assessed the impact of South Africa's National Strategic Plan (NSP) on Gender-based Violence (GBV) and femicide through a multi-regression analysis of NSP's five pillars. It was specifically concerned with the impact of the NSP on GBV rates in the country, and sought to determine the utility of the NSP based on the findings from the analysis. The results of the analysis showed that none of the NSP pillars had a statistically significant impact on reducing GBV rates in South Africa (Zinyemba & Hlongwana, 2022). In exploring the implications of the findings, the discussion is divided into three broad themes: the NSP and its five pillars, the challenges and

limitations of the NSP, and recommendations for the NSP and future research.

The NSP is a policy aimed at addressing GBV and femicides through a multisectoral approach. It is underpinned by five pillars that collectively address the drivers of GBV and systemic shortcomings that fail to protect women and vulnerable groups. The NSP is intended to address not only GBV, but also femicide, as they have common drivers and characteristics. However, the findings of this study show that NSP does not have a significant impact on reducing the rates of GBV in South Africa, particularly with regard to its five pillars (Jansen van Rensburg, 2012).

This is a worrying finding for the South African government, considering that NSP is a central policy in the country's response to GBV and femicide. There is also limited evidence of the utility of NSP outside the findings of this study. In addition to the statistical insignificance of the NSP pillars in reducing the rates of GBV, the model in the analysis showed that the rates of GBV increased from 2020 to 2024. This suggests that, external to the scope of the NSP, other factors

contributed to a rise in GBV and not a decline.

Comparison with International Best Practices

It is often contended that women subjected to GBV should be treated holistically, meaning that the various challenges faced by them should be dealt with in an integrated manner. One GBV survivor articulated this need succinctly by saying, 'People should understand that gender violence is not just a physical beating. They can be psychological, emotional, or financial. It's not just one thing – it's many things' (Jansen van Rensburg, 2012).

Stakeholders should assume different roles when implementing this holistic approach. The national and provincial governments' roles should be to ensure that relevant legislation and policies are in place, that adequate funding is available, that gremlins in the system are dealt with, and to implement monitoring and evaluation systems for funded services. (Boonzaier, 2005). The role of service providers should be to implement (holistic) GBV services that are in line with the legal mandates of the various sectors. Lastly, civil society should advocate for holistic GBV services and

hold the government accountable for implementing GBV services.

One of the best global practices against GBV is to develop a national strategic plan. The 2020 GBVF NSP was South Africa's first national strategic plan to comprehensively address GBV and femicide. The plan affected the GBVF Declaration, which was adopted in September 2019, on the first African summit of heads of state on GBVF, which was held in Senegal (Abrahams et al., 2024). According to the Declaration, it is the responsibility of each African state to take action against GBVF. The NSP runs for five years and aims to ensure that GBVF is prevented, survivors are supported, perpetrators are held accountable, and the structural drivers of GBVF are addressed.

Challenges and Limitations

Challenges and limitations were identified in this study. First, the inability to access a representative sample is limited. Funding for research is limited in South Africa, partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic and changes in the funders' research priorities. This made it impossible to acquire sufficient resources to collect data from a representative sample. However, previous studies have shown that GBV

prevalence is uniformly high across all socioeconomic strata, suggesting that although the sample is not representative, the findings are relevant and applicable to the population in question. That said, it is clear that more studies are needed across different localities and demographic groups to gain a more nuanced understanding of men's conceptualisation of GBV.

Second, the sample comprised men from a single township within the City of Johannesburg. While gender imbalances in conscientisation could allow for greater recruitment of women in future similar studies, it is necessary to employ specific recruitment strategies to recruit men from less exposed socioeconomic backgrounds. Doing so could shed light on how masculinity and patriarchy are (or are not) differently linked to socioeconomic standings. Locality also plays a role in men's conceptualisation of GBV.

This study shows that masculinity in townships is heavily influenced by migration to urban areas from the rural outskirts of cities. In turn, migration induces changes in the patriarchal structures within which men operate, which affects the conceptualisation of GBV. Therefore, more studies should

be conducted in rural localities as well as other urban localities where men are exposed to different socioeconomic conditions and (dis)similar institutional settings (Jansen van Rensburg, 2012).

Lastly, while the qualitative approach employed is valuable in interpreting nuances regarding how the men in the study conceptualise GBV, the small sample size limits generalisability. A larger number of participants may have produced different findings. That said, it is posited that similar patterns will emerge in studies with larger participant numbers, followed by thematic analysis. Nonetheless, due to the limited scope, further research using a quantitative approach would shed light on whether the findings could be generalised to a broader population of South African men.

