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**Take it Like a Man! An Investigation of the
Discourses of Female Perpetrated Intimate
Partner Violence against South African
Heterosexual Males on Facebook.**

By

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**A thesis submitted in the fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of
Arts in Communication Studies in the Faculty of Humanities, University of
Johannesburg.**

October 2023

Declaration

I, **Letacia Sekanka (Student #201174497)**, hereby declare that I am the sole author of this study entitled ***Take it Like a Man! An Investigation of the Discourses of Female Perpetrated Intimate Partner Violence against South African Heterosexual Males on Facebook***. This dissertation is a representation of my original work unless otherwise indicated in the text. All referenced materials, citations and contributions of others have been duly acknowledged. This dissertation was done under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Sifiso Mnisi and has not been previously submitted for any degrees or examination in any other university.



Dedication

To my husband, best friend, and biggest cheerleader, Parson Gapa. Thank you for your infinite love, unwavering support and never-ending encouragement. I am eternally grateful and in awe of the immense sacrifices you made for me to achieve this dream. This would not have been possible without you. A million tongues will never be enough to express my deepest gratitude and love for you. I love you for all eternity, Mukanya.



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To my entire family, thank you for your support, sacrifices and encouragement. Thank you for the foundation you laid for me to reach this stage. I truly appreciate you all.

Last, to Bafana Sithole who took his life at the age of 17 due to false rape allegations by a fellow female learner who said, "*I was just kidding.*" I hope the hashtag #JusticeForBafanaSithole will continue to live on, and that your story will highlight the seriousness of male victimisation in South Africa. To all male victims of intimate partner violence who are suffering silently at the hands of women, I hope this research forms part of the foundation for a tall and concrete haven for you to be heard, seen and helped.

Abstract

Intimate partner violence (IPV) perpetrated by women against men is a prominent yet hidden phenomenon. Given that little is known about this problem, this study set out to analyse discourses from publicly available groups, pages and accounts on Facebook to gain further insight into the perpetration of violence by women against men within heterosexual intimate relationships. This study is shaped by three objectives. First, the various forms of IPV that females perpetrated against their male partners were investigated in accordance with the South African Domestic Violence Amendment Act 14 of 2021. Secondly, the study analysed publicly available discourses in the form of posts, comments and replies that Facebook Users employed to narrate IPV against men. Third, the study investigated the role of social media in the area of female perpetrated IPV. The application of critical discourse analysis as a theoretical framework exposed the hidden power dynamics that worked silently and implicitly in the texts to conceal the injustice and oppression of violence perpetrated by women against men. Legitimation strategies such as positive self-representation and negative representation of the 'other', were used to make IPV perpetration appear natural and necessary. Discourses of humour, demon possession and witchcraft signaled a strong denial of female perpetrated IPV. These discourses were shaped by masculinity ideology, patriarchy and the social conditions of the country. These factors determined properties of discourse as Facebook Users drew on them to make sense of female perpetrated IPV. The role of social media as a platform for engagements on this issue was equally crucial as users were able to resist power dynamics and counter dominant hegemonic discourses that legitimise female perpetrated IPV. While research on the subject of female perpetrated IPV in South Africa is growing, there is still a gap from a social media perspective that analyses discourses from a critical linguistic perspective to reveal the hidden power dynamics that contribute to the continuation of this phenomenon. This study attempted to address this gap and concluded that masculinity ideology, patriarchy and high levels of femicide in the country are central to the legitimation of female perpetrated IPV.

Acronyms

CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CTS	Conflict Tactics Scale
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
DV	Domestic Violence
DVA	Domestic Violence Act
GBV	Gender-based Violence
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
IPSV	Intimate Partner Sexual Violence
MCA	Model of Courtship Aggression
MR	Members' Resources
NMA	Normative Male Alexithymia
PAS	Propensity for Abuse Scale
PTSD	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SAPS	South African Police Service
SASOP	South African Society of Psychiatrists
SNS	Social Networking Site
TV	Television
UN	United Nations
WHO	World Health Organisation

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction and Background

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is one of the most prominent and underreported crimes in South Africa (Gass, Stein, Williams & Seedat, 2011). This is understandable given that South Africa is known as one of the most violent and dangerous countries to live in,¹ especially for a country that is not at war (Peacock, 2012). The country is labelled as the rape capital of the world² that is coupled with high rates of femicide as a result of domestic violence (Amusa, Bengesai & Khan, 2022; Shai, Ramsoomar & Abrahams, 2022). According to Statistics South Africa (2020:16), 15.5% of violent crimes occur within intimate relationships where men have been found to be the main perpetrators of IPV. The violence perpetrated by men against their female partners is often blamed on varying factors including childhood trauma from exposure to violence in the home (Milaniak & Widom, 2015). Given that women have been found as the biggest victims of IPV (World Health Organisation, 2021), most research, resources and media coverage justifiably focuses on female victims whilst little attention is paid to male victims. With that, it is important to note that this research does not intend to minimise or belittle the horror and tragedy of IPV against women in South Africa, nor does it seek to make a comparison of the pain felt by women against that of men. Rather, this research aims to contribute to the understanding of IPV perpetrated by women against men within heterosexual intimate relationships in South Africa.

Men often face various forms of IPV perpetrated by their female partners (Thobejane & Luthada, 2019). These include physical, financial, and psychological abuse and coercive

¹ Human Rights Watch (2010). Human rights watch world report: South Africa. *Seven Stories Press*. 1-612

² South Coast Herald. (2018). Surge in sexual assault and violence has led to South Africa being dubbed “the rape capital of the world.” Available from: <https://southcoastherald.co.za/314591/surge-sexual-assault-violence-led-south-africa-dubbed-rape-capital-world/> (Accessed 6 May 2022).

control (Gathogo, 2015). Despite this evidence, little is known about this phenomenon as men prefer to remain silent about their victimisation due to “embarrassment [and] fear of ridicule” in society (Barber, 2008: 35), thus making them a “hidden” victim group (Cook, 2009: 107). In addition, the silence emanates from the pressure to maintain the patriarchal and socially constructed ideologies about masculinity which hold that men are superior to women and therefore, cannot be overpowered or dominated by the ‘weaker’ sex (Thobejane & Luthada, 2019; Alsawalqa, 2021). Similarly, little is also known about this phenomenon from women’s perspectives as most studies tend to focus on their victimisation rather than their perpetration of IPV against men (Drijber, Reijnders & Ceelen, 2013; Graaf & Heinecken, 2017). The lack of literature on female perpetrated IPV against men, on a larger scale, may negatively affect the development and implementation of intervention programs to address and combat this issue. Therefore, this study can potentially contribute to both the understanding of female perpetrated IPV and the development of intervention programs for male victims.

Given the dearth of scholarly literature on female perpetrated IPV against men in South Africa, this study aims to analyse discourses from publicly available groups, pages and accounts in South Africa to gain further insight into this problem. Facebook has been selected as an appropriate platform to study this phenomenon as it provides anonymity which contributes to a heightened sense of freedom, protection and anonymity, allowing Users to engage on this topic in ways they would perhaps refrain from in physical spaces (Papacharissi, 2009). Facebook can potentially result in open and honest discussions vis-à-vis physical spaces, thereby, resulting in gaining further insight into IPV perpetrated by females against males.

1.2. Summary of Preliminary Literature Review

1.2.1. The Nature and History of Female Perpetrated IPV

The South African Domestic Violence Act 14 of 2021, also defined as the New Act,³ defines IPV as violent acts and behaviours including physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse between two individuals who are or were in an engagement, dating, co-parenting, cohabiting or customary relationship, including an actual or perceived romantic, intimate or sexual relationship of any duration. Although IPV is also defined as domestic violence (Adebayo, 2014; Davis & Meerkotter, 2017), the South African Domestic Violence Amendment Act 14 of 2021 refers to domestic violence (DV) as an umbrella term under which IPV is placed. Despite the evidence suggesting that women perpetrate violence at the same rate as men and even higher (Archer, 2000; Outlaw, 2009), IPV remains a “female domain” where male victims are not recognised (Hester et al., 2012). The belief that women cannot perpetrate violence emanates from the social constructs that they are naturally submissive (Thobejane & Luthada, 2019), and physically weaker than men, and therefore, their perpetration cannot result in severe injuries (Archer, 2000; McNeely, Cook & Torres, 2001). However, this view focuses only on physical violence and ignores other forms of IPV such as verbal, emotional and psychological abuse which are also severe and can lead to mental health issues such as depression and suicide ideation (Randle & Graham, 2011).

The victimisation of men by their female partners has been an ongoing and unresolved debate (Dobash & Dobash, 2004; Walker et al., 2020). This debate emanates from the lack of evidence provided by male victims who are often reluctant to report cases of perpetration by their female partners due to the negative treatment by police officers and society at large (Barkhuizen, 2015; Thobejane & Luthada, 2019). In fact, this negative treatment can be traced back to post-Renaissance France where husbands who were battered by their wives were trotted around their town and forced to ride a donkey backward while holding its tail (Steinmetz, 1977-78). This was known as ‘*The Charivari*’, a custom intended to humiliate and embarrass male victims for being abused by their

³ Family and Divorce Law. (2023). The New Domestic Violence Amendment Act 14 of 2021. Available from: <https://www.divorcelaws.co.za/gbv-domestic-violence.html> (Accessed 04 June 2022).

wives as they threatened the social order of the patriarchal community (Steinmetz, 1977-78). Decades later, male victims of female perpetrated IPV are still mocked, humiliated and ridiculed (Barber, 2008; Thobejane & Luthada, 2019), and are further treated with disbelief and skepticism when reporting their victimisation to the authorities (Barkhuizen, 2015). To avoid marginalisation in society, they tend to just 'put up with' the perpetration (Bates, 2019).

1.2.2. Discourses by Male Victims of Female Perpetrated IPV

Male victims of female perpetrated IPV often refuse to use language that portrays them as victims and tend to be very selective of their words when describing experiences of their victimisation by female partners. Narrative analyses by Durfee (2011), Eckstein (2010) and Brooks et al. (2020) showed that men selectively used language that encompassed hegemonic masculinity when describing their victimisation in order to maintain their power and control. Similarly, South African men tend to be dishonest about their victimisation experiences as they often blame their injuries on a fight with another man instead of their female partner (Kgatle, Mankwana, Sefoka, Mafa & Manganyi, 2021). The selective use of hegemonically masculine language can be inferred as an attempt to maintain masculine ideologies rooted in the belief that men should be strong and not show any form of weakness. In South Africa, this is evident in the Sepedi proverb, "*Monna ke nku o llela teng*" which means, 'men must suffer in silence' (Thobejane, Mogorosi & Luthada, 2018) or "men do not weep" (Thusi & Mlambo, 2023: 74). This has become the narrative of some South African male victims who fear being perceived as weak by society (Alsawalqa, 2021). Men's victimisation has become a "forbidden narrative" (Church, 1996: 116), making it difficult for them to relate with the language of IPV such as "victim" because it opposes masculine ideas that are strongly related to power, control and dominance (Durfee, 2011). This has made South African male victims "hard to reach" because of the societal stigma of being abused by a woman (Thobejane & Luthada, 2019: 11). Men's discourses are shaped by African cultural norms and patriarchal expectations which socialise boys to believe that they are superior to girls and should therefore exert power over them as opposed to being victimised by them (Alsawalqa, 2021; Thobejane &

Luthada, 2019). Furthermore, Oparinde and Matsha (2021) state that the language people use influences and is influenced by their understanding and perception of the world. Therefore, the selection of the words and language used by individuals on Facebook could be an extension of their understanding of the environment within which they are situated. Through their discourses on female perpetrated IPV, Facebook Users demonstrate how environmental, societal and situational factors shape their understanding and perception of this phenomenon.

1.2.3. Social Media and Female Perpetrated IPV against Men

Social media plays an integral role across various fields in the modern era, particularly within academia as researchers have used it to understand and address issues relating to IPV (Hellevik, 2018; Subramani, Wang & Vu, 2018). Rentschler (2014) states that social media is important because it can give victims a voice and expose their perpetrators so that they are held accountable. Moreso, online discourses help to unlay the complexities of IPV which are sometimes portrayed in the news media as common perpetrator or victim stories (Whiting, Olufowote, Cravens-Pickens & Witting, 2019). Given that men rarely speak about their IPV experiences, platforms such as Facebook, where much anonymity is afforded, are important as they are potential spaces for men to vent about their victimisation whilst allowing researchers to dissect this information and use it to gain a deeper understanding of IPV. Connell (1987) found that men use “emotional inexpression” to conceal their vulnerability in order to conform to patriarchal and masculine norms. However, the lack of physical interaction, combined with anonymity and masked identities on Facebook can allow male victims to be more open about their victimisation experiences. This can potentially increase the chances of learning more about this phenomenon. Research has shown that perceived anonymity on social media increases self-disclosure, especially of negative emotions (Ma et al., 2016). Thus, anonymity can be regarded as a positive aspect for victimised males as they can disclose their IPV experiences and the negative emotions they are withholding. This is particularly important given that male victims are often mocked and ridiculed by police officers (Barkhuizen, 2015) and society at large when disclosing how their female partners have

abused them (Thobejane & Luthada, 2019). Furthermore, anonymity reduces self-awareness (Pan, Hou & Wang, 2023), which can encourage victims to open up about their experiences, therefore, leading to further insight into this problem.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

Although there is a growing body of scholarly literature in South Africa that investigates the victimisation of men by their female partners within heterosexual relationships,^{4 5 6 7} there is a gap in literature on the analysis of social media texts from a critical discourse perspective to reveal how power dynamics hidden in language contribute to the perpetration of men by women (c.f. Mkhize & Sibisi, 2022). The dearth of research in this area indicates that IPV is a “forbidden narrative”⁸ for men as women are recognised as the only legitimate victims of this crime (George, 1994). Thus, little is known about male victimisation due to men’s preferred silence, emotional inexpressions (Connell, 1987) and the dishonesty about the nature of their injuries (Kgatle et al., 2021). These can hinder the ability to gain further insight into female perpetrated IPV and potentially resolving it as it is difficult to precisely identify how men are victimised (Mphatheni & Mlamla, 2022). Men’s silence about their victimisation has various implications. First, the significance of their victimisation is overlooked due to the lack of reporting (Thobejane, Mogorosi & Luthada, 2018). This has led to their plight not to be officially recognised as a social problem due to low reporting which can affect the support and resources that can be made available to them. Secondly, the pressure to meet and maintain gender role norms can lead to mental health problems such as depression and affect the overall health of men (Alsawalqa, 2021; Pleck, 1995). Thirdly, female perpetrators and society at large

⁴Thusi, X. & Mlambo, V. H. (2023). South Africa’s Gender-based Violence: An Exploration of a Single Sided Account. *Eureka: Social and Humanities* (2).

⁵Mphatheni, M. R. & Mlamla, N. E. (2022). Gender-based Violence against Men and Boys: A Hidden Problem. *African Journal of Gender, Society and Development*, 12(3), 59-83.

⁶Thobejane, T. D. & Luthada, V. (2019). An investigation into the trend of Domestic Violence on Men: The Case of South Africa. *OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development*, 12(3), 11-18

⁷Zinyemba & Hlongwana (2022). Men’s conceptualization of gender-based violence directed to women in Alexandra Township, Johannesburg, South Africa. *BMC Public Health*. 22:2235, 1-12

⁸Church, K. (1996: 15). *Forbidden narratives: Critical autobiography as social science*. London: Routledge.

may be oblivious to the catastrophic and traumatic repercussions of men's victimisation and may continue to trivialise, mock and ridicule men as they are not aware of the effects of this scourge on them. Therefore, this study brings forth the question of female perpetrated IPV from a social media perspective to gain further insight into the forms of IPV women perpetrate against men; the power relations hidden in language; and the role of social media in promoting discussions on female perpetrated IPV. Given the lack of scholarly literature on the subject, these aspects can lead to further insight into this phenomenon.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it comes at a time when the country is experiencing high rates of suicide by men. The World Population Review suicide statistics for 2023 indicate that South Africa is ranked number 10 on the list of countries with the highest suicides rates, with 23,5 per 100 000 population. This means of the 13 774 suicides reported in the country, 10 861 were men whilst 2 913 were women.⁹ The South African Society of Psychiatrists (SASOP, 2020) notes that the 'macho male stereotype' placed on men to act in 'manly' ways, combined with the failure to do so, leads to men's silence, severe mental health issues and eventually suicide.¹⁰ Given that South Africa is a patriarchal country shaped by hegemonic masculinity, male victimisation continues to be a hidden problem as men prefer to remain silent in order to appear 'manly'. Similar to Pleck (1995), the SASOP (2020) highlights that the inability to fulfil male gender roles such as provider and protector, (which form part of the reasons women perpetrate IPV as discussed later in the study), leads to feelings of inadequacy and emasculation. Given that ideologies determine properties of discourse (Fairclough, 2001), this study is significant as it critically analyses Facebook discussions to reveal how masculinity ideology and power dynamics hidden in text are used to justify, legitimise, and naturalise female perpetrated IPV, thereby potentially contributing to its perpetuation.

⁹South African Society of Psychiatrists. (2020). Suicide among men – stigma prevents seeking help. Available from: <https://www.sasop.co.za/mens-health>, Accessed 14 September 2023.

1.5. Purpose of the Study

1.5.1. Research Aim

Given the dearth of scholarly literature on female perpetrated IPV against heterosexual males in South Africa, this study aims to analyse publicly available discourses on Facebook to gain further insight into this phenomenon.

1.5.2. Research Objectives

1. To establish, from Facebook discourses on female perpetrated IPV, the forms of IPV females perpetrate on their male partners.
2. To analyse the discourses used to narrate IPV against men.
3. To investigate the role of social media as a platform for social engagements in the area of female perpetrated IPV.

1.5.3. Research Questions

This study is guided by the following questions:

- What forms of IPV are perpetrated against men by their female partners on Facebook?
- Which discourses are used to narrate female perpetrated IPV against men on Facebook?
- What role does social media play as a platform for social engagements, particularly in the area of female perpetrated IPV?

1.6. Definition of Key Terms

Intimate partner violence: Intimate partner violence refers to the perpetration of various forms of violent acts and behaviours by one partner against the other in order to exert power, dominance and control over them (Johnson, 2008). These include physical, sexual, verbal, emotional and psychological abuse, economic, stalking, spiritual abuse,

legal and administrative aggression, and entry into one's residence without their permission (DVA Amendment Act 14 of 2021). In this study, intimate partner violence refers to the violence perpetrated by females against their male partners within heterosexual relationships.

Female perpetrators: Female perpetrators are the women who perpetrate various forms of IPV against their male partners in heterosexual relationships. These forms of IPV include physical, sexual, emotional, verbal and psychological abuse, economic abuse, stalking and harassment, malicious damage to property, and legal and administrative aggression (DVA Amendment Act 14 of 2021).

Male victims: The male victims in this study are heterosexual males who are subjected to various forms of IPV perpetrated by their intimate female partners.

Discourses: Discourses refer to the "language use in speech and writing - as a form of "social practice" (Wodak, 2014: 303). This means that the selected discourses on the subject of IPV in this study are not analysed in isolation but in relation to the conditions of South Africa. Female perpetrated IPV in this context is a discursive event that shapes and is shaped by the historical, political and sociocultural conditions as these determined the way people speak about this phenomenon. In this study, the discourses are the written texts on Facebook comprising posts, comments and replies.

Facebook User(s): This term is used as a pseudonym to refer to individuals whose posts, comments and replies were selected and used in the study. To protect the identities of these individuals, the term 'Facebook User(s)' is used.

The New Act: The New Act refers to the Domestic Violence Amendment Act 14 of 2021 which amends the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) 116 of 1998. The New Act amended the 'Old Act' to insert certain definitions and acknowledge forms of IPV that were not included in the Old Act (Government Gazette, 2022). Examples include spiritual abuse and the use of ICT to perpetrate IPV.

1.7. Structure of the Study

Chapter One provided the introduction and background to the study. The chapter provided a preliminary review of literature that explains the phenomenon of female perpetrated IPV against men within the South African context. The problem statement, significance of study, research aim, objectives and questions were discussed in the chapter. **Chapter Two** establishes the context of the problem from the global and local perspectives. The chapter reviews earlier and recent literature to gain a comprehensive view of female perpetrated IPV. Potential gaps in the literature are highlighted followed by how this study can contribute to addressing the identified gaps. **Chapter Three** discusses the theoretical framework where CDA, the GRSP and the Virtual Space are used as lenses to gain a better view and understanding of this phenomenon. **Chapter Four** outlines the methodological approaches used to collect and analyse the data. **Chapter Five** analyses the data, presents the findings and subsequently answers the research questions that guided this study. **Chapter Six** concludes the study and makes recommendations for future studies.

1.8. Conclusion

Chapter one introduced the study and provided the background to the phenomenon of female perpetrated IPV against men. The chapter discussed the research aim, objectives and questions. The statement of the problem, as well as the significance of the study were addressed. The next chapter reviews literature on the subject from both the global and South African context

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature on intimate partner violence (IPV) perpetrated by females against their male partners within heterosexual relationships. Further, this chapter provides a definition of IPV, its critiques and limitations particularly where the male is excluded and not recognised as a victim of female perpetrated IPV. The history of female perpetrated IPV is provided, followed by the causes, effects, and the prevalence of this problem from the global and local contexts. In addition, the discourses used by male victims of female perpetrated IPV to describe their experiences are explored. Last, existing research on social networking sites as platforms for discussing and investigating female perpetrated IPV is reviewed.

2.2. Defining Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence refers to various forms of violence including physical violence, sexual violence and psychological aggression perpetrated by a current or former partner against the other in an intimate heterosexual or homosexual relationship in a dating, cohabiting, co-parenting or marital relationship (Drijber, Reijnders & Ceelen, 2013; Hamel, Jones, Dutton, Graham-Kevan, 2015). For the purpose of this study, I focus on IPV as it prevails within heterosexual relationships where the male is the victim, and the female is the perpetrator.

It is often difficult to provide an accurate and fixed definition of IPV as it is shaped by researchers' perspectives, theories, conflicting ideologies, and different reporting by perpetrators and victims (Burelomovaa, Gulina & Tikhomandritskaya, 2018). This difficulty is enhanced by the historical, societal and individual issues which contribute to the uniqueness of each form of IPV, thus leading to the lack of a universally accepted definition of IPV that can encompass all its forms (Burelomovaa et al., 2018). Given the

different forms of IPV, the need to each form in its own accord and manner becomes imperative. Thus, researchers have specifically focused on different forms of IPV. For instance, some have focused on intimate partner sexual violence (IPSV) (Bagwell-Gray, Messing & Baldwin-White, 2015), others on physical violence (Kgatle et al., 2021), economic abuse (Stylianou, 2018) and psychological abuse (Heise, Pallitto, Garcia-Moreno & Clark, 2019). Hence it has been suggested that in order to eradicate IPV, different intervention and prevention programs are needed for different forms of IPV (Neal & Edwards, 2019).