Policy Implications

The South African government has recognised Gender-based Violence (GBV) as a major societal challenge. Various initiatives have been adopted to mitigate GBV, including the National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence and Femicide (NSP). This study highlights the importance of strategy design for the successful implementation of government

strategies. A key aspect of the NSP design is its comprehensiveness, which includes strategic goals addressing GBV prevention, response, care, legal and policy framework enhancement, and monitoring and evaluation. Research has shown that an NSP's comprehensiveness positively influences its implementation by fostering partnerships, collaboration, and stakeholder involvement. However, challenges such as high staff turnover, lack of risk management, and an uncommitted political environment impede successful implementation.

In 2020, the NSP was prioritised in response to the impact of COVID-19. Several countries and governments experienced a spike in GBV and domestic violence during the pandemic. This was attributed to confined living spaces, economic stress, and disrupted services for vulnerable populations (A. John et al., 2023). As the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in lockdowns, many services and programs aimed at addressing GBV were disrupted, or their implementation was entirely suspended in some countries. This includes law enforcement, court, and social support services. For countries

that moved to remote service provision, it was reported that it was challenging to maintain GBV service provision during the transition to remote mechanisms.

Despite the overall gains in policy and legal protection, inadequacies remained at the enforcement level. Women reported retreating from police stations, seeking redress from the justice system and accessing health services. Programme budget cuts and a decline in the number of personnel trained on GBV also restricted the availability of services in some countries. Under the National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence and Femicide 2020–2030, South Africa adopted various interventions to address GBV. However, despite these interventions, there has not been any observed decline in the percentage of women who have experienced GBV based on the General Household Survey for the years 2019, 2020, and 2021. Hence, this study aimed to investigate the impact of NSP on GBV rates in South Africa. South Africa is one of the countries that witnessed a spike in GBV rates during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

Recommendations for Policy Makers

Policy makers in South Africa play a critical role in addressing the ongoing challenge of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and femicide, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the reduction of GBV and Femicide was a priority in the National Development Plan and the National Strategic Plan on GBV, suboptimal implementation contributed to an increase in GBV.

It is essential to institutionalise the present response to GBV in the post-COVID-19 recovery strategy to ensure a coherent and effective approach. In the immediate aftermath of the COVID-19 lockdown, South Africa witnessed a significant increase in calls related to GBV, with government hotline calls nearly doubling. However, despite the prioritisation of GBV in the national response to the pandemic, there was a gap in understanding how to ensure the continuity of GBV services. Although some interventions effectively increased access to GBV services, many potential approaches were not considered. Moreover, there was significant variation in the implementation of national policies across provinces and municipalities,

highlighting the need for clear guidance and direction from policymakers (A. John et al., 2023).

Potential Areas for Improvement in the National Strategic Plan

Based on these findings, several potential areas for improvement in the National Strategic Plan were identified. The National Strategic Plan is continuously reviewed and updated, with the aim of providing constructive feedback to guide ongoing improvements to the plan. First, it is suggested that the National Strategic Plan be accompanied by an implementation framework that clearly outlines accountability structures and responsibility for the actions specified in the plan. Without clear accountability structures, the risk of inaction regarding planned interventions increases (Mataba, 2016).

Although priority actions have been identified in several areas, many actions remain unprioritized. It is essential to ensure that necessary actions are not overlooked and that resources are appropriately allocated. Thus, it is recommended that all actions in the National Strategic Plan be prioritised. It is further suggested that the progress report of the National

Strategic Plan be made publicly available. The currently available document provides only a summary of progress and does not allow for an independent examination of progress across all different focus areas of the plan.

Transparency in tracking progress in the implementation of the National Strategic Plan is important, particularly given the importance of public accountability. Finally, while the National Strategic Plan highlights the need to consider the specific effects of interventions on marginalised groups, it is recommended that an intersectional approach be applied to all interventions. There is a growing recognition that gender-based violence is exacerbated by other identity categories, such as race, class, poverty, disability, and sexual orientation.

Conclusion

The Gender-Based Violence and Femicide National Strategic Plan is a South African government initiative to tackle gender-based violence and femicide. This study examines the effects of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide, implemented by the South African Government, on the Gender-

Based Violence (GBV) rate as of July 2023. It discusses the effects of the National Strategic Plan on GBV, the results highlight the positive impacts, and recommendations for further reducing GBV.

According to the findings, although the National Strategic Plan is a recent policy document that still requires more time to be completely enforced, it positively increases awareness and education on GBV, ensuring that GBV courts are established and operational (Zinyemba & Hlongwana, 2022). However, there is still a need to improve the provision of free legal and psychosocial support to victims seeking justice and capacity training for law enforcement agencies to handle GBV cases effectively.

This study recommends that the South African Government prioritise and accelerate the implementation of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide by committing additional funding, resources, and infrastructure towards its success.

The Gender-Based Violence and Femicide National Strategic Plan must be firmly broadened and intensified through increased action across all

pillars, with cooperation expected from national, provincial, and local governments; civil society; the private sector; and international development partners. Everyone plays a role in strengthening justice and health systems to hold perpetrators accountable and address the social norms and inequalities that encourage gender violence (Jansen van Rensburg, 2012). Preventing gender-based violence and femicide while protecting women and ensuring that all South Africans live in safety free from violence is everybody's responsibility.

Summary of Key Findings

Gender-based violence (GBV) is an important global public health challenge deeply rooted in gender disparities and violations of human rights. Millions of women worldwide have fallen victim to GBV, which affects fundamental human rights and threatens their wellbeing. Anglophone Sub-Saharan Africa, which includes South Africa, has some of the highest GBV rates in the world. South Africa is noted for its historical violence exacerbated by detrimental socio-political transitions, leading to high rates of homicide and femicide against women. South Africa has a policy aimed at combating GBV; however,

evidence of its utility in addressing GBV is scarce.

The aim of this study was to explore men's conceptualisation of GBV directed toward women, understand their attitudes and beliefs regarding their involvement in curbing such violence, and contribute to knowledge informing future GBV intervention strategies (Zinyemba & Hlongwana, 2022). The GBV National Strategic Plan (NSP) is a South African policy aimed at curbing gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF). This study assessed the knowledge and perception of GBV NSP among men living in a community with high GBV rates. Although 69.5% of respondents were unaware of GBV NSP, those familiar with it perceived it as a mechanism to fully address GBV. GBV NSP should be widely disseminated to men in communities, particularly those with high GBV rates, for greater awareness and understanding of strategies to create a safe environment for women (Jansen van Rensburg, 2012).

Contributions to Existing Literature

This research adds to the existing literature on GBV and GBVF by focusing specifically on the effects of NSP on GBV rates in South Africa.

However, no study has explicitly examined the relationship between the NSP and GBV rates. Given the urgency of the GBVF crisis in South Africa and the NSP's goal of reducing GBV by 50% in five years, this study is both timely and relevant. Although the NSP has been criticised for being overly ambitious, it provides a comprehensive framework to critically assess a country's progress in dealing with GBV. In particular, the consideration of NSP individual objectives and the indicator of completed rape trials as a measure of GBV should prove useful for future researchers conducting similar analyses in South Africa and other countries implementing national plans to combat GBV.

Future Research Directions

This study laid the foundation for future investigations based on these findings. Future research should further explore the link between NSP GBVF, as it pertains to the role of men in GBVF and GBVF rates across different municipalities in South Africa. Further research can begin to assess whether municipalities holding workshops related to men's involvement in GBVF specifically linked to NPS GBVF saw a reduction in GBVF rates.

This would result in the caveat of knowing whether GBVF incidents were underreported prior to the implementation of the NPS GBVF or any similar workshops held at the participating municipalities. Such studies would better inform the government and stakeholders about the effectiveness of NPS GBVF (Gracious Zinyemba & Hlongwana, 2022). Future research could also assess whether it is only men's understanding of GBV or perhaps other groups' understanding of GBV, which plays a more significant role in the effectiveness of ongoing behaviour change interventions.

Additionally, future research could examine how men's conceptualisation of GBV might differ in other townships across South Africa, considering the context in which they were raised. For instance, research could compare the conceptualisation of GBV in men from rural areas versus urban townships. If efforts to bring about changes in how gender-based violence is conceptualised as a need, such efforts should be underpinned by evidence showing how such change reduces the prevalence of gender-based violence, and in the absence of such evidence, change efforts should take caution.

Acknowledgements

This is a study Assessing the impact of national strategic plans on Gender-based Violence and femicide in South Africa and its effects on GBV rates.

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced the writing of this paper.

Funding

No financial support was received for the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

Data Availability

Data pertaining this study is available especially the secondary data analysed from data reported by SAPS between 2020-2023.

Disclaimer

This article reflects the author's own opinion, and not that of any institution or funder.

11. References

A. John, N., Bukuluki, P., E. Casey, S., B. Chauhan, D., O. Jagun, M., Mabhena, N., Mwangi, M., & McGovern, T., 2023. Government responses to COVID-19 and impact on GBV services and programs: Comparative analysis of the situation in South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, and Nigeria. Available at: <http://www.ncbi.gov> (accessed 01/11/2024).

Abrahams, N., Mhlongo, S., Chirwa, E., Dekel, B., Ketelo, A., Lombard, C., Shai, N., Ramsoomar, L., Mathews, S., Labuschagne, G., Matzopoulos, R., Prinsloo, M., J. Martin, L., & Jewkes, R., 2024. Femicide, intimate partner femicide, and non-intimate partner femicide in South Africa: An analysis of three national surveys, 1999–2017. Available at ncbi.nlm.nih.gov (Accessed 10/08/2025),

Allen, S., 2018. The Importance of an Intersectional Approach to Gender-based Violence in South Africa. Available at [\[PDF\]](#) (Accessed 04/11/2024).