The term IPV has been defined in various ways which are often limited to female victims only. Since “the overwhelming global burden of IPV is borne by women” (World Health Organisation, 2012: 497), some organisations have resorted to defining IPV from a male-perpetration and female-victimisation standpoint (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1993). The World Health Organisation (WHO) (2012) for instance, defines IPV as wife or spouse abuse, and wife or spouse battering. Due to the lack of specificity, it can be assumed that the term “spouse” in this definition refers to the husband. However, this term could also apply to spouses in homosexual relationships. The WHO (2012) also refers to an abusive intimate partner as the husband or ex-husband, boyfriend or lover, within intimate relationships. The term “wife”, “girlfriend” or any other word that suggests the female as the perpetrator is excluded. However, other organisations such as the United Nations (UN) (2023) do not focus on the gender of the perpetrator in intimate relationships. The UN rather defines IPV as “a pattern of behaviour in any relationship that is used to gain, or maintain, power and control over an intimate partner.”¹¹

Due to the absence of a definition that specifically states the male as the victim and the female as the perpetrator, I have defined female perpetrated IPV against males as violence suffered by men at the hands of their female partners in dating, cohabiting, co-parenting and marital relationships. I use the New Act to refer to the various forms of violence perpetrated by females against males within heterosexual intimate relationships. The New Act uses the terms complainant and respondent to describe the perpetrator and

¹¹ United Nations. (2023). *What is Domestic Abuse?* Available from: <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/what-is-domestic-abuse>, Accessed 9 June 2022

the victim. The complainant (victim) means any person who is or has been in a domestic relationship with the respondent, and who is or has been subjected or allegedly subjected to an act of domestic violence. The respondent (perpetrator) refers to any person who is or has been in a domestic relationship with the complainant and who has a) committed or allegedly committed; or b) has used or allegedly used a third-party actor to commit or allegedly to commit an act of domestic violence against the complainant. Given that the New Act does not describe the gender of the complainant and the respondent, the term complainant herein refers to male victims and the respondent to female perpetrators.

2.3. The South African Domestic Violence Act

This study uses the Domestic Violence Amendment Act 14 of 2021 (the New Act) which amends the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 (the Old Act). The New Act came into effect on 28 January 2022 with the aim of inserting and recognising other forms of IPV which were not previously included in the Old Act. Examples include spiritual abuse and the use of electronic communication to perpetrate IPV. The use of electronic communication to perpetrate IPV is crucial in this study given that the use of Facebook is dependent on access to the internet and electronic devices.

The New Act recognises the following as forms of IPV:

- (a) Physical abuse includes threats of physical violence towards a complainant; depriving the complainant of their liberty or threaten to do so; to administer, attempt to administer or threaten to administer violence as well as the use of any chemical or other substance that is harmful to the health or wellbeing of the complainant, to a complainant without the complainant's consent.

- (b) Sexual abuse means any conduct that abuses, humiliates, degrades or otherwise violates the sexual integrity of the complainant. It is also any sexual activity that occurs without consent.

- (c) Emotional, verbal, and or psychological abuse means a pattern of degrading, manipulating, threatening, offensive, intimidating or humiliating conduct towards a

complainant that causes mental or psychological harm to a complainant. This includes repeated insults, ridicule or name calling; threats to cause emotional pain; or the repeated exhibition of obsessive possessiveness or jealousy which constitutes a serious invasion of the complainant's privacy, liberty, integrity or security. This form of abuse also includes the willful damaging or destruction of any property, or to threaten the complainant with death or injury.

- (d) Economic abuse includes the unreasonable deprivation of economic or financial resources to which a complainant is entitled under law and requires out of necessity. Examples include educational expenses and household necessities for the complainant; the unreasonable disposal of household effects or other property in which the complainant has an interest without the complainant's permission.
- (e) Intimidation means uttering or conveying a threat to, or causing a complainant to receive a threat which induces fear. These include physical violence, or damage to property belonging, threats of physical violence, or damage to property; depriving the complainant or any other person of their liberty or threatening to do so.
- (f) Harassment means engaging in a pattern of conduct that induces the fear of harm to a complainant including following, watching, stalking, pursuing or accosting of the complainant or a related person, or
- (g) Spiritual abuse refers to insulting the other person's religious or spiritual beliefs; using their spiritual beliefs to manipulate them and prevent them from practicing their spiritual beliefs.
- (h) Damage to property refers to the intentional and unlawful vandalism of property belonging to another person. It includes vandalism of cars, furniture and other tangible items that can result in financial strain to the victim.

- (i) Entry into the complainant's residence including permanent or temporary residence without their consent, where the parties do not share the same residence, or workplace or place of study, without their consent.
- (j) any other controlling behaviour of an intimidating, threatening, abusive, degrading, offensive or humiliating nature towards a complainant, where such conduct harms, or [may cause imminent harm to, the safety, health or wellbeing of] inspires the reasonable belief that may be cause to the complainant.

In addition to the definition of IPV is the legal and administrative aggression which refers to the manipulation of legal systems by one partner against the other (Dim & Lysova, 2022). Although legal and administrative aggression is not specifically included in the New Act, there has been an increase of this form of IPV by females who have reported false allegations about their male partners to the authorities, leading to men's arrest (Entilli & Cipolletta, 2017). Legal aggression is thus added to this study as another form of female perpetrated IPV.

2.4. Intimate Partner Violence in Context

IPV is a serious social, public health and human rights issue around the world (World Health Organisation, 2021). Anyone can be a victim of IPV irrespective of their age, race, class, ethnicity, religious beliefs, and geographic location (Adebayo, 2014). Of all domestic crimes committed, IPV is the most common type of violence (World Health Organisation, 2012). Hence some researchers coined "the marriage licence as a hitting license" after discovering that the violence within intimate relationships was higher than other forms of violences (Barkhuizen, 2015: 291).

IPV has long been known as violence perpetrated by men against their female partners within heterosexual relationships (Castilla & Murphy, 2023; Dobash & Dobash, 2004). This is because some women, particularly wives, were the primary victims of severe forms of IPV perpetrated by their husbands (George, 1994). Violence against women, also referred to as wife battering, can be traced back to early 753 B.C where 'The Laws of

Chastisement', under the rule of Romulus in Rome had legalised and made it acceptable for husbands to abuse their wives (Lemon, 1996). The husband was given the authority to physically discipline his wife as he was solely responsible for her wrongdoings. These laws permitted men to beat their wives with a rod or switch, as long as its circumference was not larger than the man's right thumb, hence "The Rule of Thumb" (Lemon, 1996). Sexual abuse by the husband was also not recognised by the law as wives became their husbands property upon marriage (George, 1994). Therefore, women remained silent about their victimisation. Dutton (2006:32) labelled this the "age of denial" as IPV behaviours that were prosecutable went unseen, unreported, and unchallenged, as though they were not occurring.

Similarly, in South Africa, there has been a general tradition that permits men to beat their wives to make them obedient, submissive and to keep them in 'line' (Barkhuizen, 2015). This behaviour is reinforced by *Lobola* – an old traditional practice by black South Africans where the groom and his family pay the bride price or cattle for the bride (Montle, 2020). Kethusegile, Kwaramba and Lopi explain that "some husbands claim that they can do whatever they want with their wives because they paid *Lobola* for them" (2000: 20). In some cases, there are men "who abuse their wives on the grounds that they have paid *Lobola*" (Mapara, 2007: 1). A study by Zinyemba and Hlongwana (2022) showed that 84% of women from Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape and Limpopo agreed that as soon as a man pays *Lobola*, it is culturally acceptable for him to physically abuse his wife if she does something inappropriate. Thus, in some instances, *Lobola* is indeed a right for a man to abuse his wife because she is now "a possession that he can use as he pleases" (Govender, 2023: 1). However, Baloyi (2010) argues that men who perpetrate violence against their wives show a lack of understanding of the purpose and essence of *Lobola*, which is to unify the bride's and groom's families. Recently, the Zulu King, Misuzulu ka Zwelithini promised to look into possibly reducing *Lobola* payments as an incentive if men try to end violence against women.¹² This shows that *Lobola* is an important cultural aspect that men can be rewarded for if they reduce their violence towards women.

¹²Hlangu, L. (2023). Zulu king promises to reduce lobola payments as incentive to end GBV. *Times Live*. Available from: <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2023-07-22-zulu-king-promises-to-reduce-lobola-payments-as-incentive-to-end-gbv/> (Accessed 25 July 2023)

The ill-treatment that married women suffered at the hands of their husbands, as well as their fight for equal rights, opportunities and greater personal freedom led to the Feminist Movement in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States of America (George, 1994). The Feminist Movement was a protest by victimised women who rioted against the various forms of IPV that they were subjected to at the hands of their male partners. The Movement was followed by research and activism which brought the concept of IPV into mainstream discourse in the 1970s (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Thus, the violence perpetrated by men against women gained recognition as a human rights issue in the 1970s (U.S. Department of Justice, 1995). This led to significant changes in public policy, social services, civil and criminal law and law enforcement to prioritise women and create a safer world for them (Dobash & Dobash, 2004). Therefore, research and policies that focus on female victims of IPV are based on the idea that men are more likely than women to perpetrate nearly all types of interpersonal violence, including IPV against women (Castilla & Murphy, 2023; Kolbe & Büttner, 2020). As a result, there are more human rights activists, government and non-government organisations, funding, media coverage, research as well as intervention programs dedicated to female victims than male victims (Oparinde & Matsha, 2021).

The WHO (2021) estimates that 736 million women, that is 1 in 3 (30%) women around the world have been either sexually and or physically assaulted by a male intimate partner or other men in their lifetime. Furthermore, 640 million women between the ages of 15 to 49 have reported IPV by a male partner (WHO, 2021). In 2020, 81,000 women and girls were killed worldwide, and approximately 47,000 (58%) were murdered by an intimate partner or a family member, meaning that every 11 minutes a woman or girl is killed (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2021). Despite the statistics indicating that women are the primary victims of IPV in intimate relationships, this phenomenon remains one of the most debated topics. This is because in some instances, it is difficult to determine who, between men and women is likely to use violence against the other (Dobash & Dobash, 2004). Whilst some hold that “intimate partner violence is overwhelmingly an issue of male violence against a female partner” (Dobash & Dobash,

2004: 325), others argue that this phenomenon is equally likely to be women's violence against a male partner, and that women are more violent than men (Hines & Douglas, 2011).

The debate of gender symmetry, which refers to the equal perpetration of IPV between men and women, and gender asymmetry, where men are the primary perpetrators (Archer, 2000), remains an ongoing debate with continuous comparisons between male and female perpetrators in heterosexual relationships.^{13 14 15} The entire debate is based on the physical size differences between men and women, making it the biggest and most criticised debate of IPV (Dobash & Dobash, 2004). The underlying idea is that violence is predominantly physical which is a trait strongly associated with men (Entilli & Cipolletta, 2017). The physical size debate holds that men are stronger than women, hence their perpetration of IPV is more severe than that of women (Alsawalqa, 2021). However, this argument is not applicable to all men as some are not physically bigger and stronger than women. For instance, one male victim admitted that his wife's size and strength intimidated him and made him feel vulnerable because she was much larger than him and superior in strength (Barkhuizen, 2015). Moreover, women do not always rely on physical strength to perpetrate physical IPV as some have resorted to using a weapon to attack or kill their male partners whilst they were asleep or intoxicated (Johnson, 2008). This evidence opposes the dominant stereotype that all women cannot harm men because of their physical strength and size. In fact, Johnson (2008) states that gender symmetry is a myth because it has been meaninglessly measured by its prevalence of acts which are almost impossible to estimate.

The gender symmetry debate has gaps as it ignores all the other types of IPV that are recognised in the New Act such as emotional, verbal, psychological and economic abuse. The debate is solely based on physical violence where men have been found to overpower women. Generally, if physical size and strength are used as determining factors on who perpetrates violence more between men and women, the outcome will be

¹³Dobash & Dobash (1979). *Violence against wives: A case against the patriarchy*. New York: The Free Press.

¹⁴Walker. L. A. (1986). *The battered women syndrome*. New York: Springer.

¹⁵Hines, D. A. & Douglas. E. M. (2010). Intimate Terrorism by Women towards Men: Does it Exist? *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Resolution*, 2(3):36-56.

men as perpetrators and women as victims. Barkhuizen (2015) explains that by limiting IPV to physical size, strength or gender, females will continue to be seen as victims whilst male victims are ignored. This shifts the focus from the effects of IPV to the gender of the perpetrator which can result in minimising the severity of violence against men (Scott-Storey, O'Donnell, Ford-Gilboe, Varcoe, Wathen & Vincent, 2022). Moreover, the gender symmetry debate does not recognise women as the main perpetrators in heterosexual relationships. They are recognised as either equal perpetrators or the main victims of IPV. It can also be argued that a hierarchy of the different forms of IPV has been created as a result of the gender symmetry debate. Consequently, physical violence is at the top of the hierarchy, whilst other forms of IPV are disregarded (Entilli & Cipolletta, 2017). This could be accounted to the fact physical (and sexual) violence results in immediate and tangible evidence, making it easier to detect and measure compared to other forms of IPV. Additionally, studies of domestic violence began in the late 1970s and early 1980s with inquiries into physical violence in intimate partner relationships and not the other forms of IPV (Straus & Gelles, 1990), hence the increased attention on physical IPV.

IPV is rooted in a multitude of complexities that are shaped by historical, societal and individual issues (Burelomovaa et al., 2018). Therefore, various researchers have used different strategies, tools, models and methods to understand these complexities, particularly the causes, prevalence and effects. Riggs and O'Leary (1996) developed a Model of Courtship Aggression (MCA) which comprises two components, namely, the background component and the situational component. The background component refers to the historical, societal and individual characteristics which are used to predict future aggression within intimate relationships. Historical characteristics include a history of childhood abuse, parental aggression towards the children and witnessing violence within the household (Gass et al., 2011). Societal characteristics include ideologies and stereotypes that shape and influence beliefs about how men should behave. Ideologies that hold that men should be strong can contribute to male victims' silence about their victimisation to avoid public humiliation and ridicule (Alsawalqa, 2021). Last, individual characteristics include personal traits, psychopathology, and a history of the use of aggression (Burelomovaa et al., 2018).

The second component of the MCA is the situational component (Riggs & O'Leary, 1996). This component refers to the factors which contribute to a conducive environment for violence to take place. These factors include substance abuse and dependency, a lack of problem-solving skills, intimacy levels and interpersonal conflict. Combined, both the background and situational components of the MCA explain some of the causes of IPV. Similarly, the Propensity for Abuse Scale (PAS) is a self-report measurement that assesses predictive risk factors for IPV. These include factors such as trauma and harsh parenting and are used to determine if an individual will perpetrate violence in the future (Dutton, Landolt, Starzomski & Bodnarchuk, 2001). Other tools used to understand IPV include the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) developed by Murray Straus (1979). The CTS is a tool used to provide data on the prevalence and chronicity of tactics used by intimate partners to resolve conflict (Chapman & Gillespie, 2019). The Domestic Abuse Intervention Program in Duluth, Minnesota, United States of America (USA) also developed the 'Duluth Power and Control Wheel' as a device to depict the role of power and control within intimate relationships (**Figure 1**). Since IPV is perpetrated by one partner to exert power and control over the other (Johnson, 2008), the 'wheel' illustrates a range of tactics, mechanisms and behaviours that one partner uses to achieve power and control over the other (Pence & Paymar, 1993).



Figure 1: The Duluth Power and Control Wheel (Pence & Paymar, 1993). Available at: <https://www.theduluthmodel.org/wheels/>

Given the mountainous research illustrating that females are the biggest victims of IPV perpetrated by males within heterosexual relationships,^{16 17 18 19 20 21} the aforementioned measurement tools listed above were specially designed to measure IPV by men against women. For instance, the Duluth Power and Control Wheel (**Figure 1**) uses only the words ‘her’ and ‘she’ to describe the victim whilst words such as ‘him’ and ‘he’ are excluded. However, given that men are gaining recognition as victims of IPV, tools such as the CTS have been upgraded to the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2), as well as the PAS which has also been updated to acknowledge both men and women as perpetrators of IPV (Chapman & Gillespie, 2019; Allen, Swan, Maas & Barber, 2015). Specifically, a ‘Motives and Reasons for IPV scale’ was developed to understand women’s violence against their male partners in heterosexual relationships (Caldwell, Swan & Allen, Sullivan & Snow, 2009). According to Caldwell and colleagues (2009), this was the first scale to specifically measure female perpetrated IPV in heterosexual relationships. These updated and emerging tools indicate that female perpetrated IPV against males is gaining recognition. Despite this, there has not been a solid method to determine levels of perpetration between men and women. This is because not all victims report IPV, therefore, “the exact numbers [of perpetration and victimisation] are difficult to come by” (Fried, 2003: 91). Consequently, it is impossible and unreasonable to provide

¹⁶ Dobash, R. P. & Dobash, R. E. (2004). Women’s violence to men in intimate partner relationships. Working on a puzzle. *British Journal of Criminology*, 44(3):324-349

¹⁷ Hester, M. (2009). Who Does What to Whom? Gender and Domestic Violence Perpetrators. *European Journal of Criminology*, 10(5), 1-19

¹⁸ McFeely, C., Whiting, N., Lombard, N., Brooks, O., Burman, M., and McGowan, M. (2013). Domestic abuse and gender inequality: an overview of the current debate. *Centre for Research on Families and Relationships*, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK

¹⁹ Fleming, P. J., Gruskin, S., Rojo, F., & Dworkin, S. L. (2015). Men's violence against women and men are inter-related: Recommendations for simultaneous intervention. *Social Science & Medicine*, 146, 249–256.

²⁰ Walker, A., Kimina, L., Dilkie S., Georgia. G., Richelle. M., Costsa, B., Hyder, S. & Bentley, A. (2020). Male victims of female-perpetrated intimate partner violence, help-seeking, and reporting behaviors: A qualitative study. *Psychology of Men & Masculinities*, 21(2):213-223.

²¹ World Health Organisation. (2021). *Devastatingly pervasive: 1 in 3 women globally experience violence. Younger women among those most at risk: WHO*. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news/item/09-03-2021-devastatingly-pervasive-1-in-3-women-globally-experience-violence>, Accessed 09 October 2022.

fixed solutions for IPV because it is shaped by different circumstances (Dobash & Dobash, 2004). Therefore, there has only been predictive and prevalence measurement tools for IPV. This indicates that IPV within heterosexual relationships remains a colossal and multidimensional problem that requires ongoing inquiry and research, particularly because it is rooted in a multitude of complexities.

According to Johnson (2008), there are varying forms of IPV. Johnson (2008) explains that these are more about control than violence because violence is a physical manifestation of a general cycle of coercive control. Therefore, in order to understand and determine the measurement of the different forms of IPV, the control tactics must be studied first. As such, Johnson (2008) uses the 'Duluth Power and Control Wheel' (**Figure 1**) to demonstrate the role of control which often results in violence in intimate relationships. The 'wheel' shows violence as the rim of the wheel, indicating that it holds all the spokes of power and control together. Therefore, violence is one piece of a more general pattern of power and control (Dobash & Dobash, 2017). The different types of intimate partner violence by Johnson (2008) are stipulated below:

- a) Intimate Terrorism: This type of violence occurs in heterosexual relationships. It is also known as patriarchal terrorism (Johnson, 1995) and is mostly perpetrated by men against their female partners.
- b) Violent Resistance: This type of violence is mostly practiced by women in an attempt to prevent violence perpetrated against them by their male partners. Thus, the resister (woman) uses violence against the intimate terrorist (man) who is violent and controlling.
- c) Situational Couple Violence: This type of violence is not about control but rather a result of conflicts such as arguments that escalate and result in physical violence. In such cases, a partner who initiates violence may immediately regret it, show remorse and apologise.
- d) Mutual Violent Control: This is the type of IPV where both partners are violent and controlling.

2.5. History of Female Perpetrated IPV Against Males

IPV perpetrated by females against their male partners within heterosexual relationships is not new (Luthada & Thobejane, 2019). It was first brought to public attention in the 1970s by Suzan Steinmetz. In her article titled "*The Battered Husband*", Steinmetz (1977-78) stated that husband battering was not necessarily an unknown phenomenon but rather an example of selective inattention by media and researchers. In other words, Steinmetz acknowledged that men were abused by their female partners, however, their plight was less heard compared to that of female victims. Steinmetz was savagely attacked and faced death threats because her research had serious implications for funding for female victims and had the potential to shift and reduce the attention paid to female victims (George, 1994). In addition, Steinmetz's (1977-78) was criticised for failing to stipulate the context that positioned women to act violently against their husbands (George, 1994). This indicates that violence perpetrated by women was not accepted unless the context and reasons for perpetration were provided. This was evident in how the critics of her research argued that wives rarely perpetrated violence and if they did, it was out of self-defence (George, 1994). Steinmetz (1977-1978) was also accused of misreading, misinterpreting, and misrepresenting the findings of her study and was further discouraged from publishing her findings (George, 1994).

Despite this, Steinmetz's (1977-1978) research showed that the existence of IPV against men could be traced back to *The Charivari*, a custom rooted in patriarchy, a male-dominated and male-ruling system which is founded on "the absolute control of men over women, in every aspect of her life" (Patel, 2016: 18). The word patriarchy is derived from the Greek word '*patriarkhēs*' which means 'father or chief of a race' (Ademiluka, 2018). Patriarchy holds that men are superior to women. This is evident in how historically, enslaved black males who did not assume the role of provider and protector as emphasised in the modern times, automatically had higher status than women. "Consequently, the enslaved black male, though obviously deprived of the social status that would enable him to protect and provide for himself and others, had a higher status than the black female slave based solely on his being male" (Hooks, 2015: 38). As a result, IPV against women was portrayed as a social injustice that emanated from the patriarchal

order which oppressed women and portrayed them as victims of male perpetrators (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Therefore, IPV was traditionally conceptualised as a consequence of patriarchy which allowed men to use violence to maintain power and control in the relationship (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). In addition, given that patriarchy denied men as victims and women as perpetrators, it became toxic for men who failed to exercise their given power, authority, dominance, and control over women (Burelomovaa et al., 2018). It also put pressure on men to maintain dominance over women, and to constantly act in masculine ways which was often hard for them (Thobejane & Luthada, 2019). Moreover, for the black man in particular, he was relegated to the bottom of the hierarchy and unable to meet the standards of hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy due to white supremacy. Hence, marginalised groups such as male victims have their own forms of masculinity due to the inability to access the same power and privilege possessed by their white counterparts (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This is done to maintain their power as men.

It can be argued that patriarchy in some instances, has failed to achieve its mandate in granting men the power to rule in all aspects of life. On the contrary, patriarchy has denied men the ability to be mere humans who can express their pain and agony when abused by women. The basic privilege of expressing hurt is denied due to masculine standards and stereotypes. Women's perpetration of IPV against men demonstrates that patriarchy is to a certain extent, a façade because women are still able to perpetrate IPV against their male partners regardless of patriarchal privileges afforded to men.

IPV perpetrated by wives against their husbands was dismissed because of the assumption that they caused fewer injuries due to their physical size and strength (George, 1994). However, this assumption has been opposed by some scholars. For instance, early researchers have provided evidence indicating that male victims of female perpetrated violence have received medical attention after reporting severe injuries (Goldberg & Tomlanovich, 1984; Smith, Baker, Buchan & Bodiwala, 1992). In addition, research conducted in the 1970s and 1980s proves that violence was perpetrated by both partners in heterosexual relationships. For instance, Nisonoff and Bitman's (1979) study indicated that 18.6% of men in heterosexual relationships experienced violence from their

female partners. Similarly, a study by Breen (1985) shows that 23% of male students reported being slapped, kicked and punched by their female partners while 9% reported that their victimisation was a result of an assault where a weapon was used. This proves that female perpetrated violence can be severe, and that gender is not necessarily a determining factor in the perpetration of IPV between intimate partners in heterosexual relationships.

2.6. Female Perpetrators

Female perpetrated IPV against males has traditionally received little attention and has been regarded with a degree of scepticism and controversy (Nicholls, Greaves & Moretti, 2008; Hines & Douglas, 2010; Park et al., 2021). This may be due the physical size debate which holds that women are physically smaller than men and therefore, their violence is only perpetrated in self-defence, retaliation and as a pre-emptive act (Saunders, 1998). Given that IPV is “perpetrated almost entirely by men” (Johnson, 2008: 93), women’s violence is continuously argued to be perpetrated only as a response to men’s violence. However, this view is limited as it fails to explain women’s violence outside of intimate relationship such as in workplaces and towards their children. Furthermore, similar to the gender symmetry debate, women’s justification of IPV as self-defence, retaliation and a pre-emptive act is only limited to physical (and sexual) violence and ignores other forms of IPV that do not rely on physical strength for perpetration.

Women perpetrate IPV for numerous reasons including jealousy, displaying a tough guise, poor emotional expression and the need to control their partners (Caldwell et al., 2009; Entilli & Cipolletta, 2017). Moreover, childhood trauma resulting from emotional and physical abuse and neglect, sexual abuse, depression, anxiety and substance abuse can lead to the perpetration of IPV by women (Myhill, 2015). These reasons suggest that women do not always perpetrate IPV in response to men’s violence, particularly in self-defence, retaliation and a pre-empt act. Instead, their perpetration is a result of numerous factors including those stated above. Hence, George (1994:147) states that “women can act in very aggressive ways for reasons other than self-defence.” Despite this, it must be

noted that there are women who actually perpetrate IPV in self-defence (Swan & Sullivan, 2009).

Although the physical size debate is often dismissed (Dobash & Dobash, 2004), it is an important factor to consider as women often perpetrate physical IPV when the man is either asleep or drunk and is unable to defend himself. Examples include Dan Matakaya, a 31-year-old Kenyan police officer whose wife poured him with acid on his face whilst he was asleep, leading to permanent blindness.²² According to Onuoha (2017), this is a new trend in cases of domestic violence where women are suddenly attacking men when they are unconscious. Women's perpetration of violence towards men whilst incapacitated indicates that they are aware that men are stronger and can restrain them from causing severe injuries. Therefore, they tend to perpetrate severe forms of physical violence when the man is unaware. Other male victims have been poured with boiling water and cooking oil whilst they were asleep, leading to long-lasting physical and mental health issues including life-changing injuries and permanent disability, fear and anxiety (Alsawalqa, 2021; Barber, 2008; Entilli & Cipolletta, 2017). This indicates that women's perpetration of IPV is consequential, opposing the notion that it is not. Despite these significant consequences, violence by women remains a hidden issue because male victims are reluctant to report them to the authorities (Thobejane et al., 2018).

2.7. Intimate Partner Violence in South Africa

South Africa has a significant violence problem (van Niekerk, Tonsing, Seedat, Jacobs, Ratele & McClure, 2015). It is characterised by high rates of violence and is known as one of the most dangerous countries in Africa (Nkosi, 2023). The violence in the country is so prevalent that it is comparable to countries that are at war that people are afraid of walking at night (Lukani, 2019; van Niekerk et al., 2015). Of all violent crimes in South Africa, gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the highest crimes committed (Matzopoulos et al., 2019). The term GBV is more popular and widely used in South Africa

²² Odongo, C. & Kimuyu, H. Police officer narrates how monster wife blinded him in savage attack. *Nairobi News*. Available from: <https://nairobinews.nation.africa/police-officer-wife-blinded-acid-attack/>, Accessed 16 June 2022

to refer to the violence perpetrated by men against women in intimate and non-intimate relationships. GBV refers to “harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender” (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2022) whilst IPV refers to harmful acts and controlling behaviour directed at an intimate partner (WHO, 2012). In his speech during the Gender-based Violence and Femicide Summit in 2022, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa referred to GBV as violence perpetrated by men against women.²³ However, he also referred to women who were murdered by their male intimate partners. Thus, GBV is a term that is used interchangeably with IPV in South Africa (see Mphatheni & Mlamla, 2022).

IPV against women is a widespread problem in South Africa. According to Abrahams, Ramsomar and Shai (2021), three women are killed every day by an intimate partner, which is almost five times higher than the global average. Hence the country is labelled ‘the destination of femicide’ (Minisini, 2021) and the ‘rape capital of the world’ due to the high number of women murdered and raped by an intimate or non-intimate partner (South Coast Herald, 2018). The country “sits at the top of the chain of severe and persistent violence against women” (Rowlands, 2021: 18305). President Ramaphosa declared GBV against women a second pandemic in the country following the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 (Ndawonde, 2023). This is because the number of victimised women was so high that the rates were almost similar to the deaths caused by the coronavirus.

Violence against women has been a continuous and persistent problem. Hence, some awareness and activism campaigns are also limited to only female victims. For example, the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children is an annual campaign held to oppose violence by men against women and children. The campaign aims to “raise awareness of the negative impact that violence and abuse have on women and children and to rid society of abuse permanently” (Parliament of South Africa, 2023). Although the campaign may lead to a positive outcome such as increased awareness of women abuse, it also continually portrays men as the main perpetrators of IPV.

²³SABC News. (2022). President Ramaphosa addresses the Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Summit. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cVR1GY7eit8>

In recent years, stories pertaining to the murders of women by their intimate male partners have trended on South African mass media. These include Reeva Steenkamp who was shot and killed on Valentine's Day in 2013 by her boyfriend, Paralympian, Oscar Pistorius after he allegedly mistook her for a burglar in his home.²⁴ In addition, Karabo Mokoena was killed and placed in a wheelie bin by her partner Sandile Mantsoe, who burnt her body in an attempt to discard the evidence.²⁵ Tshegofatso Pule was also killed at eight months pregnant, and her body was hung onto a tree by a hitman who was hired by her partner, Ntuthuko Shoba.²⁶ Moreover, Nosiselo Mtebeni was murdered by her partner who dismembered her body and placed it in a suitcase and refuse bags.²⁷

The high rate of GBV against women, combined with the brutal nature of these murders led to a public outcry. During the GBV and Femicide Summit in 2022,²⁸ President Ramaphosa stated that:

These barbaric acts are a shameful indictment on the men of South Africa. It is not women who are responsible for ending such crimes, it is men who are responsible and who must take responsibility to bring violence, rape, and murder against women to an end. They are the ones who must act. We need to reach out to young boys and men to develop a masculinity that values respect, understanding and accountability. There have been so many women who have been killed at the hands of men. They [murdered women] have fallen victims to heartless men.

²⁴ Masweneng, K. (2023). What happened to house where Oscar Pistorius shot Reeva Steenkamp? Times Live. Available from: <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2023-04-04-what-happened-to-house-where-oscar-pistorius-shot-reeva-steenkamp/>, Accessed 05 May 2023.

²⁵ The Citizen. (2017). Karabo Mokoena as it happened. Available from: <https://www.citizen.co.za/rosebank-killarney-gazette/karabo-mokoena-happened/>, Accessed 9 November 2022.

²⁶ Seleka, N. (2022). Tshegofatso Pule murder: Mastermind Ntuthuko Shoba sentenced to life in prison. News24. Available from: <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/tshegofatso-pule-murder-mastermind-ntuthuko-shoba-sentenced-to-life-in-prison-20220729>, Accessed 11 August 2022.

²⁷ Isaacs, L. (2021). Alutha Pasile sentenced to 25 years in jail for murdering Nosiselo Mtebeni. *Eyewitness News*. Available from: <https://ewn.co.za/2021/12/02/alutha-pasile-sentenced-to-25-years-in-jail-for-murdering-nosiselo-mtebeni>, Accessed 23 February 2022.

²⁸ SABC News. (2022). *President Ramaphosa addresses the Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Summit*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cVR1GY7eit8>, Accessed 12 January 2023.

In the statement above, the President stated that men are responsible for ending violence against women. The President targeted men as the main perpetrators who need intervention to stop the perpetration of IPV. He also added that:

We have not mobilised the resources that are required for effective behaviour-change programs that link up the efforts of social partners in communities to address the attitudes and actions of men in every part of society, in every workplace, school, college, university, in every government department, and in every municipality, we need to organise men's dialogues.... We need to reach out to boys and young men to develop masculinities that value respect, understanding and accountability. I have said to myself, I want, as I move around the country to find time to devote to having men's dialogues so that we can talk about gender-based violence with the men of our country.

Women are excluded from these dialogues because they are considered the main victims of GBV/IPV and not the perpetrators. According to Mphatheni and Mlamla (2022: 69), "the exclusion of women and girls from GBV dialogues may result in no future changes to gender-based behavioural patterns. It may for instance be perceived that GBV is committed by men and boys only and thus women and girls may be exonerated from guilt when they perpetrate GBV." This GBV stereotype positions men as perpetrators against vulnerable women and does not allow men to be seen as victims (Hine, Bates & Wallace, 2020). The political nature of IPV puts more emphasis on female victims and less on male victims (Barkhuizen, 2015).

The high rates of GBV against the women in the country explain the reasons why female victimisation receives more media attention. For instance, the South African Broadcasting Corporation channel one (SABC 1) introduced the reality television (TV) show, *The Orange Couch* where victims of IPV across the country share their experiences. It can be assumed that due to the high rates of femicide in the country, the show intends to educate and inform audiences about the causes, cycle, and effects of IPV with gruesome and in-depth detail of experiences through the use of re-enactments, graphic audio-visuals and narrations by the victims. Although *The Orange Couch* is in its fourth season, all the victims who shared their experiences were female except for two episodes where the victims were male. However, these males were sexually molested by older men during

their childhood. Thus far, there has not been a single male victim of female perpetrated IPV in a heterosexual relationship featured on the show. The absence of male victims could be due to the embarrassment that men may be subjected to if they publicise their victimisation, particularly on national TV. *The Orange Couch* is broadcast by the SABC, a public broadcaster that does not require subscriptions or monthly payments. This means that a large number of South Africans have access to the show. In fact, *The Orange Couch* was in the Top 20 Programmes All Adults 15+ in November 2022 (TVSA, 2022). It was one of the most watched shows in the country with over 1.6 million in November of 2022 (TVSA, 2022). Given that media representations can influence thoughts, beliefs and behaviour (Gottfried, et al., 2011), some audience members may conclude that female victimisation perpetrated by men is the only true and factual narrative of IPV in South Africa. According to Barkhuizen (2015), media has paid very little attention to the victimisation of men in South Africa. This indicates that the South African public lacks ‘images’ of victimised men which are needed for audiences to construct their own ‘conceptions’ of IPV (Barkhuizen, 2022). The images of victimised men as well as “public media campaigns are needed [to] present the fact that men can also be the victims...” (Park et al., 2021: 11676).

2.8. Male Victims of Female Perpetrated Intimate Partner Violence

Female perpetrated IPV against men often leads to feelings of “seclusion, powerlessness and emotional distress” (Entilli & Ciolletta, 2017:2338). Due to societal standards and expectations placed on men to act ‘manly’, men are often under pressure to maintain these expectations to avoid appearing weak. These expectations emanate from their perceived lack of masculinity, which comes from a set standard of hegemonic masculinity and socially constructed masculine characteristics (Alswalqa, 2021). Hegemonic masculinity ideals refer to rigid gender role expectations placed on men to be superior, in control, empowered and courageous (Connell, 2005). These include the ability to display strength at all times, be emotionally detached and fearless, and compete with each other for pride and resources (Dim & Elabor-Idemudia, 2020; Perryman & Appleton, 2016).

In some cases, it is difficult for men to deconstruct their mindsets and identities outside of these patriarchal and hegemonic masculinity ideals because they are “usually imposed upon [them as] boys during the socialisation process” (Mshweshwe, 2021: 2). Patriarchy and these hegemonic masculinity ideals are toxic to men as they often result in societal ridicule, mockery, and trivialisation due to men’s perceived weakness (Barber, 2008; Barkhuizen, 2015; Entilli & Cipolletta, 2017). It also makes it hard for men to seek help from the authorities and medical services. One male victim who admitted himself to the hospital for medical attention heard the nursing staff refer to him as “... that dumbass who got battered by his wife”, followed by bursts of laughter (Entilli & Cipolletta, 2017: 2336). The embarrassment, ridicule and marginalisation that male victims are subjected to often results in their preference to remain silent (Barkhuizen, 2015). This is because they are often treated with disbelief and mistakenly labelled as the perpetrator despite the evidence of injuries inflicted by their female partners (Entilli & Cipolletta, 2017; Park et al., 2021).

Male victims are often not comfortable with the ‘victim’ label and often find it hard to see themselves as such due to the masculine narrative.^{29 30 31 32} As a result, they often lie about the nature of their injuries by blaming them on a fight with another man (Overstreet & Quinn, 2013). They also tend to describe the choices and actions they took to prevent the abuse, thereby, reflecting hegemonic masculine norms of control and power (Dixon et al., 2020). An earlier study by Steinmetz (1977-1978: 503) shows how one male victim whose face was scratched by his wife with her nails stated that “I didn’t want anyone to know. I told the guys at work that the kids did it with a toy.”

²⁹Allen-Collinson, J. (2011). Assault on Self: Intimate Partner Abuse and the Contestation of Identity. *Symbolic Interaction*, 34(1): 108-127. Doi. 10.1525/si.2011.34.1.108

³⁰Corbally, M. (2015). Accounting for intimate partner violence: A biographical analysis of narrative strategies used by men experiencing ipv from their female partners. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 30(17), 3112–3132.

³¹Hine, B. Bates, E. A. & Wallace, S. (2020). “I have guys call me and say ‘I can’t be the victim of domestic abuse’”: Exploring the experiences of telephone support providers for male victims of domestic violence and abuse. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 8(4), 41-65.

³²Venäläinen, S. (2020). “What about men?”: Ideological dilemmas in online discussions about intimate partner violence committed by women. *Feminism & Psychology*, 30(4) 469-488.

Moreover, due to women's 'petite' physical size, men often interpret women's violence as a quaint form of feminine communication as opposed to an attempt to cause them physical harm (Nybergh, Enander & Krantz, 2016). In some cases, men are not even aware of their own victimisation unless a friend or family member addresses the issue (Burrell & Westmarland, 2019). A Portuguese study that used online questionnaires on 89 male IPV victims found that 76% of male victims did not seek help, with "I did not notice that I was a victim" as the most commonly selected reason (Machado, Hines, & Matos, 2016). However, even after becoming aware of their victimisation, some men are still in denial and seldom define themselves as the victims of female perpetrated IPV (Park et al., 2021).

Importantly, there are forms of IPV that men do not perceive as quaint. Some have stated that regardless of the severity of the physical injuries inflicted on them by their partners, they found psychological abuse to be the most damaging because it affected their identity, dignity and eroded their confidence (Alsawalqa, 2021; Barkhuizen, 2015). Psychological abuse is a hidden form of IPV that is only known by the male victim and the female perpetrator. Examples include being humiliated for their salaries, occupation and sexual performance (Entilli & Cipolletta, 2017). This indicates that although much attention is paid to physical violence, for some men, psychological abuse is more severe. Unfortunately, psychological abuse is not easily detectable and measurable as physical and sexual IPV, hence society may be blind to such.

Despite the severity of the abuse, men remain in abusive relationships for various reasons including the fear of losing their children,³³ ³⁴ the fear that their children will suffer the same way they did, the fear of not being taken seriously,³⁵ and the fear of hurting their partner's feelings and being blamed by society.³⁶ In addition, they stay because they are dependent on their partners for financial support (Thobejane & Luthada, 2019).

³³Bates, E. A. (2019). Intimate partner violence: New perspectives in research and practice (pp. 43–57). Taylor & Francis

³⁴Brooks et al., (2020). How Many Silences Are There?" Men's Experience of Victimization in Intimate Partner Relationships. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 35:2(3-24): 5390–5413.

³⁵Drijber et al., (2013). Male victims of domestic violence. *Journal of Family Violence*, 28(2), 173-178.

³⁶ Park et al., (2021). This Society Ignores Our Victimization": Understanding the Experiences of Korean Male Victims of Intimate Partner Violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(23-24) 11658–11680

Previously, a lack of economic resources was not an issue because men had a greater potential earning than women guaranteed through patriarchy. Transformation policies where gender discrimination in employment is prohibited have granted women opportunities to earn equal or higher salaries than men. This can shift power dynamics as women have the resources to abuse men who financially depend on them.

2.9. Male Victims in South Africa

South Africa is a patriarchal country (Mudau & Obadire, 2017). Therefore, “it is an abomination to see a man crying after being beaten by a woman” (Thobejane & Luthada, 2019: 17). Thus, male victims prefer to remain silent due to the stigma and negative stereotypes that are attached to men who are abused by women. Their silence has led to the absence of protests this scourge, resulting in insufficient attention on their plight (Barkhuizen, 2015; Mphatheni & Mlamla, 2022). Whilst thousands of women across the country have marched against violence to demonstrate their anger due to the increasing rates of femicide (Mkhize & Sibisi, 2022), male victims have been silent. Protests are significant, particularly because for females in the country as they led to “renewed calls to address violence against women as soon as possible” (Mphatheni & Mlamla, 2022: 14). Thus, in order for male victims to gain recognition and increased awareness, protests may be one of the solutions. The silence by men makes their victimisation appear less serious, hence the insufficient strategies to reduce their victimisation (Mphatheni & Mlamla, 2022). In fact, Nzima, Mngomezulu and Makhonza (2019) found that one of the reasons IPV was perpetrated against men was due to outdated legislation that does not protect men from violent women. These outdated legislations, combined with the northern models that researchers often draw on to understand female perpetrated IPV have shown limited applicability in the southern context (Boonzaier & van Niekerk, 2018). Although researchers assert that “there should be an opportunity for new and innovative methods of intervention which take into account the multi-faceted realities of men” (Boonzaier & van Niekerk, 2018: 3), these can only be effective if men vocalise their victimisation.

A large number of reported cases of female perpetrated IPV in South Africa often emerge after the death of a male victim. For instance, South African rapper Nkululeko ‘Flabba’

Habedi was murdered by his girlfriend Sindisiwe Manqele who claimed that she acted in self-defense.³⁷ An interview with Habedi's mother revealed that Habedi repeatedly told her that Manqele was going to kill him as she had constantly threatened to do so.³⁸ Despite the death threats, Habedi's mother did not take him seriously and neither did Habedi report his victimisation to the police officers. As a result, he lost his life. In addition, Yonela Boli, a master's student at the University of Fort Hare was stabbed by his girlfriend following a dispute. He later died in hospital due to the severity of the injuries.³⁹ A witness later admitted that they saw his girlfriend slapping him, indicating that there may have been ongoing physical IPV before stabbing him. Boli's silence may have been a result of the masculinity ideology and the patriarchal narrative that when in pain, a man should suffer in silence (Thobejane, Luthada & Mogorosi, 2018). Boli's silence prior to his death may have been due to the assumption that nobody would believe him. This is echoed by another male victim who stated that, "nobody would help me! No police, court or counselor believed me" (Barkhuizen, 2015: 297). Similarly, another man who was abused by his partner highlighted this skepticism, particularly by the authorities, stating that, "the police do not take us seriously as men, when we report cases of abuse by women" (eNews, 2021).⁴⁰ This lack of belief has seen some men resort to seeking spiritual assistance from African traditional or voodoo doctors to cast a spell on their abusive partners out of desperation to end their victimisation (Barkhuizen, 2015). These attempts suggest a sense of hopelessness for male victims and connotes that they may have tried everything to end their abuse yet failed. Hence, they seek intervention from higher powers to end their victimisation.

³⁷ Shange, N. (2015). I stabbed Flabba intentionally – girlfriend. *News24*. Available from: <https://www.news24.com/news24/i-stabbed-flabba-intentionally-girlfriend-20150917>, Accessed 08 April 2022.

³⁸ Times Live. (2015). 'She's gonna kill me,' Flabba's message to his mom months before his death. *Times Live*. Available from: <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2015-03-24-shes-gonna-kill-me-flabbas-message-to-his-mom-months-before-his-death/>, Accessed 08 April 2022.

³⁹ IOL. (2020). Girlfriend charged after Fort Hare student Yonela Boli stabbed to death. *IOL*. Available from: <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/eastern-cape/girlfriend-charged-after-fort-hare-student-yonela-boli-stabbed-to-death-42448438>, Accessed 08 April 2022.

⁴⁰eNCA News. (2021). <https://www.facebook.com/eNCANews/videos/male-abuse-men-speak-to-checkpoint-about-domestic-violence-allegedly-at-the-hand/4974552899252739/> Accessed 3 March 2023

Similarly, male victims may also turn to extreme ways of dealing with the trauma of their victimisation. On the 17th of November 2022, Bafana Sithole, a 17-year-old teenage boy from Emalahleni, Mpumalanga province in South Africa committed suicide after he was wrongfully accused of rape by a fellow female classmate, Amanda Nzimande.⁴¹ After his death, Nzimande stated that “she was just kidding” and later confessed to lying about the rape claims (Sithole, 2022). In his suicidal letter addressed to his mother shared by @AdvoBarryRoux on Twitter, here after referred to as X, (**Figure 2**), Sithole wrote:



⁴¹ Sithole, S. (2022). Teenager’s suicide note details pain and suffering over untrue rape allegations. *IOL*. Available from: <https://www.iol.co.za/the-star/news/teenagers-suicide-note-details-pain-and-suffering-over-untrue-rape-allegations-f64c82d8-a10c-44fb-9f0c-fbb1423ca0b2>, Accessed 14 November 2022.