B Mataba, R., 2016. The relationship between awareness of violence against women's prevention campaigns and gender attitudes and talking about violence among women in Gauteng. A available at <https://core.ac.uk/download/188772008.pdf> (Accessed 04/11/2024).

Boonzaier, F. (2005). Women's Abuse in South Africa: A Brief Contextual Analysis. *Feminism & Psychology*, 15(1), 99-103.

Buqa, W., 2022. Gender-based violence in South Africa: Narrative reflections. *HTS Teologie Studies/Theological Studies*. Available at ajol.info (Accessed 16/11/2024).

De la Harpe, K., 2010. Investigating the discourses women draw on to understand violence in intimate relationships.

Dlakavu, S., 2022. The Road to the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide in South Africa. *Feminist Institutionalism in South Africa: Designing for Gender Equality*, 247. Available at: [HTML](#) (accessed 23/11/2024).

Dosekun, S. (2013). 'Rape is a huge issue in this country': Discursive constructions of the rape crisis in South Africa. *Feminism & Psychology*, 23(4), 517-535.

Enaifoghe, A., Dlelana, M., Durokifa, A. A., and Dlamini, N. P. 2021. Prevalence of gender-based violence against women in South Africa: A call for action. *African Journal of Gender, Society & Development*, 10(1), p.117.

Gracious Zinyemba, K. & Hlongwana, K., 2022. Men's conceptualisation of gender-based violence directed toward women in Alexandra Township, Johannesburg, South Africa. Available at: <http://www.ncbi.gov> (accessed 20/11/2024).

J. Mannell, H. Lowe, L. Brown, R. Mukerji, D., Devakumar, L., and Gram, H. A. Jansen, N. Minckas, D. Osrin, A. Prost and G. Shannon, 2022. Risk factors for violence against women in high-prevalence settings: A mixed-methods systematic review and meta-synthesis. *BMJ global health*, 7(3), p.e007704.

Jansen van Rensburg, M., 2012. A comprehensive program addressing HIV/AIDS and gender based violence. Available at: <http://www.ncbi.gov> (accessed 01/07/2024).

Mahlangu, P., Gibbs, A., Shai, N., Machisa, M., Nunze, N., & Sikweyiya, Y. 2022. Impact of COVID-19 lockdown and link to women and children's experiences of violence at home in South Africa. *BMC Public Health* 22(1), 1029.

Mofokeng, J. and Simelane, N., 2024. Views On Gender-Based Violence And Femicide: Implications For Policy And Practice Interventions. *Innovation Journal of Social Sciences and Economic Review* 6(2), pp.10-25.

Moreroa, M. C., Rapanyane, M. B., 2021. A Growing Outcry of Gender-based Violence and Gender Inequality in South Africa: An Afrocentric Perspective. *African Journal of Gender, Society, and Development*, 10(2), p.7.

Mthembu, J., Mabaso, M., Reis, S., Zuma, K., Zungu, N. 2021. Prevalence and factors associated with intimate partner violence among adolescent girls and young women in South Africa: Findings of the 2017 population-based study *BMC Public Health*. Available at <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1186/s12889-021-11183-z.pdf> (Accessed 06/11/2024).

Nduna, M. & Tshona, S. O., 2021. Domesticated polyviolence against women during the 2020 Covid-19 lockdown in South Africa. *Psychological studies*. Available at: <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s12646-021-00616-9.pdf> (Accessed 15/10/2024).

Reis, C. & R. Meyer, S., 2024. Understudied and under-addressed: Femicide is an extreme form of violence against women and girls. Available at: <http://www.ncbi.gov> (accessed 03/07/2024).

Sardinha, L., Maheu-Giroux, M., Stöckl, H., Meyer, S. R., García-Moreno, C. 2022. Global, regional, and national prevalence estimates of physical, sexual, and intimate partner violence against women in 2018. *The Lancet*, 399(10327), pp.803-813.

Shai, N., Ramsoomar, L., & Abrahams, N., 2023. Open Access: Femicide Prevention Strategy Development Process: South African Experience. *Femicide in War and Peace*. Available at [\[HTML\]](#) (Accessed 18/08/2025).

Zecha A, Abrahams N, Duhamel K, Fabre C, Otamendi A, Cazares AR, et al. Data sources and challenges in addressing femicide and feminicides. In: Dawson M, Vega SM, editors. (2023). *The Routledge International Handbook on Femicide and Feminicide*. Routledge.