.>Last words to umawakhe 💔💔💔

Mama I hope this letter finds you 😭💔
By the time you are reading this, I'll be already gone
Let me love you and leave you

Sengihambile mina maye 😭
I've suffered in this world all alone
I was accused by those who are better than me 😭💔

May she forgive me for what I did to her 😭💔
Kodwa zanke ngim'hlangule mina 😭💔
I'm not a rapist

What did I do to her aze ang'zonde kangaka 😭💔
I am gone
Bayasho abaziko ukuthi mhlaba awunoni 😭

My problems are now solved in a long peaceful sleep 😭
💔
May she live longer, ngoba mina ngihlulekile 😭💔

May the Good God not sympathize with her 😭💔
May my soul cause a cloud of curse upon her life 😭💔

My soul won't rest in peace 😭💔
It was sent to death by those who said I'm a rapist
Mina ngisukelwe ngingonang 😭💔

Beyingekho enye into ebekangayisho kunalena 😭💔
My heart of gold has stopped beating
What was my fault 😭💔

No one knew this day will come 😭💔
I'm now leaving her in the darkest world and her sky will
turn grey 😭💔

May my tears be a golden memory in her life

May she never find peace in her life 😭💔

I'll never rest till i get justice 😭💔

Ngiyam'Jabulela ukuthi yena usaphila, mina ngihlulekile
😭💔

My life was robbed 😭💔

I thank her for teaching me a lesson even though it was
too late

Bengiyoboshelwa yena mina 😭💔

Mama thula ungasakhali sekwanele manje 😭💔

No one believed me 😭💔

Kodwa nawe uyazi bengekhe ngize ngiyenze into efana
nalena mina

Thula mama ungasakhali sekwanele 😭💔

Iskhat sam besesifikile 😭💔

Ngisendaweni encono manje 😭💔

Ngiyazi ubuhlungu kodwa nezitha ziyajabula mawukhala

😭💔

Thula mama ungasakhali ujabulisa izitha 😭💔

Mina owami umgodi ngiwuvulile ngaphinde ngawuvala

😭💔

I've fought my fight and I've finished my race 😭💔

Sesiphelile iskhat sam sokuphila 😭💔

Mama ngizohlezi ngikuthanda 😭💔

Khulula inhliziyo yakho

Ngikhulule nami ngihambe ngiyendaweni encono 😭💔

Figure 2: Suicide letter of Bafana Sithole. Source: [Man's NOT Barry Roux on Twitter: "Kriel High School learner Bafana Sithole hanged himself with his tie in a Classroom"](#)

[after A girl accused him of Raping her. He Hanged himself then later on the girl claimed ukuthi "SHE JUST WAS KIDDING." #JusticeForBafanaSithole https://t.co/erwwyNK86Q" / Twitter](https://t.co/erwwyNK86Q)

Below is the translation of the letter in English:

Mama I hope this letter finds you. By the time you are reading this, I'll be gone. Let me love you and leave you. I have already left. I've suffered in this world all alone. I was accused by those who are better than me. May she forgive me for what I did to her. But I did not rape her. I'm not a rapist. What did I do to her for her to hate me so much. I am gone. People have been saying that the world is an evil place. My problems are now solved in a long peaceful sleep. May she live longer, because I failed to live long. May the Good God not sympathize with her. May my soul cause a cloud of curse upon her life. My soul won't rest in peace. It was sent to death by those who said I'm a rapist. I was accused of something I did not do. There is nothing else they could say apart from this one. My heart of gold has stopped beating. What was my fault. No one knew this day would come. I'm now leaving her in the darkest world and her sky will turn grey. May my tears be a golden memory in her life. May she never find peace in her life. I'll never rest till I get justice. I am happy that she is still alive because I failed. My life was robbed. I thank her for teaching me a lesson even though it was too late. I was going to get arrested for her. Mama don't cry, you have cried enough now. No one believed me. But you also know that I would never do something of this kind. Don't cry mama you have cried enough. My time had arrived. I am in a better place now. I know it hurts but enemies are happy when you cry. Don't cry mama you will make the enemies happy. I opened my own grave and I closed it. I've fought my fight and I have finished my race. My time to live has come to an end. Mama, I will always love you. Set your heart free. Let me go so I can go to a better place.

The suicide letter by Sithole echoes the reality of male victims who fear that they will not be believed if they report victimisation by women. A study conducted by Barkhuizen (2015) on the victimisation of men by women showed that male victims who were falsely accused knew that the female perpetrators would not be punished for their false accusations. This is evident with Nzimande who to date, has not been legally charged for

her false rape allegations as police claimed that they could not find a link between Sithole's death and Nzimande's accusations.⁴²

The suicide letter also indicates that Sithole had already concluded that the criminal justice system was going to rule in favour of Nzimande, and that he would be arrested for a crime that he did not commit. He also stated that no one believed him, a repeated narrative of many male victims (Thobejane & Luthada, 2019). His death also suggests that indeed, the criminal justice system often fails to assist male victims as it holds men as the primary perpetrators. The responses from the police, courts, and other support services often expose abused men to secondary abuse by treating them as the perpetrators.^{43 44 45} Barber (2008: 38) suggests that "humility, compassion and sensitivity [are required] when addressing male victims to encourage them to discuss their situation." Consequently, the lack of these traits make it difficult for men to open up about their victimisation.

Sithole's death highlights the seriousness of male victimisation in South Africa. Although there are no confirmations of an intimate relationship, some people on X stated that Sithole and Nzimande dated for a short while and engaged in sexual activities. Out of fear that she would get into trouble with her parents, Nzimande claimed Sithole had raped her. Previous research highlights the significance of taking male victims seriously when they report violence perpetrated by women (Machado, Hines & Matos, 2016). Validating and believing men will play a crucial role in the lives of male victims and may prevent suicide, suicidal ideation, depression and increased social isolation (Morgan & Wells, 2016). Failure to achieve this, combined with a lack of recognition, lack of acknowledgement,

⁴²Khumalo, Z. (2022). Mpumalanga cops unable to confirm link between boy's death and false rape allegations. *News24*. <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/mpumalanga-cops-unable-to-confirm-link-between-boys-death-and-false-rape-allegations-20221124>, Accessed 09 February, 2023)

⁴³Barkhuizen, 2015. Police reaction to the male victim of domestic violence in South Africa: Case study analysis. *Police Practice and Research: An International Journal*, 16(4):291-302. doi:10.1080/15614263.2015.1038025

⁴⁵Walker et al., (2020). Male victims of female-perpetrated intimate partner violence, help-seeking, and reporting behaviors: A qualitative study. *Psychology of Men & Masculinities*, 21(2):213-223.

and the inability to accept male victimisation will discourage male victims to report victimisation and will result in low numbers (Wallace et al., 2020).

2.10. Discourses of Male Victims of Female Perpetrated IPV

Discourses of male victimisation refer to the choice of words and language used when individuals speak or write about male victims. Researchers have used different approaches, narrative strategies and analyses to study men's discourses about their own victimisation experiences. These include a biographical narrative interpretive method to examine narrative strategies used by men to account for their victimisation experiences (Corbally, 2011; Durfee, 2011). Studies suggest that discourses about male victimisation are determined by gender roles, social conditions and hegemonic masculinity ideology (Durfee, 2011; Eckstein, 2009; Migliaccio, 2002). Therefore, the way people speak or write about male victims is influenced by socialisation and gender ideologies. Discourses about male victimisation can be positive or negative depending on the experiences, beliefs and views of each individual. For male victims in particular, their discourses about their own victimisation are ideologically determined. For instance, male victims often oppose any association with the term "victim" as it places them in a position of vulnerability and weakness which is against their 'manly' identity (Oparinde & Matsha, 2021). The manner in which men speak about their victimisation can either "challenge, reject, or reaffirm the status quo" that they are strong, dominant, masculine and powerful and therefore, cannot be abused by women (Oparinde & Matsha, 2021:4). For some, narrating their experiences can reaffirm that they are weak (Barkhuizen, 2015), whilst others are able to gain control over how their identities are portrayed through their own narratives (Eckstein, 2010).

Due to the pressure to maintain the status quo, Kgatle et al. (2021) found that South African men for instance, often lie about their victimisation by blaming their injuries on a fight with another man instead of their female partner. This is because male-to-male violence is more accepted than female-to-male violence (Thobejane & Luthada, 2019). The selective use of hegemonically masculine language can be inferred as an attempt to maintain masculine ideologies rooted in the belief that men should be strong and not show

any form of weakness. This coincides with Corbally's (2015) study which revealed that men prefer to use dominant discursive identities and discourses when disclosing their IPV experiences. This is a strategy to reaffirm the status quo that they are strong (Oparinde & Matsha, 2021). However, Entilli and Cipolletta (2017) reveal that male victims have also used words such as 'prison', 'trap' and 'spiral of pain' when disclosing their experiences. Men may feel imprisoned and trapped because they are discouraged from publicising their victimisation, leading to a lack of support and feelings of isolation. However, support groups have created a platform for men to be more vocal about their victimisation (Durfee, 2011). This shows that when supported, male victims can open up about their victimisation.

Men's discourses about their own victimisation is strongly linked to their male identity. Research conducted by Corbally (2015) indicated that certain discourses and their structural positioning were used to portray a desired identity that men wanted to be associated with. This highlights that despite their victimisation, men still want to be portrayed in a positive light – as *real* men. The study revealed three dominant narratives by male victims: the fatherhood narrative, the good husband narrative, and the abuse narrative. The fatherhood narrative refers to IPV perpetration through the denial of fathering opportunities to men by their female partners. Despite this, they still used words to emphasise that they were good fathers regardless of the removal of children from their lives. This indicates that fatherhood is significant to men's identity. Additionally, Corbally (2015) explains that the good husband narrative includes being a provider and a loyal, loving husband. Similarly, the men in this study used certain words to emphasise that they are good providers and loving husbands, which Corbally (2015) explains is significant to being perceived as a *real* man. The abuse narrative on the other hand, reflected a disassociation between the interviewees' identities as men and as victimised people. It was noted that none of the men in Corbally's (2015) study used the word "victim" in the entirety of their interviews and showed difficulty in finding the language to articulate and describe their victimisation. This is because victimhood is not necessarily recognised in the masculine discourse (Burr, 2008). This may also occur as a result of Normative Male Alexithymia (NMA), a 'condition' where men lack the emotional vocabulary to express themselves due to heavy socialisation and pressure by parents, community and

peers to conform to masculine gender norms, leading to extreme difficulty in expressing their feelings (Affleck, Glass & Macdonald, 2012)

Morgan and Wells (2016) note that men often describe how they were victimised as opposed to the sharing the impact of their victimisation on their well-being. This could be due to NMA where men cannot emotionally articulate their experiences because they simply lack the vocabulary and ability to do so. In most cases, men's identity takes precedence over their victimisation. Male participants from Eckstein's (2010) study revealed that they experienced a diminishing sense of identity due to the abuse suffered at the hands of their female partners and expressed concern about how society would see them as failures. Therefore, male victims tend to gravitate towards the negative impact of the victimisation on their reputation, image and identity, as opposed to the perpetration itself. Their perceived acknowledgement of their victimisation or lack thereof, is problematic as they refuse to acknowledge themselves as victims. In light of this, Wallace et al. (2020) hold that male victims should know that their victimisation is not an attack on their male identity.

Corbally's (2015) analysis of narrative strategies signals a strong correlation between men's victimisation and their identity. Thus, Eckstein's (2010) study is imperative in this context as the author analysed male victims' discourses to determine how masculinity and the construction of victim identity were related. Some of the male victims in Eckstein's (2010) study could no longer claim a hegemonic masculinity identity status due to their victimisation and therefore, attempted to re-claim other masculine identities that are socially acceptable in order to still be regarded as *real* men. Due to the embarrassment of their victimisation, some male victims had to "enact complicit identities to re-assert hegemonic norms and to avoid stigmatization" (Eckstein, 2010: 64). These included fighting for the weak and advocating for their protection, fighting against injustice and providing messages of strength to others. They also acknowledged that their victimisation allowed them to re-perceive their masculine identity which led to a better sense of humour, wisdom and emotional responsiveness (Eckstein, 2010). This allowed them to re-assert their identities as "true men" (Connell, 1995) because they became softer and better fathers with improved emotional communication (Eckstein, 2010). These discourses

indicate that in some instances, hegemonic masculinity can be toxic to men because it puts them under pressure to meet and maintain societal expectations and standards which are difficult to attain. However, as Pleck (1995) found, the inability to meet these expectations can also be liberating.

Central to Corbally (2015) and Eckstein's (2010) studies is the need for positive identity association. The male victims in Corbally's study denied the 'victim' label in order to protect their identity, image and reputation. On the other hand, the victims in Eckstein's study failed to meet the ideal standards of hegemonic masculinity and instead, adopted and reclaimed other forms of masculinity, allowing them to re-assert their identities which made them better men and fathers. These varying discourses clearly indicate that masculinity is not fixed and further highlight that it is possible to deconstruct masculinity ideals and standards enforced by patriarchy and through socialisation.

2.11. Social Media and Intimate Partner Violence

Technological advancements have played a crucial role in advancing communication through the internet. In particular, social networking sites (SNSs) allow people to engage and interact with each other in efficient ways. Although these interactions and engagements occur in virtual spaces, they are regarded as 'real' places by some users. SNS have been described as a real place by some people since they were able to create friendships, speak about their problems and help others in solving theirs (Bert, 2011).

Social media plays an integral role across various fields in the contemporary world, particularly within academia as researchers have used it to understand and address issues relating to IPV (Hellevik, 2018; Subramani et al., 2018). Rentschler (2014) states that social media is important because it can give victims a voice and expose perpetrators so that they are held accountable. In the year 2021, *Times Live*, a South African newspaper reported that a 29-year-old woman had raped a 13-year-old boy, leading to her 12-year sentence (Dayimani, 2021). The length of the sentence led to a social media uproar with many South Africans expressing their anger and frustration with the criminal justice system (Mphatheni & Mlamlala, 2022). Some Facebook users compared the gender of the perpetrator and stated that had it been a man who had raped a 12-year-old girl, he

would be given a longer sentence. Similarly, the popular case of American model and actress Amber Heard's accusations of IPV against her then-husband Johnny Depp led to debates on social media about who the actual victim or perpetrator was (Whiting, Olufuwote, Cravens-Pickens & Witting, 2019). When Depp was found not guilty, many social media users expressed their anger and frustration towards women who falsely accuse men of crimes they did not commit.

Social media has been used by South African researchers to investigate intimate partner violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic (Mkhize & Sibisi, 2022). Similarly, Oparinde and Matsha (2021) used a combination of social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to oppose and counter GBV discourses in South Africa. Their study showed that the language used on social media can be a crucial tool in curbing IPV. Other studies have shown that social media platforms can be powerful agents for engaging public dialogue about the realities of IPV, and that anyone can be a perpetrator despite their gender (McCauley, Bonomi, Maas, Bogen & O'Malley, 2018). In addition, social media has been used by victims of IPV to discuss the factors that influenced them to stay or leave abusive relationships (Cravens, Whiting & Amar, 2015). These studies highlight the relevance of social media in the area of IPV.

In addition, social media has also been used by male victims of female perpetrated IPV to expose their partners. On the 30th of May 2023, South African actor Sithembiso "SK" Khoza shared a video of himself in a hospital in England after being assaulted by his fiancé, leaving him with a bruised upper lip and multiple cuts on his hands.⁴⁶ In his video, Khoza said:

I'm about to let the world know what is going on right now. I think the people deserve to know Officer Nick, what do you say sir? Ladies and gentlemen, I know I haven't been live ... for a very long time. You're looking at me smiling right now. I'm currently in England and my fiancé almost killed me. Is that the best way to put it? ... She almost killed my ass... To the women who actually physically abuse men out there, I'm done keeping quiet so I'm out here talking. So, I'm saying, yeah, I said it.

⁴⁶Mbayimbayi, A. (2023). WATCH: SK Khoza claims his fiancée tried to kill him. *The Citizen*. Available from: <https://www.citizen.co.za/entertainment/celebrity-news/sk-khoza-claims-abuse-fiancee-video/>, Accessed 4 June 2023

Choice Kate Mathebula beat me to ... jeez. Yoh, I got injuries all over my body right now. All over my body right now. I just wish my mama were around, if my mom was here right now, she'd be dragging that girl. She'll be saying, "Don't take her officers, I'll handle her." What happened? I don't know. I don't know. All I know is that I almost lost my ear tonight; I almost lost my finger tonight. I have basically two broken knees right now... From spatula to tin opener to a knife, now I'm lying in a hospital in England."

Various SNSs users expressed differing opinions on the matter. Some said he deserved it, whilst others argued that violence should not be gendered and that men are human before their assigned sex.⁴⁷ This shows that social media platforms are not merely virtual spaces but also serve as a platform to express dissent and counter hegemonic narratives about male victimisation. Resultantly, Khoza's video contributes to the visibility of male victimisation in South Africa as he is a well-known actor in the country.

The South African Government has also used X to address violence against women in the country (**Figure 3**). In the year 2019, the South African Government posted a message which read, "Violence and abuse against women have no place in our society. Govt [government] is calling on women to speak out, and not allow themselves to become victims by keeping quiet. Women who speak out are able to act, effect change and help others." However, the message was later revised and reformulated by activists, and read: "Govt is calling on men to speak out, and not allow themselves to create victims. Men who speak out are able to act, effect change and help others" (Oparinde & Matsha, 2021). In both the original and reformulated posts, men are held accountable for being the main perpetrators of violence. The responsibility of perpetration on both posts was shifted to men, directly blaming them for their violence against women. Again, such posts emphasise that men are the main perpetrators whilst women are the victims. The choice of language in the post demonstrates how the construction of language can be detrimental to men who do not perpetrate violence against women or those who may be victims of female perpetrated IPV.

⁴⁷Man's NOT Barry Roux. (30 May 2023). Available from: <https://twitter.com/AdvoBarryRoux/status/1663454549745475585?lang=en>



Figure 3: Twitter post on GBV from the South African Government. Extracted from Oparinde and Matsha's study (2021)

SNS are also imperative in the area of IPV as the interactions and discussions taking place on these platforms can help to expose the complexities of IPV which are sometimes portrayed in the news media as common perpetrator or victim stories (Whiting et al., 2019: 80). Given that men rarely speak about their IPV experiences, platforms such as Facebook are important as they are potential spaces for men to vent about their victimisation. They also allow researchers to dissect this information and use it to gain a deeper understanding of IPV. Connell (1987) found that men use “emotional inexpression” to conceal their vulnerability in order to conform to patriarchal and masculine norms. However, anonymity, masked identities and the lack of physical interactions on Facebook can allow men to publicise their victimisation experiences.

It is difficult for victims of IPV to discuss their experiences. This difficulty can be alleviated with methods that do not require direct interaction with the participants. For instance, in a randomised control trial in Japan, Kataoka et al. (2010) found increased reporting of IPV among those taking a self-administered questionnaire. The lack of physical interaction

made it easier for some victims to provide in-depth detail about their victimisation experiences. Therefore, Facebook could be regarded as a less severe method of eliciting information from victims and perpetrators of IPV. This is particularly important as South African researchers Davis and Meerkotter (2017) have shown that non-personal data can be used as a powerful tool in increasing the visibility of IPV. Personal data includes race, gender, age and place of residence, whilst non-personal data refers to data that cannot be used to identify a person (Davis & Meerkotter, 2017). Facebook could to a certain extent be considered a platform with non-personal data since users can lock their profiles, thereby prohibiting the public to access their personal details.⁴⁸ This means that “non-personal data can maintain the anonymity of victims and perpetrators” (Davis & Meerkotter, 2017: 20), giving Users a heightened sense of freedom to discuss their IPV experiences.

Considering the gaps highlighted in the literature, this study attempts to address men’s victimisation as a possible “forbidden” discourse (Allen-Collinson, 2008). Masculinity ideology, patriarchy and gender roles are central to the perpetration and victimisation of IPV in heterosexual relationships. Through a critical analysis of Facebook discourses and the use of social networking sites, this study is significant as it can contribute to the body of scholarly literature in the area of female perpetrated IPV.

2.12. Conclusion

The perpetration of IPV by females against males in heterosexual relationships is a serious problem around globally and in South Africa. It comes in various forms including physical, sexual, psychological, economic and legal abuse and can result in post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and suicidal ideation, and other illnesses. Despite the growing increase of literature on the subject, male victimisation still has not received adequate scholarly attention is not regarded as a social problem due to low reporting by male victims. Various factors hinder men from publicising their victimisation. These include patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity, social condemnation and marginalisation, as

⁴⁸Facebook. (2023). *Lock your Facebook profile*. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/help/196419427651178>

well as the negative treatment by police officers and society at large. To protect their identities and maintain the dominant and preferred masculinity standards, men remain silent or lie about the nature of their injuries to avoid appearing weak. The gendering of IPV overlooks men as victims and women as perpetrators, despite the evidence that women can perpetrate severe forms of IPV as they do not always rely on their physical strength and size. Furthermore, social media is crucial in the area of IPV as Users can challenge dominant hegemonic views of IPV which often overlook men as victims. The next chapter discusses the theories that frame this study.



CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical lenses through which I read and make sense of IPV against men. Given the fact that the phenomenon of IPV against men is fairly novel, I have resorted to using various theoretical lenses to read it. In that vein, I will discuss the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the Gender Role Strain Paradigm (GRSP) and the Virtual Space as theories that frame this study. These are discussed in detail, including their relevance, critiques, applicability to the study and interconnectedness (**Figure 5**).

3.2. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a form of discourse analysis that studies the power relations that exist in written or spoken words (Onoja, Bebenimino & Onoja, 2022). CDA has been described as a theory that shows the relationship between discourse, language, power, ideology and social structure (Fairclough, 1995; Simpson & Mayr, 2010). CDA is often associated with scholars such as Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk and Ruth Wodak due to their extensive research and knowledge on the subject. However, despite the scholars' varying and in-depth contribution to the subject matter, there is no single version of CDA but varying methods for analysing discourse critically (Mullet, 2018). Given the variation of these methods, what centers them is the view that language is a means of social construction, that is, language both shapes and is shaped by society (Simpson & Mayr, 2010).

There are eight tenets of CDA that Fairclough and Wodak (1997) presented in a seminal paper. The authors state that: a) CDA aims to address social problems and is seen as a form of intervention for the dominated and the oppressed. b) Power relations are discursive; that is, power dynamics can change and the use of language is responsible

for this. c) Discourse constitutes society and culture as language can reflect and transform society and the power relations. d) Discourse performs ideological work and can produce unequal relations of power to dominate and exploit others. e) Discourse is intertextual and historical and cannot function nor be studied in isolation. Every form of text is connected to historical contexts and connected to allusion of previous texts. f) There is a link between text and society which can be understood through discourse. g) Discourse is interpretative and explanatory. h) Discourse is a form of social action or social practice. Therefore, the intended outcome of CDA is a change in the discourse and use of power by the powerful in certain institutions.

What is central to these eight principles is that discourse is equal to power because it can be used to oppress or intervene for the oppressed. CDA holds that discourses are historical and intertextual, and therefore, cannot be studied in isolation but rather in relation to the society in which they are produced. By studying Facebook discourses in relation to the historical, political and sociocultural conditions in South Africa, further insight is gained into female perpetrated IPV.

CDA has various functions amongst which is to expose the inequalities, injustices, domination, oppression and the control that are exerted through linguistic forms by those in positions of power against the powerless (Fairclough, 1995). Thus, CDA studies *how* and *why* discourses are produced in order to identify these unequal encounters. These unequal encounters often use linguistic strategies that may appear normal or neutral to the surface. They are implicit, backgrounded and designed in such a manner that people are not consciously aware of the power hidden in them. Machin and Mayr (2012) also state that the linguistic structure of a text often works 'silently' and 'invisibly', making it difficult to locate these hidden power relations. This strategy 'naturalises' and neutralises these inequalities so that they are accepted as common sense. This makes language the primary medium of social control and power (Fairclough, 2001).

Fiske argues that "our words are never neutral" (1994: 12). Therefore, language cannot be neutral. Language is made up of ideologies which contribute to naturalising and neutralizing oppression, inequalities and injustice. For instance, one ideology that is naturalised and accepted as common sense in South Africa is 'men must suffer in silence'

(Thobejane & Luthada, 2012). Such ideologies work silently and invisibly and have led to unequal encounters for victims of IPV as it is natural for women to publicise their victimisation whilst men are expected to hide and remain silent about theirs. CDA therefore, intends to dismantle such inequalities and power relations that are hidden in ideology, and this is when discourse becomes critical. Discourse is critical as it aims to 'denaturalise' and expose power relations so that the oppressors can be exposed (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Fairclough (1989: 5) defines the term "critical" in the study of language as follows:

Critical is used in the special sense of aiming to show connections which may be hidden from people – such as the connections between language, power and ideology... Critical language study analyses social interactions in a way which focuses upon their linguistic elements, and which sets out to show up their generally hidden determinants in the system of social relationships, as well as hidden effects they may have upon that system.

In the above statement, Fairclough holds that ideology is undeniably and pervasively imbedded in language, making discourse critical. Although the terms language and discourse have been used interchangeably, Chilwa and Ajiboye (2016) explain that they have different meanings. Simpson and Mayr (2010) explain that language refers to the *abstract* patterns and rules which operate simultaneously but at different levels, such as grammar and semantic levels. On the other hand, discourse refers to the *real* patterns of the contexts of use. Discourse is the spoken word or written text, a *real* manifestation of language. Discourse works above the level of language comprising grammar and semantics so as to encapsulate deep meaning hidden in words.

Ideologies are "systems of values, expectations, beliefs, or ideas shared by a social group and often presumed to be natural or innately true" (Thompson & Bennett, 2017: 47). Masculinity ideologies on the other hand, are "a body of socially constructed ideas and beliefs about what it means to be a man and against which men are appraised within their communities" (Thompson & Bennett, 2017: 47). Ideologies are closely related to power, and power in modern society is increasingly achieved through ideology (Fairclough, 2001). For instance, the victimisation of men by their female partners is often opposed

because of the assumption that men are physically stronger and are able to defend themselves. Similarly, it is a common belief that women are physically smaller than men and that their perpetration is trivial and inconsequential. Such ideologies contribute to the domination, oppression, shame, embarrassment and ridicule of male victims. They have become common-sense assumptions that society relies on and has accepted as truth. These ideologies are so powerful that they have entrenched their way into intervention programs and support made available to male victims. This indicates that the relationship between ideology, power and language is internal and dialectical.

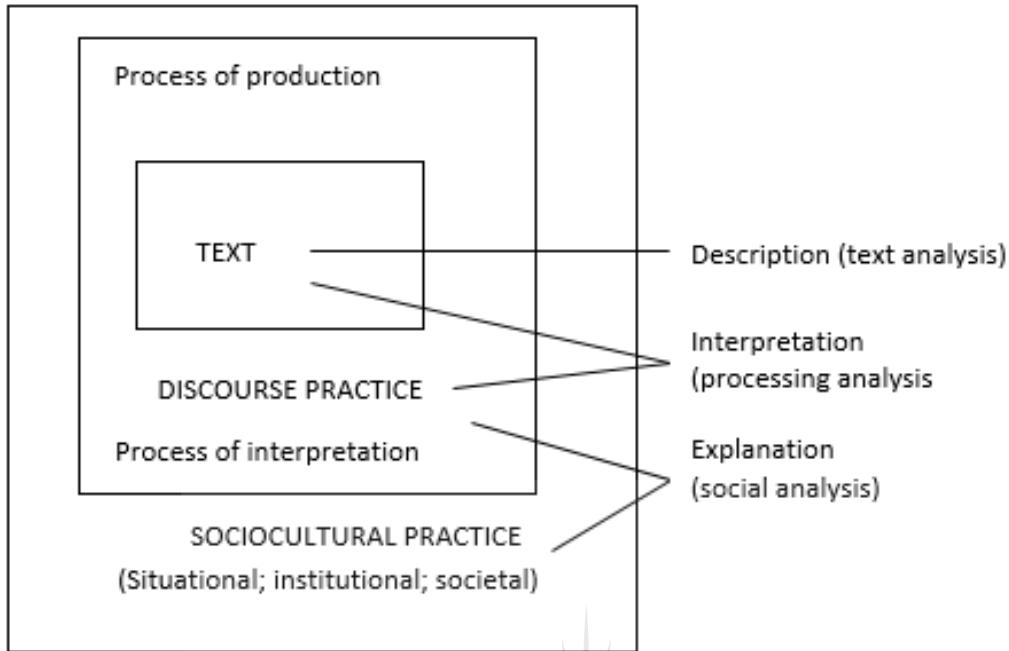
Linguistic phenomena are social and ideological phenomena because whenever people speak or listen, read or write, they do it in ways which are ideologically determined by their society (Fairclough, 2001). Indeed, discourses are "ideologically determined ways of talking or writing about persons, places, events or phenomena" (Wallace, 1992: 68). Hence, language is never neutral as it is shaped by society. Furthermore, this indicates that ideology is undeniably and pervasively imbedded in language so much so that even people who are conscious of their own individuality and believe that their language cannot be influenced by society, still use language in ways that are determined and influenced by social conventions (Fairclough, 2001).

In South Africa for instance, various researchers have shown that the country is patriarchal and masculine (Barkhuizen, 2015). Therefore, masculinity ideologies can influence the way people speak about male victimisation. Masculinity ideologies can make it difficult for some people to separate these ideologies from how they think, feel and behave towards male victims. This may be because of the socialisation process which has led to the internalisation and acceptance of rules, beliefs, stereotypes and expectations about male victims.

In addition to this, Fairclough adds that "social conditions determine properties of discourse" (2001:16). Therefore, the conditions in a given society are critical to how people produce and interpret discourse. Put simply, there are social conditions of production and social conditions of interpretation (Fairclough, 2001). These conditions are related to the three levels of social organisation which Fairclough developed a three-dimensional model for. The three-dimensional model explores the text, its production and

interpretation within the larger social context (Fairclough, 1995). Thus, any discursive event, that is every time people read, speak or write, there is a simultaneous three-dimensional phenomenon taking place. Thus, the three-dimensional model is made up of a linguistic description of the text (dimension 1), followed by the interpretation of the relationship between the discourse process and the text (dimension 2), and the explanation of the relationship between the discourse processes and the social processes (dimension 3) (**Figure 4**).

At the first level is the text dimension which involves the analysis of the texts. This level includes features such as the choices and patterns in vocabulary made up of the structure and style of the text, wording and metaphors. It also includes grammar such as the use of passive verbs, modal verbs, and the structure of the text. Fairclough (1995) also describes it as the description level because it is the stage where people describe their thoughts, beliefs and experiences on given issues through the formal properties of text. The second level is the interpretation level where discourse practice takes place. This level specifies the nature of the production of text, as well as its distribution and consumption in society in relation to other discourses. Intertextuality takes place at this level because people draw upon other texts to produce, consume and interpret their own texts. The third level is the explanation level, also defined as the social practice dimension. This dimension focuses on how power relations and ideologies in discourse can reproduce, challenge or transform society.



(Figure 4: Fairclough's three-dimensional model - Source: Fairclough, 1995: 98)

Central to the three-dimensional model is members' resources (MR). Fairclough (2001) explains that the MR is the information that people store and draw upon when they produce, consume and interpret texts. The MR is made up of people's knowledge of language, values, beliefs, assumptions and stereotypes of the natural and social worlds which may determine their thoughts and perceptions about issues such as female perpetrated IPV. Similar to the "neural pathways" explained by Fausto-Sterling (2000), the structure of society and its conditions can create a foothold in an individual's psyche and can provide cognitive strategies which can determine the individual's views on certain issues such as IPV (Fairclough, 2001). When ideologies for instance, are imbedded in one's psyche, the person can give their power through consent. For instance, if it is imbedded in the mind of a male that women's perpetration is trivial and inconsequential, there are less chances that he may oppose this, however depending on his male role discrepancy levels. Therefore, through ideology, he accepts his victimisation and may give away his power to fight it.

Fairclough (2001) explains that there are two ways in which power is exercised and granted: coercion and consent. Coercion refers to the use of physical violence to achieve

a desired goal such as the arrest of perpetrators. Consent, on the other hand, is when ideology is used to manufacture and achieve a desired outcome through socialisation. In layman's terms, coercion is physical and consent is psychological. It is in the latter form of power that males accept victimisation by their female partners and remain silent about it.

One of the reasons Fairclough (2001) wrote the book *Power and Language* was to increase the awareness and consciousness of how language contributes to the oppression and domination of some people by others. By writing this book, he hoped that "language can change what language has created" (Fairclough, 2001: 116). If language has created power that is used to deprive people what is rightfully theirs, such as males being acknowledged as victims, then the same language can be used to challenge this misuse of power and eradicate inequalities.

3.2.1. Critiques of Critical Discourse Analysis

Despite the notion that people are socialised into sets of beliefs and values, Widdowson (1996: 58) argues that people are not entirely controlled by ideologies and societal structures and social conditions. People can still challenge dominant ideologies and make their own decisions despite the power and dominance of those in high positions. People are selective of the discourses they produce and consume, as well as the cognitive strategies they use to interpret these discourses. For instance, despite the dominant belief that men cannot be victimised by women, some male victims can oppose this based on their own experiences. Therefore, a dominant ideology does not mean it is accepted as common sense by all members of society because experiences are unique to each individual. Machin and Mayr (2012) have also criticised CDA for being too complicated to use in some instances.

3.2.2. Applicability of Critical Discourse Analysis to the Study

CDA in this study is used as both theory of language and power and analytical framework/data analysis model. As a theory of language and power, CDA exposes hidden

and implicit power relations concealed in language and taken for granted as everyday talk. By using the Description Level of Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model and studying the selection of language and words through lexical analysis, power relations are exposed. The use of language can expose the abuse of power hidden in the language used by the elite, whom in this study have been identified as the female perpetrators. As a data analysis model, CDA is used to study the selected discourses at the description, interpretation and explanation levels. Given the dearth of literature on this subject within the South African context, using CDA to analyse how discourses are produced in relation to the historical, political and socio-cultural conditions in the country may provide further insight into this problem. The use of the CDA in this study plays a pivotal role because it holds that discourses stem from the social conditions of society. South Africa is a patriarchal country and this may influence and shape the way people speak about male victims of female perpetrated IPV. Additionally, CDA is about challenging and resisting ideologies that are accepted as common sense. Therefore, studying counter arguments and disagreements about this issue on Facebook may lead to further understanding of this problem. This is important, particularly because even the minutiae of a text's linguistic make-up can reveal an ideological standpoint. This analysis may show how socio-cultural, political and historical factors can influence the way people speak about female perpetrated IPV.

3.3. Gender Role Strain Paradigm

The gender role strain paradigm, also called the "standard model", is regarded as the major theoretical paradigm in the study of the psychology for men and masculinities (Levant & Powell, 2017). The gender role strain model for masculinity was developed by Joseph Pleck in the early 1980s in the United States of America. In 1995, Pleck updated the gender role identity paradigm (GRIP) to the gender role strain paradigm (GRSP) by integrating new and emerging ideas about masculinity. Pleck proposed the ten propositions to demonstrate the negative impact that gender role norms and masculinity ideology have on males. The ten propositions view males as the biggest victims of assigned gender roles created by society. These propositions hold that (a) contemporary

gender roles are operationally defined by gender role stereotypes and norms. (b) Gender roles are contradictory and inconsistent. (c) The proportion of persons who violate gender role norms is high. (d) The violation of gender roles leads to social condemnation, and (e) negative psychological consequences. (f) Actual or imagined violation of gender roles leads people to overconform to them. (g) Violating gender roles has more severe consequences for males than for females. (h) Prescribed gender role traits are often dysfunctional. (i) Each sex experiences gender role strain in its paid work and family roles, and (j) historical change causes gender role strain.

Put simply, these ten propositions by Pleck highlight that male gender role norms have more negative outcomes as opposed to positive outcomes. This may explain why there are higher suicide rates by men (World Population Review, 2023). Gender role norms, and the inability to live up to societal standards and expectations affect men more than women. Hence Pleck explains in his propositions that violating gender roles has more severe consequences for men than for women. Furthermore, men remain silent about their IPV experiences to avoid marginalisation and condemnation. This is a form of overconforming which may also manifest in their choice of language when discussing their IPV experiences. Gender roles emanate from gender ideologies which are central to the GRSP and are a vital co-factor in the male role strain (Pleck, 1995: 19). Gender ideologies are beliefs about the importance of men and women adhering to culturally defined standards for gendered behaviour. Levant and Powell (2017) explain that these culturally defined standards are made up of two components: masculinity and femininity. Masculinity refers to traits associated with men such as dominance and aggression. Femininity on the other hand, comprises of traits such as submissiveness and nurturance. Hence, it is difficult for society to believe that women can perpetrate violence against men because their 'nature' does not allow them to attack individuals who are known and expected to be dominant and aggressive.

Levant and Richmond state that "the dominant gender ideologies in a given society define norms for gender roles" (2016: 18). Therefore, through gender ideologies, gender role norms are created. Gender role norms are standards, rules, customs, expectations and values that are often enforced by parents and teachers through social learning (Levant,

2011). Through social learning, boys are taught that they are strong and dominant, hence they overlook their own victimisation. This indicates that ideologies enforced through social learning can shape and determine thoughts and behaviour. Fausto-Sterling (2000) uses the term “neural pathways” to describe how gender roles can affect thinking, beliefs and behaviours, even on issues such as IPV.

In South Africa, different members of society such as men, women, children and elders are socialised into having certain thoughts and beliefs about the victimisation of men by women. Proverbs such as “*monna ke nku o llela teng*”, which means ‘men must suffer in silence’, are some of the common dominant narratives that are rooted in gender ideologies (Thobejane & Luthada, 2019). Such proverbs contribute to the belief that ‘real’ men are strong and should not publicly display their pain but rather hide it. Men who defy these expectations and do not conform to them are often frowned upon. Hence Butler (1993) explains that gender is performance as both the male and female genders are expected to ‘perform’ according to their assigned gender roles. Failure to do so leads to the three sub-types of GRSP which are gender role discrepancy, gender role trauma and gender role dysfunction.

3.3.1. Male gender role discrepancy

Pleck (1995) explains that a significant proportion of males have shown long-term failure to fulfill male role expectations. The proportion of males who violate gender role norms is high, meaning that there is a significant number of men who struggle to fit into these standards. This dynamic is known as “gender role discrepancy” (Pleck, 1995:12). It refers to men’s inability to fit into the set standards of masculinity. Given that South Africa is a ‘masculine’ country (Barkhuizen, 2015; Mphatheni & Mlamlala, 2022), South African men may create, define and internalise their own ideals of masculinity based on the masculinity ideology that is dominant in the country. As a result, they may be expected to fulfill male gender role expectations such as defeating and dominating a woman during a physical altercation, instead of being the victimised.

Men are more prone to experiencing the consequences of not maintaining these norms, thus threatening their manhood as society will deem them ‘unmanly’ (Pleck, 1995). These

consequences include a low self-esteem, social condemnation, marginalisation, mental and physical health problems (Alsawalqa, 2021; Pleck, 1995; Wong, Ho, Wang & Miller, 2016). These multifaceted consequences are detrimental to the overall health of men. Hence Pleck (1995) adds that men's inability to conform to gender roles is somewhat good as it can lead to better psychological benefits which could reduce or eradicate these consequences. When men do not adhere to the expectations and standards placed upon them, the benefits for their emotional and psychological wellbeing are great. This shows that despite the dominant gender ideologies enforced through socialisation, individuals will choose to conform or not.

3.3.2. Male gender role trauma

Male gender role trauma refers to the difficulty and trauma that men experience from trying to meet male gender role standards and expectations (Pleck, 1995). When boys are socialised from a young age to refrain from expressing their emotions, the process can be inherently traumatic and can result in mild-to-moderate NMA (Levant & Powell, 2017). This also prevents their own self-awareness as victims because they have been conditioned as boys to believe that they are strong and cannot be victimised by girls. Hence in their adulthood, males often use "emotional inexpression" (Connell, 1987) when discussing their victimisation experiences to avoid appearing weak.

In modern culture, men are still denied the right to grieve and express their emotions, leading to increased trauma strain (Pleck, 1995). This is particular in South Africa as it is a patriarchal country where men are expected to live up to the standards of hegemonic masculinity (Luthada & Thobejane, 2019). In South Africa, men are still viewed as weak for crying, grieving or displaying emotions (Thobejane & Luthada, 2019). Pleck (1995) stresses that it is important for men to grieve as this is the first stage in resolving the trauma.

3.3.3. Male gender role dysfunction

The third major sub-type of GRSP is the male gender role dysfunction. Male role dysfunction leads to strain when men are not able to fulfill these gender role norms because they are perceived as positive and desirable. The pressure to fulfill gender roles can have negative consequences on men because these standards can be inherently dysfunctional (Pleck, 1995). Mahalik and colleagues (2003) developed the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory which measures men's ability to conform to masculine norms. Their measurement tool indicated negative results, showing unhealthy alcohol use, substance abuse, self-silencing, hopelessness and a low self-esteem as a result for trying to conform to gender roles. Therefore, in an attempt to appear 'manly', male victims are prone to the abovementioned issues.

3.3.4. Critiques of the Gender Role Strain Paradigm

Gender role norms are shaped and influenced by culture, beliefs and stereotypes; however, they are filtered through one's own experiences, characteristics and personal traits. Hence, they are not universally accepted as a 'fixed' standard for men to live by. Male gender roles are contradictory and inconsistent. For instance, men could cry for different reasons such as the birth of a child which does not necessarily mean that they are weak. However, due to socialisation, it may be hard for men to differentiate between society's perceptions and their own understanding of masculinity (Cole et al., 2018). Gender role norms can be extremely constraining to men that they begin to question their validity. This indicates that gender role norms are not fixed as they can be challenged and resisted despite the socialisation process through which they were enforced.

3.3.5. Applicability of the Gender Role Strain Paradigm to the study

The gender role strain discrepancy, trauma and dysfunction are important in this study because they provide the context and reasons as to why male victims prefer to remain silent about their victimisation. This theory explains how masculinity ideologies can contribute to the difficulty that men may experience in expressing themselves as victims

of violence perpetrated by females due to the socialisation and conditioning, they went through as boys. Society at large can also refer to these ideologies when speaking about male victims. However, this theory also shows that these ideologies can also be resisted and challenged and not merely accepted as truth. Both the acceptance and refusal of these masculinity ideologies can lead to gaining further insight into this phenomenon.

3.4. The Public Sphere

The term 'public sphere' was originally coined in the year 1962 by philosopher Jürgen Habermas in his book titled, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* published in 1989. The term public sphere refers to private individuals who gather to form a public body. The public body becomes a platform for discussions that lead to the formation of public opinion (Habermas, Lennox & Lennox, 1974: 49). Historically, the public sphere was only limited to feudal authorities such as the church, and the members of royal families and of nobility (Habermas et al., 1974).

The public sphere excluded people from the lower class, people of colour, immigrants, and women (Fuchs, 2014; Fraser, 1990). This exclusion attracted criticism from various scholars because it reflected a similar exclusion imposed by the feudal authorities.^{49 50} It also contradicted the term public sphere which refers to "ideas of citizenship, commonality, and things not private, but accessible and observable by all" (Papacharissi, 2002: 10). For Habermas, the public sphere meant "a society engaged in critical debate" (1989:52). However, this exclusion meant that certain groups could not engage in critical debate which denied them a sense of existence and support attained through inclusion and participation (Papacharissi, 2010: 10). Inclusion and support are imperative,

⁴⁹ Fuchs, C. (2014). Social media and the public sphere. *Journal for a Global, Sustainable Information Society*, 12(1).

⁵⁰ Fraser, N. (1990). Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. *Social Text*, 56-80.

particularly for marginalised groups such as male victims as they can be acknowledged and supported in online spaces.

As such, public spheres can be formed to discuss the perpetration of IPV by females against their male partners where for instance, solutions to combat this problem or ways to increase its visibility are discussed. Public spheres are not regulated by the government; therefore, members are not required to behave or engage in a professional manner. This presents an opportunity for unfiltered, uninhibited, plural and diverse voices where freedom of speech, self-expression, assembly and association are guaranteed (Fuchs, 2014). This freedom is important as it can lead to further insight into female perpetrated IPV.

3.4.1. The Virtual Space

Zizi Papacharissi is one of the scholars to expand Habermas's original concept of the public sphere. Papacharissi (2002) redefined the 'public sphere' in relation to the modern digital era where technological advancements have enhanced communication through the internet. The author uses the term 'virtual sphere 2.0' to refer to users' ability to interact with others in virtual spaces (Papacharissi, 2009). It could therefore be said that the virtual sphere is a digital version of Habermas's concept of the public sphere as people meet virtually to have discussions on varying issues. However, Morozov (2011) argues that the internet does not recalibrate Habermas's public sphere and is far from revitalising it. Habermas (2006) agrees, stating that the millions of voices in virtual spaces have led to fragmented views and opinions which are difficult to control. With that, Papacharissi (2002) holds that the public sphere might have expired as more people are using virtual spaces to interact and express themselves, as opposed to forming public opinion.

It is for this reason that I use Papacharissi's expansion of Habermas' public sphere: the Virtual Space. The internet has redefined ways of communicating and has produced new forms of virtual spaces such as SNSs where Users can discuss and debate about female perpetrated IPV. Similar to how the internet has dismantled hierarchies that existed during the feudalism era where only the bourgeois could engage in critical debate, the Virtual

Space has dismantled the hierarchies of IPV where men who are victimised by their female partners can openly speak about their experiences of IPV. Thus, male victimisation as a “forbidden discourse” can be widely known (Allen-Collinson, 2011.). Papacharissi describes this as “potentially powerful” (2010: 131).

SNSs are ‘potentially powerful’ in the sense that they can serve as platforms to challenge and resist the status quo of dominant cultural and structural ideologies. In Africa specifically, Mutsvairo (2016) explains that SNSs have the potential to disrupt dominant heteronormative narratives which are culturally sanctioned. Dominant heteronormative narratives such as ‘men must suffer in silence’, can be resisted by internet users as they discuss their own views and experiences which may object ideologies that are accepted as truth. This allows counter-hegemonic discourses to emerge and leads to “a society engaged in critical debate” (Habermas, 1989: 52). Virtual Spaces have become important in African societies as people can express dissent, thus uncovering voices which could have otherwise remained silent.

3.4.1.1. Facebook as a Virtual Space

Facebook can be described as a transparent platform that promotes freedom of speech and expression. Papacharissi (2009) compares the architectural structure and design of Facebook to that of a glasshouse, stating that it is publicly open. She also describes it as a “looser network” due to its unrestricted nature that enhances interactions and spontaneous communication (Papacharissi, 2009: 200). In addition, the architectural design of Facebook allows members to post, like, comment, reply, react and share, thus promoting interactions and engagements. Similar to the public sphere which encourages unfiltered, uninhibited and plural voices, the flexibility of Facebook leads to hasty and unguarded opinions as opposed to rational, focused and controlled discourse (Papacharissi, 2009). Facebook embodies the definition of the public sphere which is a space that is “... open to all, in contrast to close and exclusive affairs” (Habermas, 1989: 6). The structure and design of Facebook are important in this study because the unfiltered and uninhibited talks, chats, gossip, reflections, debates, arguments and engagements will lead to gaining further insight into the perpetration of violence by

women against men. The variety and diversification of viewpoints, perspectives and opinions are imperative as they can lead to further understanding female perpetrated IPV.

Facebook is both a public and private space. Papacharissi (2009) explains that it is private because communication, interactions and participation begin first in the private environment which is located within the individual's personal space. This does not mean that the individual is disconnected or isolated. Rather, the individual is connected to others and operates in a language that they have chosen to use to express themselves (Papacharissi, 2009: 132). The private virtual space allows people to choose their own language and to "shout more loudly" (Jones, 1997: 30). Given that people are located in a familiar space such as their home, they have an increased sense of protection, allowing them to cuss and use derogatory language when expressing their opinions. Thus, Users can engage freely without worrying about who is watching.

3.4.1.2. Critiques of the Virtual Space

As much as the internet enhances communication and dismantles hierarchies by allowing male discourses into the IPV domain, there are some drawbacks. The digital divide, which is the gap between those with and without access to the internet, leads to the exclusion of some voices on the subject of female perpetrated IPV. Internet research conducted by Pew Research (2010) revealed that most internet users were educated, wealthier and more male than female, therefore, replicating a bourgeois society. Therefore, those who struggle with finances to gain access to the internet, poor network coverage and power cuts may be limited in participating online and engaging with others. This means that the underprivileged male victims may be subjected to further exclusion as they cannot engage on this issue with other Users.

3.4.1.3. Applicability of the Virtual Space to the Study

The theory of the Virtual Space is applicable in this study as it explains the importance of social networking sites in enhancing communication in virtual spaces. The heightened sense of freedom and protection promoted by the private space allows people to represent and express themselves in their own way. Through Users' unfiltered and uninhibited discussions, debates and interactions in online spaces, further insight is gained into female perpetrated IPV.

The diagram below shows the interconnectedness of the three theories that frame this study (**Figure 5**). Firstly, Pleck (1995) explains that central to male gender roles is masculinity ideology. Masculinity ideology is a set of beliefs often enforced during the socialisation process about male behaviour, values and attitudes. These beliefs are imbedded into the psyche and MR of men and have become properties of discourse as they shape the way male victims and society at large perceive and speak about male victimisation (Fairclough, 2001). The manner in which Facebook Users engage on the subject of female perpetrated IPV becomes critical as their discourses are a result of the political, institutional, situational and sociocultural conditions of the environment within which they are placed. Facebook then becomes a platform where dominant hegemonic narratives, injustices, inequalities, and power dynamics shaped by masculinity ideology are reproduced or resisted. By critically analysing Facebook discourses, implicit and hidden power dynamics are exposed.

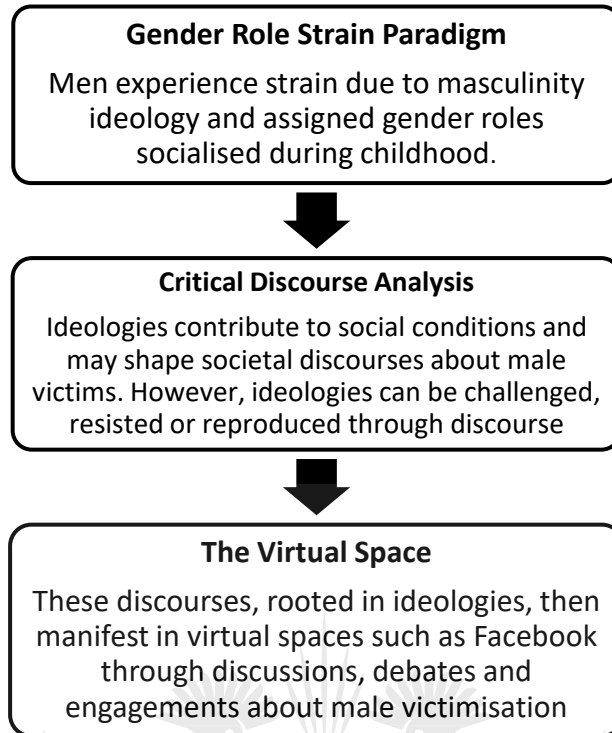


Figure 5: Diagram of relation between the GRSP, CDA and the Virtual Space. (Developed by researcher).

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter discussed three theories through which I read and made sense of female perpetrated IPV against males within heterosexual relationships. Firstly, the GRSP explains men are the biggest victims of gender roles and this causes strain. Males can experience the sub-types of GRSP which are discrepancy, trauma and dysfunction as a result of adhering to these gender role norms. Masculinity ideology is implicated all the three sub-types of GRSP and is often enforced through socialisation. This can contribute to men's difficulty in discussing their victimisation experiences. Masculinity ideology is also pervasively imbedded and hidden in discourse so much so that it can naturalise inequalities and injustices that are accepted as common sense. This can contribute to the ongoing victimisation of men by their female partners. CDA however, exposes these

inequalities by analysing how ideologies and social conditions influence and shape discourse. The three-dimensional model demonstrates that when people speak, read or write, their description, interpretation and explanation of discourses are ideologically determined. Therefore, masculinity ideologies and social conditions in South Africa can lead to further understanding of female perpetrated IPV as they shape the way people think, feel and behave. Last, the virtual space derives from Habermas's concept of the public sphere. This concept discusses how the internet has created virtual spaces for self-expression and representation. The structural design of Facebook in particular leads to diverse and plural voices, where people can be their authentic selves as they are uninhibited and unfiltered in their delivery of discourses. Despite the issues of access to the internet as a result of the digital divide, the discussions on Facebook can lead to further insight into female perpetrated IPV. The next chapter discusses the methods and tools used to collect and analyse data.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the methods I followed to collect and analyse the data. I provide an explanation and justification of the materials and tools selected and used. The research design and paradigm, sampling methods, and the trustworthiness of the study are discussed. Last, the ethical considerations are provided.

4.2. Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research intends to explore the “underlying qualities of subjective experiences and the meanings associated with phenomena” (Bezuidenhout & Strydom, 2021: 198). This study utilised a qualitative research design as I was interested in how Facebook Users experienced, perceived, discussed and attached meaning to the phenomenon of female perpetrated IPV against men. This approach was appropriate for this study as qualitative research aims to allow researchers to “find deepness” in the data they gather (Bezuidenhout & Strydom, 2021: 199). This study followed a descriptive, exploratory research design. This study aimed to establish the forms of IPV that females perpetrated against men. To address this object, a descriptive research design was followed as it focuses on the ‘what’, ‘where’ and ‘how’ questions (Pascoe, 2021). Thus, a descriptive design was appropriate in identifying the forms of female perpetrated IPV. In addition, an exploratory research design was selected and used as it “consists of an attempt to discover something new and interesting” (Swedberg, 2020: 17). Furthermore, Swedberg (2020) explains that a general lack of knowledge about an important topic makes it exploratory. Given that IPV is a global socio-economic issue makes it important to study, particularly because there is insufficient knowledge on the subject matter. Thus, there is “need to know more about [this] topic, and since very little information existed, the study ... is exploratory in nature” (Swedberg, 2020: 24). In addition, although this social

phenomenon has already been studied, there is a need for new and interesting findings given that IPV is rooted in a multitude of complexities (Burelomovaa et al., 2018). These findings can lead to further insight into female perpetrated IPV, thus fulfilling the aim of the study. Both designs were useful as not much is known about female perpetrated IPV in South Africa.

4.3. Interpretivism Paradigm

The experiences, opinions and meanings of female perpetrated IPV expressed by Facebook Users are subjective, varied and unique to each individual. These cannot be quantified or measured because they are influenced and shaped by social conditions and ideologies, meaning that they are fluid and prone to change (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2021). Therefore, the interpretivist paradigm is used in this study as it explains that people are fundamentally different from objects. Additionally, the use of CDA which rests on the production, interpretation and explanation of phenomena in relation to the socio-cultural, historical and political conditions in a given society leads to further insight into female perpetrated IPV against men as discourses are produced and interpreted according to the above-mentioned conditions. Thus, the manner in which people discuss and interpret the phenomenon of IPV is crucial in this study.

4.4. Data Collection

The data collection in this study was limited to Facebook groups, pages and accounts that were public and not restricted in any manner or shape. Data was collected and selected in accordance with the research questions and objectives of the study. In addition, data was collected at all three levels which are the Post Level, Comment Level and the Reply Level (**Figure 6**). The Post Level is the starting point and the product of the creation for engagements and interactions to take place. This is where Users share and express their original thoughts, views, perceptions and experiences of female perpetrated IPV, allowing people to comment and share their views in relation to the original post. At the Comment Level, Users are able to directly respond to the main post by sharing their

thoughts, agreeing or disagreeing, etc. At the Reply Level, Users can only respond to the Comment. Given that the third research question of this study centers on social media engagements, it was imperative to study the comments and replies as this is where Users engaged, debated and discussed IPV.

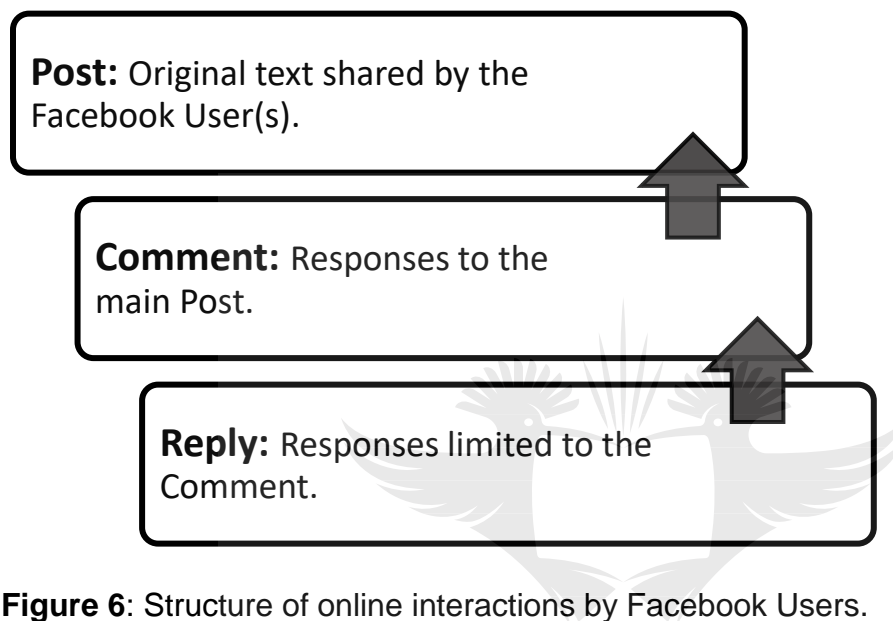


Figure 6: Structure of online interactions by Facebook Users.

I began collecting data available from January 2018 to June 2023 to increase the sufficient amount required to address the aim of the study. This time frame was also shaped by dearth of scholarly literature on the subject in South Africa. Thus, to gain further insight into female perpetrated IPV, a large number of discourses comprising thoughts, views, opinions, experiences, interpretations and discussions on the subject were sought. By doing this, I was able to potentially “add context, enhance information, and yield insights into aspects [of female perpetrated IPV] that would otherwise remain invisible...” (Orgad, 2009: 41).

There are two types of netnographic data: observational and archival data (Kulavuz, 2013). In this study, I used both types of data. As noted earlier, I observed how Users interacted and discussed female perpetrated IPV on Facebook. Following these observations, I then proceeded to archive the data since it was textual and could be downloaded (Kozinets, 2010). The data comprising posts, comments and replies was

manually copied and pasted on numerous Microsoft Word documents. The data was searched for on the Facebook search bar by typing key words and phrases relating to female perpetrated IPV in order to generate the desired results. As noted in Chapter One, keywords and phrases included: gender-based violence against men, intimate partner violence against men, female perpetrators, women perpetrators, violence by women, male victims, men abuse, violence against men, abused men, men must suffer in silence and indoda ayikhali (a man does not cry). Variations of these terms were used to ensure exhaustive search results. These key words and phrases were taken from previous studies on IPV by women against men (Ferrales Brehm, McElrath, 2016; Hines & Douglas, 2009; Kgate et al., 2021; Oparinde & Matsha, 2021; Park et al., 2021; Scarduzio et al., 2017; Thobejane & Luthada, 2019; Venäläinen, 2020).

4.5. Netnography

This study employed a netnographic approach because it is the most appropriate in conducting desktop research, particularly on social media (Kozinets, 2002). The term 'netnography' was coined by Kozinets (1997) and is a combination of the words "interNET" and "ethNOGRAPHY". However, the term is not new as it first emerged in the mid-1990s in the United States of America following online research pioneered by Nancy Baym (Hine, 2008). Kozinets developed the netnographic research methodology to address online research due to the rise of new media and online research.

The term netnography is a combination of the words, "internet" and "ethnography" (Kozinets, 2020). It is derived from ethnography which refers to the "fieldwork, or the study of the distinctive meanings, practices, and artifacts of particular social groups" (Kozinets, 2002: 62). It is also defined as online ethnography or virtual ethnography (Hine, 2008) and is a systematic description of how humans behave, practice and make meaning of a given phenomenon based on the firsthand observations of the researcher (Howard, 2002: 533). Netnography in this study is used to study behaviours, practices and meanings that Facebook Users attach to the phenomenon of female perpetrated IPV. Netnography therefore, applies the principles and practices of ethnography in online spaces.

Researchers (de Valck, van Bruggen & Wierenga, 2009: 197) have provided a detailed definition of netnography, stating that it is:

a written account resulting from fieldwork studying the culture and communities that emerge from online, computer-mediated, or internet-based communications... where both the fieldwork and the textual account are informed by the qualitative methods.

Given that netnography is based on the firsthand observations of the researcher, the researcher is therefore expected to be in the field and 'live' with the participants as their human presence is required. Although this study was based on online discussions which did not enable human presence, I was able to 'live' with the participants and first-handedly observe them by following a "pure" netnographic approach. I 'lived' with the Facebook Users by spending long days and hours in the groups, pages and accounts and observing their conversations, interactions and discussions on IPV.

Netnographic studies can be conducted in two ways: participatory or non-participatory. I followed the non-participatory approach which is passive and observational in nature (Kozinets, 2010). This means that I was "passively monitoring the community and integrating the gathered information" to understand female perpetrated IPV against men from the discussions and interactions in the selected groups, pages and accounts (Alavi, Ahuja & Medury, 2011: 89). Loanzon and colleagues describe this pure observational approach as a "specialized type of lurking" (2013: 1576). A lurker, as Hine (2009) describes, is a person who merely observes online communication and does not participate actively in the group. Lurking has a "voyeuristic quality" that leads to the ease of studying stigmatic conversations and discourses that may have been difficult to conduct in face-to-face settings (Costello, McDermott & Wallace, 2017). This was a significant element in this study, particularly because male victims have shown difficulty in publicising their victimisation due to issues such as the NMA.

I followed the non-participatory approach for various reasons. Firstly, the subject of IPV is sensitive. Thus, for such topics, non-invasive approaches are preferable in the context of this study. Secondly, research has shown that some people prefer less invasive methods of elicitation such as computer-mediated methods when discussing their

victimisation experiences (Kataoka et al., 2010). Similar to reporting their IPV cases to police officers, invasive methods of elicitation such as interviews may force participants to relieve their victimisation experiences which may bring trauma. Thirdly, some of the posts, comments and replies contain criminal acts which would perhaps not have been shared by members out of fear of being reported to the authorities or being judged by the researcher. Therefore, to gain further insight into the problem of female perpetrated IPV, I followed an “unobtrusive and noninfluencing monitoring of the communication and interaction of [online] community members to gain practical insights” into their views, perceptions and opinions on female perpetrated IPV against men (Pollok, Lüttgens & Piller, 2014: 2). A non-participatory and observational netnographic approach is “well suited to dealing with ... sensitive topics or illegal acts ...” (Costell et al., 2017). Therefore, “mingling by the researchers might have limited in-depth information or pushed informants away” (Kozinets, 2010:14). This would have been a disadvantage to this study and might have prohibited the ability to achieve the research aim, which is to gain in-depth understanding of female perpetrated IPV against men.

Therefore, an observational approach, which is an act of watching, was followed as I watched texts on a computer screen. Watching included reading the posts, comments and replies to the comments, as well as watching how members interacted and “spoke” to each other. I paid attention to what they were texting, the language they used and how they responded to the questions asked. I observed the overall communication to get a sense of how engagements were taking place. Observing these engagements also allowed me to see if the data was relevant to my study. Therefore, I “extensively read and made meaning of textual communication in addition to watching the text” (Kulavuz-Onal & Vásquez, 2013: 230).

To ensure that this netnographic study was of high quality, I incorporated Kozinets’ (2002) six steps which are: research planning, entrée, data collection, data analysis, ethical standards and research representation. Kozinets (2002) further advises that researchers can adapt or omit some of these steps to suit their studies. Therefore, I only used and omitted those that did not apply.

4.6. Entrée into the Research Site

The process of entering a community is known as *entrée* and is the most sacred part of netnography (Kozinets, 2010). I gained entry into the research sites with no restrictions at all. Given that the groups, pages and accounts were public, I had access to all the interactions in the group. I could enter and exit the research site without having to renegotiate access over and over again. I could read, react, reply and engage with members of the group if and when I desired.

4.7. Sampling

Sampling refers to the process of selecting the subject or object to be included in the research project (Pascoe, 2021), which in this study were discourses on female perpetrated IPV. I used non-probability sampling because I studied discourses that are not fixed but rather shaped by the unique experiences of each User on Facebook. With that, the results are not generalisable to the larger population and instead are limited to the discourses that were selected and used in this study. Purposive sampling was used because I purposefully selected only the data based on its relevance to the study (Pascoe, 2021). I also used convenience sampling as the data I used was conveniently and publicly available from groups, pages and accounts with no restricted access (Pascoe, 2021). When I reached data saturation, that is, the stage where new data is no longer being generated, I then halted the process of sampling discourses.

4.8. Population

The population of this study were the public posts, comments and replies on Facebook pertaining to the subject of female perpetrated intimate partner violence against men. Posts from January 2018 to June 2023 were selected. A total number of 62 public groups, pages and accounts were located on Facebook, resulting in over 5000 posts, comments and replies combined. The pages and accounts belonged to local South African celebrities who often ask the public to share their relationship issues. Additionally, some of the groups and pages were named after popular local TV shows where Users

communicated in local South African languages. This increased the certainty that the groups, pages and accounts were South African based. From the 62 public groups, pages and accounts, a total number of 73 discourses at all three levels (posts, comments and replies) were selected and analysed.

4.9. Units of analysis

The unit of analysis is the 'what' or 'whom' being studied, (Pascoe, 2021). The unit of analysis was Users' discourses and interactions on female perpetrated IPV. The unit of analysis comes in varying levels. The first level is the social artefacts, followed by the social interactions (Pascoe, 2021). The social artefacts in this study were the posts because they are the product of creation. The posts led to the creation of the social interactions which were the comments and replies comprising of arguments, debates, gaslighting, exchanges, interactions, members mocking and making fun of each other. Thus, the social artefacts led to social interactions (**Figure 6**).

4.10. Storage of data

The data was stored in password-protected laptop belonging to the researcher. The folders containing the data were also protected with a password. Therefore, no other individual had access to the data.

4.11. Data Analysis

The General Analytical Framework for Critical Discourse Analysis comprising seven steps by Mullet (2018) was used to analyse the data collected from Facebook (**Figure 7**). The steps were not necessarily followed in the logical order set out by Mullet (2018) as some were adjusted to allow for appropriate analysis.

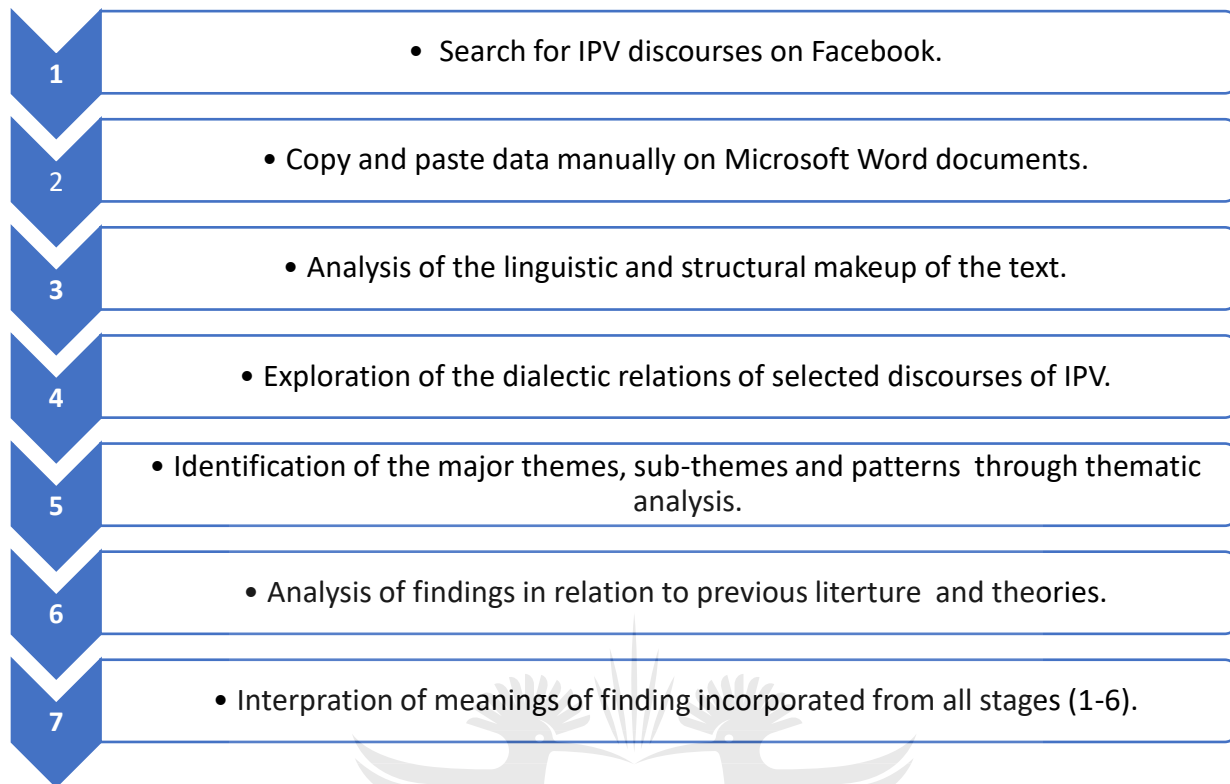


Figure 7: The Seven Stages of Data Analysis

Stage 1:

This stage involved searching for and identifying discourses on female perpetrated IPV from public groups, pages and accounts on Facebook. Selected key words and phrases were used to generate the desired results.

Stage 2:

Upon locating the data and carefully selecting it according to its relatedness to the research questions, it was then manually copied and pasted it on numerous Microsoft Word documents in preparation for the analysis.

Stage 3

Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model was used to analyse the language and structure of the discourses at the first level, which is the Description Level. Features such as choice of words, patterns in vocabulary, grammar, structure, modal verbs and rhetorical tropes including metaphors and colloquialisms were analysed. The linguistic

and structural strategies used to enact, reproduce and resist power relations on the subject of female perpetrated IPV were analysed in this stage. The work of other CDA scholars such as van Dijk (1995) and Machin and Mayr (2012) was used. I analysed the linguistic makeup of the text. That is, I looked at how the text was structured, the words, grammar, metaphors, hyperboles, idioms, colloquialisms and proverbs in order to determine the commenter's perspective, perceptions, beliefs, values, thoughts, feelings and position about female perpetrated IPV. I analysed how the texts were structured, which ideas were foregrounded and backgrounded. This was imperative, given that the minutiae of a text can reveal an ideological standpoint.

Stage 4

This stage comprised the second and third level in Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model. The focus was centered on the exploration of the dialectical relations of selected discourses to IPV. That is, the sociocultural, historical and political factors in South Africa were explored as well as their role in shaping and influencing the way people speak, think and feel about male victimisation as well as their behaviour towards male victims.

Stage 5

Stage 5 involved identifying the major and sub-themes through thematic analysis, which were then grouped together for the write up. Given that I manually copied and pasted the data, I was able to work through all the posts and comments line-by-line to assign codes and themes.

Stage 6

This stage focused on how the use of words and language can illustrate the commenter's position on IPV in relation to existing literature. For instance, previous research has shown that men often use hegemonic masculine language when describing their female IPV experiences. Therefore, in this stage, I used literature to analyse and make sense of this phenomenon.

Stage 7

I interpreted the meanings of the major and sub-themes by incorporating all the stages from 1 to 6. Throughout the interpretation stage, I described gaps and questions that arose and the insights I discovered that can lead to gaining further insight into female perpetrated IPV. I also referred to the reflexive and field notes I made during my ethnography phase of collecting data to ensure that data was analysed objectively without bias.

4.12. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the validity and reliability of a study to ensure that it is credible (Koonin, 2021). Although these terms are usually associated with quantitative research, they are used to describe the trustworthiness in qualitative studies. The term trustworthiness consists of four criteria, namely, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). It was highly imperative that I ensured the trustworthiness of the study by employing all four criteria in order to attempt to safeguard research rigour.

4.12.1. Credibility

Credibility refers to the accuracy used by the researcher to interpret the data based on the responses as actual meanings by research participants, or the 'truth value' of interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Given that this study was based on online discourses, I did not get a chance to physically interact with participants and ask for further clarity on their discourses. However, I followed the threads on all posts, comments and replies, especially where Users were asked to further explain their victimisation or perpetration experience. Koonin (2021) adds that data triangulation increases and ensures the credibility of a study. To achieve this, I used methodological triangulation, that is, my field notes and reflective notes to ensure that the study is credible and not biased. The fieldnotes included my observations during the collection of data and the reflexivity notes include my emotions, thoughts, feelings, views and opinions. I used these

as a guide to ensure that I was not biased but rather objective when analysing and interpreting the data.

4.12.2. Transferability

Transferability refers to the “applicability or usefulness of a study’s findings to the theory and practice of another study in a similar context and delivering similar results” (Koonin, 2021: 296). Simply put, transferability means the analysis and results of the study can be applied to other studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure transferability, I followed Koonin’s (2021: 296) advice and ensured that I used “detailed and thick descriptions in describing the behaviour, experiences and opinions” Facebook Users as expressed in their discourses. This was done so that other researchers could potentially deliver similar results in their study.

4.12.3. Dependability

Dependability refers to the quality of the integration that takes place between the data collection method and data analysis (Koonin, 2018). Dependability relates to how detailed and descriptive the research procedures are so that they can allow other researchers to critique, follow and review the process, and thus repeat the study. To increase the dependability of the study, I provided rich and thick descriptions of the research design, that is, the methodology and methods, and the data collection processes. I also included field notes, reflexivity journal of my emotions and journey in collecting the data, the data analysis process which includes the how I coded and interpreted the data, as well as a reflective appraisal of the project. I ensured that I included all the details in the data collection process, as well as justification for all choices I made in selecting the methods I used. Koonin (2018) states that this leads to transparency which determines if appropriate methods were used and sound research were practiced. To ensure transparency, I followed Moravcsik’s (2019) three dimensions which are data, analytic and production transparency. At the data transparency level, I provided rich and thick descriptions of the data. At the analytic transparency level, I demonstrated and explained

in my reflexivity notes and journal, how I analysed Users experiences of IPV. Production transparency relates to how researchers describe the design and methodological decisions they made during the research process, how robust their methods were and what contextual factors may have influenced their judgments. These were also included in the reflexivity journal where I noted my feelings such as anger and frustration of violence by women against men to ensure that my judgement was not influenced.

4.12.4. Confirmability

Confirmability refers to how the data collected supports the interpretation of the both the researcher and the findings of the study (Koonin, 2021). Confirmability indicates how well the findings flow from the data. To ensure confirmability, I describe the research process in a comprehensive manner so that other researchers who looked at the data I used can arrive at similar conclusions. Similar to the process I followed in establishing credibility, I improved the confirmability of the study by utilising the processes of methodological triangulation. I used a reflexive journal not only to record my thoughts and emotions during the data collection process, but to reflect on any biases and preconceptions I had during the research process. By doing this, I also questioned and addressed the role of my background, beliefs, and experiences in the data analysis and interpretation in order to be as objective as possible.

4.13. Ethical Considerations

Although the data used in this study was collected from public groups, pages and personal accounts on Facebook, ethical procedures had to be followed given the sensitivity of the phenomenon under study. I took precautionary measures to ensure that the identities of Users were protected as the nature of their discourses could bring harm or reputational damage to them. In light of this, all the identifiable features such as names, surnames, profile pictures and screenshots were omitted. Furthermore, all the data comprising posts, comments and replies were deidentified through paraphrasing so that the texts cannot be

used trace the Users. I employed fabrication by “combining, molding, and/or arranging elements into a whole for a particular purpose” (Markham, 2012: 338).

4.14. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the methods I followed and employed to collect and analyse the data. This chapter included a discussion of the research design and approach that was suitable to address the research question. A qualitative research design was selected as the aim of the research was to gain further insight into female perpetrated IPV. In addition, a netnographic approach was utilised where I took the non-participatory, unobtrusive position on Facebook. Despite this, I was expected to ‘live’ with the participants and participate in the group. By spending many years in the group, reading and re-reading the discourses, I was able to ‘live’ with the Users. I also participated by ‘Liking’ and ‘Reacting’ to some of the posts, comments and replies. Data was collected through copying from the research site and pasting onto separate Microsoft Word documents. Thus, the data was observed and archived. The trustworthiness of the study, and the ethical considerations are also discussed. The next chapter is the data analysis chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDING the SILENT, INVISIBLE and VICTIMISED MALE

One morning I was sleeping and she woke me up with multiple slaps because she didn't have clean panties to wear. I had to wake up, wash, and dry them with a hairdryer... It was my responsibility to make sure she had clean clothes and panties because I was not working 😞

(Paraphrased comment by male Facebook user).

5.1. Introduction

This chapter seeks to do two things: discuss and subsequently analyse the findings of the data collected from the various public Facebook groups, pages and accounts. To answer the questions upon which the study is based, this chapter firstly provides an understanding of the various ways in which men are victimised by their female partners. This is followed by the discourses that Facebook Users draw from to narrate their experiences of IPV and to make sense of this phenomenon. Finally, this chapter discusses the role of social media in enhancing the freedom of speech, anonymity and protection to promote engagements pertaining to the victimisation of men by their female partners.

For a long time, men have experienced IPV perpetrated by their female partners but continue to remain silent, invisible and marginalised. This has contributed to limited knowledge regarding the various ways in which they are victimised. The discourses below provide further insight into the kinds of IPV that men are subjected to at the hands of their female partners. The kinds of IPV are defined and described in relation to the South African Domestic Violence Amendment Act 14 of 2021, here referred to as the New Act.

5.1.1. Forms of IPV Perpetrated against Men

5.1.1. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any act or threatened act of physical violence towards the victim. Examples include slapping, choking, stabbing, beating, throwing objects and using a weapon to cause harm to the victim.

Slapping

[User 1] I arrived home drunk and I forgot that she was coming to visit me. She already had the keys so when I arrived the door was wide open. I asked myself if I had locked the door when I left 🤔🤔🤔 To summarise the long story, she hit me with one warm clap 🖐️ and I became sober right there and then 😂😂

[User 2] My girlfriend beat me up so badly last night. It's because she had already warned me that one day, she will beat me if I didn't stop cheating but I thought she was joking. She saw a message from my side chick and I quickly apologised. It didn't take seconds before she landed her first clap. It was so hot I felt like I was hit by a man. I froze and tried to calm her. Ehhh (shocked expression) she threw another one and I tried blocking. She threw kicks and punches. When I tried fighting back, she overpowered me and threw me on the bed and continued beating me so bad I felt like the whole community was beating me. I honestly don't think that I will cheat ever again. I am so embarrassed even to this day. What kind of a man gets beaten up by a woman like that? I'm even scared to call her baby. I think of calling her bosso (boss). It is very difficult to live with John Rambo 😭😭😭.

Slapping was a common and recurring form of physical IPV. It is not a new phenomenon as it has been recorded in studies as early as the 1970s (Nisonoff & Bitman, 1979). In the above comments, women slapped their partners for various reasons including infidelity and arriving home late. User 1 explains that he forgot that his partner was visiting him and arrived late and drunk, leading to him getting slapped. It can be stated that IPV in this regard was perpetrated due to anger, poor emotional expression by the woman as well

as her need to control her partner (Caldwell et al., 2009; Entilli & Cipolletta, 2017). The woman expected the man to be home when she arrived, a form of coercive control which manifested in physical violence. This supports findings by Johnson (2008) who states that IPV is perpetrated by one partner to exert power and control over the other, resulting in physical violence in some instances. Additionally, User 1 explains that his partner's slap made him immediately sober, indicating that it was painful. However, he also uses laughing emojis when narrating his experiences. This could be a strategy to downplay the seriousness of his victimisation and coincides with previous studies where men have blamed their injuries on their children (Steinmetz, 1977-1978), a fight with another man (Overstreet & Quinn, 2013), or used emotional inexpressions when narrating their experiences to avoid appearing weak (Connell, 1987).

In the second comment, User 2 explains that he was physically assaulted by his partner in various ways including slapping, kicking and severe beating due to infidelity. The comment highlights that women perpetrate physical violence in response to other forms of IPV perpetrated by their male partners. For instance, infidelity by men can lead to emotional pain which can result in the retaliation of physical violence by women. As highlighted in Chapter Two, this confirms George's findings that certainly, "women can act in very aggressive ways for reasons other than self-defence" (1994: 147). Furthermore, IPV in both cases was perpetrated against non-violent men as women were the first ones to hit the men out of anger. This coincides with findings from Greaves and Morrell (2012) who reported that women often perpetrate IPV against non-violent men. To add, User 2 was intimidated by his partner's behaviour and strength. This echoes findings from Barkhuizen's study titled, '*Police reaction to the male victim of domestic violence in South Africa: case study analysis*', where one male victim testified that his partner was a large woman who made him feel vulnerable and afraid because she was superior to him in strength, making him "no match for her" (2015: 297). Therefore, men are not always physically stronger than women nor are they always able to defend themselves against violent women. User 2 also describes his girlfriend as John Rambo,⁵¹ an action movie character played by Sylvester Stallone who is metaphorically used to

⁵¹Lionsgate. (2023). Available from: <https://www.lionsgate.com/movies/rambo> (Accessed 20 August 2023).

demonstrate that women can overpower men. Furthermore, the comments contradict the physical size debate which holds that women's perpetration of IPV is inconsequential because they are smaller in size (Alsawalqa, 2021). Moreover, both comments contradict previous research which indicates that women perpetrate physical IPV only in self-defence, retaliation and as a pre-emp act (Hines & Bates, 2019).

Physical abuse can be embarrassing to men because it suggests that they are weaker than women. This is explicitly expressed by User 2 who was embarrassed for being overpowered by his partner. He further asks, "What kind of a man gets beaten up by a woman?" This question is shaped by hegemonic masculinity rooted in the socialisation of men "to be the stronger sex, especially in a heterosexual relationship" (Barkhuizen, 2015: 294). Resultantly, men are expected to be able to defend themselves as failure to do so can lead to ridicule, mockery and name-calling (Entilli & Cipolletta, 2017). Drawing on Pleck's (1995) GRSP theory, the inability to be the stronger sex can lead to trauma, strain and dysfunctionality. Randle and Graham (2011) further explain that depression and suicide ideation can occur as a result of failing to meet and maintain masculine ideology and expectations. To add, physical abuse varies from other kinds of IPV as it is the only kind that results in physical injuries, making it difficult to hide and easy to detect from a mere glance. Hence, to hide their embarrassment, some men often lie about the nature of their injuries to maintain masculinity ideology (Steinmetz, 1977-1978; Overstreet & Quinn, 2013). Although User 2 openly admits to being victimised by his partner, it is clear that hegemonic masculinity is pervasively embedded in his psyche as it determines the way he speaks about his victimisation (Fairclough, 2001; Wallace, 1992).

Stabbing

[User 3] I stabbed him on his arm because he was still talking to his ex👩.

Stabbing was also a common form of IPV perpetrated by women. User 3 explains that she stabbed her partner because he was talking to his ex-girlfriend whilst in a relationship with her. Stabbing is a severe form of IPV which can result in severe injuries and death. Importantly, stabbing indicates that IPV by women cannot be dismissed as it previously

was due to the assumption that women caused fewer injuries than men because of their physical strength (George, 1994). On the contrary, stabbing indicates that women can overpower men and that their violence can be life-threatening and fatal. Earlier and recent studies show that male victims reported severe injuries and sought medical attention (Goldberg & Tomlanovich, 1984; Rowlands, 2022). This indicates that stabbing by female partners is a common phenomenon.

Boiling Water

[User 4] I discovered that he was cheating on me and burned him with boiling water. He forgave me but he cheated again. This time I messed up his room. He ended the relationship and he is now happy with someone else. It kills me inside.

In the above comment, User 4 explains that she burnt her partner with boiling water after she caught him cheating. Similar to the previous comments, IPV was perpetrated due to infidelity which Rowlands (2022) highlights is one of the causes of female perpetrate IPV. The comments show that women resort to severe forms of physical violence after being cheated on. Boiling water can lead to severe injuries and is also one of the common ways South African women perpetrate physical violence against their male partners.^{52 53} In addition, User 4 damaged her partner's property when he cheated again, therefore perpetrating another form of IPV described in the New Act. This highlights that men experience multiple forms of IPV in their relationships.

Moreover, female perpetrated IPV was so severe that it led to the deaths of men:

[User 5] I was dating a man who would physically abuse me. He used to hit me so one time I tried to defend myself. I stabbed him to death 🤔 I was

⁵²McCain, N. (2023). Life behind bars for Pretoria woman who poured boiling water on boyfriend and axed him to death. *News24*. Available from: <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/life-behind-bars-for-pretoria-woman-who-poured-boiling-water-on-boyfriend-and-axed-him-to-death-20230922>

⁵³Marupeng, P. (2018). Wife pours boiling water over 'cheater' husband. *Times Live*. Available from: <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2018-11-08-wife-pours-boiling-water-over-cheater-husband/>

arrested and went to jail for six years. I am now out on parole but the pain of killing him haunts me every single day. It hits hard and I don't know how to deal with it.

User 5 explains that she stabbed her male partner to death in self-defence because he used to hit her. Rowlands (2021) explains that this form of IPV is often perpetrated when people believe that there is no other solution to the relationship but death. Therefore, they tend to perpetrate this form of IPV as a last resort. Women's perpetration of violence has long been categorised as self-defence, retaliation and a pre-emptive act (Saunders, 1998). Although this argument has been opposed, there are reported cases where women certainly used violence to defend themselves (Runyan et al., 2007). Therefore, the comment above somewhat confirms that there are instances where women use violence that ends fatally to defend themselves. Johnson (2008) categorises this form of IPV as 'violent resistance', a form of IPV that is mostly perpetrated by women to resist violence from their male partners.

The New Act also stipulates that physical violence includes the use of chemicals and other substances that may be harmful to the health of the victim:

Sleeping pills

[User 6] I found out that he was cheating on me with my friend... I then went to his place for a sleepover and gave him sleeping pills. When he fell into a deep sleep, I then undressed him and tied him to a chair naked. I beat him up to a pulp and once I was satisfied, I left his place with him still tied up to the chair 😊😊😊 I'm still proud that I did that 😊.

User 6 explains that she gave her partner sleeping pills in order to assault him. This can be life-threatening given the absence of a doctor's prescription and the possibility of giving a higher dosage. Importantly, the use of sleeping pills was a strategic move to make the man unconscious so that she could physically assault him. It was also a way for the woman to compensate for her lack of physical strength as she may have been aware that her strength would limit her in causing the injuries she desired. This is similar to a recently

reported story in *News24* where a South African woman poured sleeping pills in her partner's drink and when he was drowsy, handcuffed him, poured him with boiling water and assaulted him multiple times with an axe until he died.⁵⁴ Such cases echo findings by Johnson (2008) and Rowlands (2022) where women perpetrated physical violence when men were asleep, unconscious or intoxicated and therefore, unable to defend themselves. These comments support the gender symmetry debate and indicate that in some cases, physical strength is a significant factor in the perpetration of physical IPV.

5.1.2. Sexual Abuse

The New Act defines sexual abuse refers to any conduct that abuses, humiliates, degrades or otherwise violates the sexual integrity of the complainant. It also refers to other forms of sexual coercion as well as having sexual intercourse with someone without their consent. In the comment below, men were asked to describe how they have been abused by their partners. One User stated:

[User 7] My girlfriend raped me.

The comment above was received with skepticism and laughter by Facebook Users. This indicates that some individuals find men's sexual violence by women humorous. Given that rape is not a laughing matter, the laughing reactions reflect the myths that portray male rape as harmless, which often discourages "men from disclosing sexual assault" (Hlavka, 2017: 483). These myths imply that men cannot be raped nor are they affected by rape as much as women, and that they always want sex (Javaid, 2015; Stemple & Meyer, 2014). Importantly, men are usually unacknowledged as victims of sexual abuse (Reed et al., 2020), and are often blamed for their victimisation due to stereotypes such as "he became erect so he must have wanted it" (DiMarco et al., 2022: 471). Such stereotypes could be drawn from Butler's (1993) theory of heterosexuality where the male

⁵⁴ McCain, N. (2023). Life behind bars for Pretoria woman who poured boiling water on boyfriend and axed him to death. *News24*. Available from: <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/life-behind-bars-for-pretoria-woman-who-poured-boiling-water-on-boyfriend-and-axed-him-to-death-20230922>.

body is identified as the “penetrator”, and the female body as the “penetrated”. Given that women can be sexually abused without being aroused whilst a man “can achieve and maintain an erection and sexually ... respond to the perpetrator” throughout the assault is one of the main controversies that lead to the belief that “they wanted and enjoyed it” (Thomas & Kopel, 2023: 22). Hence, Users may draw on such beliefs and stereotypes to make sense of men’s sexual victimisation by women and conclude that it is funny, trivial and inconsequential.

Despite this, the comment by User 7 challenges such stereotypes as the man clearly states that his girlfriend raped him. Despite the biological making of the male body, men can still be forced to “penetrate” women. Although User 7 does not explicitly narrate how he was raped, a study by Krahe et al. (2003) found that women used aggressive strategies to coerce men into sex, took advantage of men whilst incapacitated, and used verbal pressure and physical force to rape men.

Despite the research by Krahe and colleagues (2003) validating women’s sexual violence towards men, the stereotypes and myths remain and are reflected in the Users’ laughing reactions to the comment by User 7. Laughing connotes a degree of disbelief, thereby rejecting and dismissing men’s sexual abuse as a serious problem. Laughing also indicates that Users are oblivious to the catastrophic, traumatic and pervasive repercussions of men’s sexual victimisation that can result in severe mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, shame and suicide ideation, as well as short-term and long-term physical injuries (DiMarco, Mizzoni & Savits, 2022; Depraetere et al., 2020; Hlavka, 2017). These negative reactions and myths highlight that little is known about this form of IPV. This can be accounted to masculinity ideology and expectations placed on men which male victims expressed was a hindrance to disclose their victimisation due to fear and being labelled as weak (West, 2000). Drawing on Pleck’s (1995) GRSP theory, it is clear that the masculinity ideology and expectations are prevalent amongst South African men as only 2.9% of male victims reported being raped by a female (Jina et al., 2020: 928). Therefore, men often refrain from publicising their sexual abuse to maintain their identity as ‘real men’ and to avoid social condemnation.

5.1.3. Emotional, Verbal and Psychological Abuse

Emotional, verbal and psychological abuse means a pattern of degrading, manipulating, threatening, offensive, intimidating or humiliating conduct towards a complainant that causes mental or psychological harm to a complainant. This type of abuse was perpetrated due to various reasons including unemployment and infertility.

Unemployment

[User 8] One morning I was sleeping and she woke me up with multiple slaps because she didn't have clean panties to wear. I had to wake up, wash and dry them with a hairdryer. It was my responsibility to make sure she had clean clothes and panties because I was not working 😞 I cleaned, cooked and ironed. It really hurt me when she told me that I'm useless, when she hit me for asking about her whereabouts and made me take off my clothes because she bought them. She told me that sex was for men with jobs and I didn't deserve it because I was unemployed. I became her punching bag when she had a bad day at work. I was so scared of her that I couldn't even change the TV (television) channel or say something. I stayed because I loved her.

In the comment above, User 8 experienced various forms of IPV including emotional, psychological, verbal and physical abuse which were perpetrated due to being unemployed. These included name-calling, slapping and denial of sexual intimacy as 'it was only reserved for employed men'. The various forms of IPV that the man experienced were so severe that he was afraid of changing the TV channel. It is clear unemployment plays a significant role in intimate relationships and can shift power and control into the hands of the employed partner. This is a manifestation of what Van Dijk (1995) defines as discursive power; a shift of power, dominance and authority which in this case, was magnified by the woman's employment and used as a tool to oppress and exert control over her partner. Drawing on the Pleck's (1995) GRSP theory, it is well documented that the ability to provide forms part of male gender roles, and therefore, failure to fulfil these roles can lead to strain and dysfunction in men. Heggebø (2022) further explains that men's social identity is strongly linked to employment and the absence of work can result

in mental and somatic health conditions. In the African context, Ichou (2006) points out that unemployment has distressing consequences for men which are promulgated by norms of patriarchal masculinity, leading to shame, embarrassment, lack of confidence and fear, as evident in the comment by User 8.

Infertility

[User 9] I have fertility issues. I am abused emotionally but can't really divulge to friends and family because it would be embarrassing. It is difficult for me. She calls me all sorts of names. She once suggested that I get my brother or friends to impregnate her.

In the above comment, the man was emotionally, verbally and psychologically abused due to his inability to have children. He states that his partner called him all sorts of names and even suggested that his brother or friends impregnate her. Such utterances are “hurtful and emasculating” (Rowlands, 2022: 29), and can lead to immense emotional pain and psychological trauma as they imply that the man is a failure for not being able to father a child, something that his brother and friends are capable of. Thus, in this context, Dolan and colleagues (2017) suggest that his *infertile* body is both a failed entity due to his inability to have children, and a subordinated social entity as a result of failing to meet the standards of hegemonic ideals that shape men’s masculine identities. Given that “being a father is related to a man’s sense of his masculinity” (Morell & Richter, 2004: 36), User 9 may have a diminished sense of self-identity as a “real” man because he cannot have children. Drawing on the GRSP theory, masculinity ideology is significant to User 9 as he tries to appear strong by hiding his victimisation from friends and family. By doing this, he can potentially avoid embarrassment, ridicule, mockery and being perceived as weak (Barkhuizen; 2015; Hines & Douglas, 2009). Despite his efforts to be strong, he states that it is difficult, thereby supporting Pleck’s (1995) findings that when men force themselves to adhere to male gender roles and do so successfully, the process is straining and traumatising. Importantly, the comment by User 9 is consistent with previous research which highlights that part of the reason men prefer to remain silent about their victimisation is due to embarrassment (Alsawalqa, 2021; Barber, 2008).

Denied access to children

[User 10] I lost my job and the bank repossessed everything I owned. When this happened, I was in a relationship with my girlfriend who told me not to worry too much. She became pregnant and went home to give birth. Things began changing. She didn't tell me she gave birth. I was told by her sister. I went to see her at the hospital but she was cold towards me. She didn't keep me updated about the baby. She said I wasn't working so what was the point of telling me about what the baby needed. I became depressed because of that. She kept the baby away from me for six years and when I reached out to see the baby, she gave me the condition that it will only happen if I get back together with her. I don't know if I should or shouldn't. She has seen that my life has improved because I now have a job and living a good life.

In the comment above, the man states that he was denied access to his daughter and was given an ultimatum by the child's mother to reunite with her if he wanted his child in his life. This manipulative behaviour supports Corbally's findings where one male victim stated that his partner told him, "You'll never see those kids if you walk out that door" (2015: 10). The denial of fathering opportunities was the most dominant narrative in Corbally's (2015) study, indicating that the removal of men from their children's lives was the most powerful, and long-lasting form of IPV that men experienced. Hence, men tend to remain in abusive relationships for the sake and safety of their children, out of fear of losing their children or their children suffering the same way they did (Bates, 2019; Brookes et al., 2017). This is also evident in the comment above by User 10 as considers reuniting with his child's mother for access to his child regardless of the abuse he experienced. This indicates that fatherhood is so significant to some men that they will sustain the violence perpetrated by their female partners for the sake of their children.

Faking the death of a child

[User 11] I told him that our child died and took him to the graveyard where there was a recent burial of a child. He started crying and I just laughed. He told his parents and they performed a cleansing ritual for him.

The comment above is indicative of the fact that women can resort to extreme forms of emotional and psychological abuse. The comment by User 11 clearly indicates that the woman was aware that lying about the death would devastate the man. Pretending that a child died and laughing at the man whilst he is crying for his 'deceased' child at a graveyard is an inhumane act that can lead to trauma, depression and anxiety. Given the attachment that fathers have to their children (Corbally, 2015), as also seen with User 10, User 11 was clearly heartbroken and distraught after seeing his supposed child's grave. To add, the woman did not inform the man that she lied about the child's death as his family went ahead to perform a cleansing ceremony for him. Thus, the man may continue to mourn for a child who is still alive, possibly resulting in ongoing feelings of guilt, self-blame and anxiety.

Fake pregnancy

[User 12] I was dating this guy who was deeply in love with me but I was only interested in his money. I used him to pay my bills. He was so desperate for a child but I used contraceptives without telling him. One day I faked a pregnancy and sent him a test from my friend who was pregnant. He was so excited that he transferred a large amount into my account for the baby. I realised that he was now getting attached to a non-existent pregnancy so I faked a miscarriage. I put chicken liver on my underwear and sent him a picture. He was broken and couldn't stop crying. He wanted us to see a doctor together but I quickly refused. I asked him for money to see the doctor on my own and he sent it. I ended the relationship after a few months. The most painful thing is he still believes that I was pregnant for him.

Faking a pregnancy was a dominant form of emotional and psychological IPV, indicating that women often lie to their male partners about being pregnant. In the comment above, the woman faked her pregnancy as a way to extort money from the man and resorted to extreme measures such as using chicken liver as evidence of the pregnancy loss. This was done to ensure that her partner believed her without a doubt. The comment by User 12 is similar to a story reported by the *INDEPENDENT* where a woman lied about the existence of a child to extort large amounts of money from her former partner.⁵⁵ This form of emotional and psychological abuse also extends to economic abuse as men are forced to give up their financial resources which they may have required out of necessity for non-existent children. Importantly, User 12 did not tell her partner that she lied about the miscarriage. Therefore, similar to User 11, the male victim here could experience lifelong emotional and psychological pain or trauma for an incident that did not occur.

Paternity fraud

[User 13] So I dated this lady from 2012 and four years later she fell pregnant. I was there through the entire pregnancy and afterwards. Six months later I found out that the child wasn't mine. I'm now married and blessed with a very beautiful little girl. Took me time to heal but I'm okay now.

Lying about the paternity of the child was another dominant form of emotional and psychological abuse that women perpetrated against men. Since there is no law in South Africa that requires women to disclose the truth about the biological father of the child, men find themselves victims of paternity fraud. This is cemented by the South African Children's Act Section 36, a presumption that if the man engages in sexual intercourse with a woman during the period of conception, he will be presumed as the biological father and will be held responsible for the maintenance of the child unless a deoxyribonucleic

⁵⁵ Wood, V. (2019). Woman made up child to extort thousands from unwitting man who she pretended was the father. *INDEPENDENT*. Available from: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/woman-made-up-child-lied-existence-extortion-thousands-of-pounds-father-a9180216.html>

acid (DNA) test is conducted and excludes him entirely (Preller, 2016). Given that not all men conduct a DNA test to ensure that they are the biological father, they could be victims of paternity fraud without knowing. This indicates that there are forms of IPV that men are not aware they are victims of. This form of IPV has negative psychological effects on both the alleged father and the child and can result in depression and anxiety (Avni, et al., 2023; Bourne, et al., 2023). Equally, paternity fraud also expands into economic abuse as men are positioned to financially provide for children that are not theirs. The impact of this form of IPV was so severe that it took User 13 time to heal.

Sexual performance

[User 14] We had sex and she wasn't impressed. I found out after going through her phone. She was telling her friend that I am weak, fast and don't even last a minute. She said, "I don't know how to dump him". I couldn't sleep afterwards because her words broke me. I then went to Men's Clinic the following day and was given a diagnosis. I wasn't aware all along that there was something I suffered from.

In the above statement, the man was criticised by his partner because of his sexual performance. His partner told her friend that he was weak and did not last long in bed. Informing people about a man's 'poor' sexual performance can cause emotional pain and low self-esteem. The comment by User 14 is similar to that of a South African male victim whose partner told him, "I am not feeling you, you're not a man for me" (Rowlands, 2022: 29). This finding is congruent with the comment by User 9 who was victimised by his partner because he was infertile. In this case, User 14 was victimised due to underlying health issues that affected his sexual performance, which he was not aware of. These comments reveal that men are often victimised due to health conditions that are not entirely responsible for and therefore beyond their control.

Size of genitalia

[User 15] We dated for two years. She then found out that I was flirting with my colleague. She came straight to my workplace and dumped me, telling everyone that I have a small pipi (private part). She went around displaying my disability to everyone.

In the above comment, the woman verbally, emotionally and psychologically abused the man by publicly mocking him about the size of his private part in front of his colleagues. This is because the man was flirting with his co-worker, resulting in the woman's anger. By referring to the size of his genitals as a disability, the man alludes that he is not equal to the stereotypical standards and ideals of the penis size (Wiley & Eardley, 2007), which may result in low self-esteem as the penis size is often equated with masculinity and sexual competence (Oswald, Khera & Pedersen, 2021; Tiggemann, Martins, & Churchett, 2008). Therefore, the woman may have been aware of this and specifically insulted him about his penis size to attack his masculinity and confidence in order to make him feel less of a man. Moreover, the woman perpetrated another form of IPV by entering into the man's workplace without his consent. As noted in Chapter Two, the New Act stipulates that entry into one's residence or place of work without their permission is a form of IPV. Again, this shows that women perpetrate multiple forms of IPV against men simultaneously.



5.1.4. Economic Abuse

Economic abuse refers to the unreasonable deprivation of economic or financial resources to which a complainant is entitled under law or requires out of necessity. It also includes the use of financial resources without the victim's permission.

[User 16] My ex-girlfriend yooooohhh (expression of shock). I gave her my bank card with money. She spent every single cent. She then broke up with me and threw the empty card in my face. I had plans for that money. I was looking for a stand only to find that she spent the money to maintain her soft life.

In the above comment, User 16 narrates that he gave his former partner his bank card with money due to the possible desire or need to make her happy. Brown explains that “the provider role ... can be seen as an expression of male responsiveness to female ‘need’” (2019: 183). Additionally, the provider role can make men feel valuable and useful and can prevent the development of negative forms of masculinity (Brown, 2016). Drawing on the Pleck’s (1995) GRSP theory, a man’s ability to provide for a woman can lead to positive forms of masculinity as it alludes that he is a *real* man. Although User 16 states that he had planned to buy land with the money, he still gave the woman his bank card instead of a certain amount of cash. Pleck (1995) explains that men tend to overconform to gender roles to meet and maintain masculinity ideology. This is evident in how User 16 impulsively gave the woman his card as a way to impress her, knowing very well that she was high maintenance, as seen with the words “soft life”. Indeed, User 16 was economically abused as he was unreasonably deprived of his financial resources which he required out of necessity. Moreover, he was only used for his money because the woman left him after spending all his savings.

5.1.5. Intimidation

Intimidation means uttering or conveying a threat to, or causing a complainant to receive a threat which induces fear. Examples include smashing objects, displaying weapons such as guns, and making death threats. The comment below demonstrates how the woman intimidated her male partner with a knife, thereby inducing fear:

[User 17] I chased him down the road with a knife 🗡️ I only stopped because I realised that it was the wrong knife. I turned back to get the correct knife but I was too tired from running 🏃 so I aborted the mission.

This intimidation tactic by the woman is also a form of psychological abuse as it can induce fear in the man. User 17 narrates that if she had a correct knife, she would have stabbed her partner. This suggests that the knife she had was not going to cause the injuries she wished for. Moreover, her comment also indicates a lack of regret and remorse, suggesting that she does not have seen anything wrong with her actions. The comment by

User 17 suggests that there are female perpetrators who are oblivious to their perpetration of violence and deem it as normal.

5.1.6. Stalking

Stalking refers to repeatedly following, pursuing or accosting the complainant. The New Act recognises that ICT plays a crucial role in the perpetration of IPV. In the comment below, the woman explains how she was able to stalk her partner online:

[User 18] I saw WhatsApp messages from another woman and that broke the trust I had for him. I always check his phone when he's not there because he always deletes the messages. So, I hacked into his phone and took screenshots of his chats with other women. He doesn't know that I did this. So, I still have access and check what he does on Facebook and WhatsApp. I want to see if he is cheating on me.

In the above comment, User 18 did not stalk her partner physically but rather virtually through WhatsApp, a form of SNS. By being able to access her partner's phone without his permission, the woman was able to follow and monitor the man's activities repeatedly online. This comment also shows that technology has certainly led to new ways of perpetrating IPV online.

5.1.7. Spiritual Abuse

The New Act defines spiritual abuse as advocating hatred against an individual because of their religious or spiritual beliefs, as well as preventing them from exercising their constitutional right to freedom of religion. In the comment below, the woman narrates how she discarded her former partner's ancestral bones:

[User 19] My ex was a traditional healer, so I took his ancestral bones and threw them away.

The comment above is an example of spiritual abuse. User 19 explains that she threw away her ex-partner's ancestral bones, therefore, possibly preventing him from practicing and exercising his spiritual rights. Ancestral bones are sacred and serve various purposes including communicating with ancestors and diagnosing patients (Makgopa & Koma, 2009). By discarding the bones, the woman may have caused stress and trauma to the man.

5.1.8. Damage to Property

Damage to property refers to the wilful damage or destruction of property, or threats to damage or destroy property belonging to the victim. Many Users admitted to damaging their partners' vehicles, clothes and gadgets:

Vehicle damage

[User 20] Last week I slashed my boyfriend's car tyres and faked a break-in at our place because he's always busy. When he has time he spends it with his friends, it's like we are two strangers living in the same house.

In the above comments, User 20 damaged her partner's car tyres and forged a break-in at their residence. This was a form of poor emotional expression (Caldwell et al, 2009), as the woman resorted to extreme forms of IPV that may result in financial and psychological implications. To add, the woman damaged the man's property because she was angry that he was spending more time with his friends, making her feel as though they were strangers. Thus, to retaliate, she damaged his car tyres. To some men, a car may be a basic mode of transport, but to others, a car is a means to "emphasize masculine powers..." (Walker et al., 2000: 153), and is a performance of male power, and a substitute for women (Dundes, 2023). Given that women may be aware of how men are drawn to their cars, they tend to damage their cars to hurt their feelings. This form of IPV

is common in South Africa and has been reported numerous times in local online news platforms such as such *Times Live* (Ngcobo, 2023) and *Briefly* (Masasi, 2023).

Damage to personal items

[User 21] I found out that he cheated on me then I went to his house, soaked his laptop and tv in the water for 30 minutes then took them out and placed them in the position I found them. I opened his nicely made bedding, poured mayonnaise and tomato sauce on his sheet then placed back the bedding like it was nicely made. I soaked his clothes with bleach then I ironed them and folded them in his drawer. I locked the door then went home.

In the above comment, the woman damaged her partner's property out of anger after finding out that he cheated on her. User 21 again demonstrates that infidelity by men can lead severe forms of IPV such as malicious damage to property. The number of items the woman destroyed will lead to financial strain on the man's part given that he may have to replace his laptop, television, clothes and bedding.

Damage to clothes

[User 22] I invited my ex to a braai, only for him to find me braaing his clothes because I had a dream about him cheating on me 🤔

In the above comment, User 22 explains that she burnt her partner's clothes after she dreamt that he cheated on her. Burning someone's clothes because of a dream that they cheated may sound strange, however, the media has reported cases where women stabbed their partners after dreaming that they were unfaithful to them,⁵⁶ and in some

⁵⁶ D'Angelo. B. (2021). Mississippi woman stabs husband after dreaming he cheated, police say. *WSCO-TV*. <https://www.wsocv.com/news/trending/mississippi-woman-stabs-husband-after-dreaming-he-cheated-police-say/CMW2E5CELZDBHHKXLARSNJGAYY/> (Accessed 05 June 2023).

cases went as far as beating them to death.⁵⁷ Such cases highlight that dreams are significant in the perpetration of IPV and further signal the importance of honing the connection between dreams and the manifestation of IPV perpetration.

5.1.9. Legal and Administrative Aggression

Legal and administrative aggression refers to the manipulation of legal systems by one partner against the other (Dim & Lysova, 2022). It includes making false allegations about a partner and reporting them to the authorities. The comment below indicates how some women committed legal and administrative aggression against their partners:

[User 23] I lost my job due to Covid-19 and began working as a plumber. I left my girlfriend at home and went to work at a certain hotel. One of the men I was working with asked if the woman checking in at the reception was my girlfriend. I looked and to my surprise, it was surely my girlfriend. I remained calm but I was so embarrassed and emotional and ended up breaking down to the point where I couldn't complete the job. After some hours, she and the man were leaving the hotel. I don't know what came over me but I waved as the guy was driving, hoping he would stop. He saw me and so did my girlfriend but he just drove past me. When I arrived home, I just wanted to speak to her but to my surprise she poured me with boiling water and ran to the other room screaming "help, help, help!!!" I was so surprised that I followed her only for her to call the police who came knocking on the door in ten minutes. As soon as I opened the door to let the police in, she ran to one of them and screamed that I was abusing her. The police did not hesitate and instantly shot me with a rubber bullet and sprayed me with pepper spray. I have been in a relationship with her for a couple of years and have never laid a hand on her.

⁵⁷ Mann, H. (2017). Woman Clubs Boyfriend To Death For Cheating On Her In Her Dream. *Let's Talk KLVI AM 560*. Available from: <https://klvi.iheart.com/featured/harold-mann/content/2017-04-17-woman-clubs-boyfriend-to-death-for-cheating-on-her-in-her-dream/> (Accessed 03 June 2023).

In the comment above, the man explains that he was arrested for a crime that he did not commit. It can be assumed that the woman thought that the man was going to beat her for cheating on him and instead, acted pre-emptively by pouring him with boiling water and calling the police on him. Her reaction supports findings by Dobash and Dobash (2004) where in some cases, women perpetrated IPV pre-emptively because they believed that the men would hit them first. Moreover, User 23 was not given a chance to share his side of the story but was rather handled violently by the police with the use of pepper spray and a rubber bullet shot and arresting him with immediate effect. This coincides with recent studies where police immediately arrested male victims without further investigations (Barkhuizen, 2015) and showed no interest in bringing charges of assault to female perpetrators (Thusi & Mlamla, 2023). Furthermore, the comment by User 23 clearly indicates that the woman was confident that the police would believe her more than her partner. This confirms the assertion of one male victim who stated that, "...women take advantage of the fact that the South African law defends and supports them" (Zinyemba & Hlongwana, 2022: 2234). Legal and administrative aggression is a serious form of IPV and is further discussed in the analysis of the second question of the study.

5.1.10. Entry into Residence without Permission

The New Act describes entry into the victim's permanent or temporary residence without their consent as a form of IPV, particularly where the parties do not share the same residence. In the statement below, User 24 explains how she entered her partner's residence without his consent:

[User 24] My ex dumped me so I went to his house the following day because I still had the keys to his place. I entered his house whilst he was at work. I drank Stameta (a form of laxative) and waited for an hour for it to become effective. The machine started and I 🍑 (pooped) between his bed sheets. When my stomach ran again, I pooped in his pots and the last round went into his freezer. When I was done, I took the meat from his freezer and left 🚶🚶🚶

In the above comment, the woman entered her ex-partner's residence without his permission. After consuming laxatives, she pooped in the men's bed sheets, pots and freezer, and also stole his food. This was done out of retaliation because the man had broken up with her. Therefore, she might have been angry that the man ended the relationship. This is similar to the story of American actress Amber Heard and actor Johnny Depp where Heard reportedly pooped on the bed she shared with Depp. She later admitted that "it was a practical joke gone wrong".⁵⁸

The above descriptions of the various forms of IPV provide further insight into female perpetrated IPV as they highlight how and why women perpetrate violence against their male partners. To advance these descriptions, the narrations below are critically analysed to document how Facebook Users make sense of IPV. In light of this, the second research question interrogating the discourses used to narrate female perpetrated IPV is addressed.

5.2. The Narrated Discourses of Female Perpetrated IPV

5.2.1. Positive Self-representation and Negative Representation of the Other - Legitimation of Us vs. Delegitimation of Them

Facebook Users' discourses were crafted to enact and reproduce power, dominance and injustice against female perpetrated IPV. This was done using the strategy of positive self-representation by female perpetrators and the negative representation of the other, whom in this study, are male victims. This strategy is also known as the Legitimation of *Us* and the Delegitimation of *Them* (Chibuwe & Munoriyarwa, 2023). This strategy is evident in the comment below:

⁵⁸⁵⁸ VanHoose, B. (2022). <https://people.com/movies/amber-heard-denies-leaving-poop-in-bed-as-prank-on-johnny-depp/>People. (Accessed 15 July 2023).

[User 25] He cheated on me and said it was a mistake. So, I waited for him to fall asleep and covered his face with a pillow to scare him just a little. He woke up and asked what I was trying to do, I gave him the same response he gave me. I told him it was a mistake 😞😞.

In the comment above, the woman begins her statement by highlighting that her partner had been unfaithful to her, therefore foregrounding her reasons for physically abusing him. This suggests that she is not a violent person but rather, she was provoked and only perpetrated violence out of anger and retaliation. This is a linguistic strategy of positive self-representation and negative representation of the man (Chibuwe & Munoriyarwa, 2023), indicating that had her partner not cheated on her, she would not have been violent towards him. By foregrounding her victimisation, the woman demonstrates the need and necessity for her perpetration of violence, in a way making it appear legitimate, justified, acceptable, normal and natural on the surface. Although she admits to perpetrating physical violence, the linguistic structure of her text here works silently, invisibly and implicitly as Simpson and Mayr (2010) point out, making it difficult to locate the hidden power relations. This coincides with Van Dijk's statement that "negative acts... may be reduced by placing them later in the sentence... keeping the agency implicit" (1991: 215). By foregrounding her victimisation of emotional abuse and backgrounding her perpetration by placing it later in the sentence, the woman attempts to reduce the severity of her violence to make it appear less significant. Taking into account Fairclough's (1989, 1995) three-dimensional model as discussed in Chapter Three, at the Description Level comprising of the structure of the text and selection of words, the woman uses the word "little" to describe her attempt to scare her partner by suffocating him with a pillow. The purposive and careful selection of this word highlights that she believes that her perpetration of IPV is trivial and inconsequential, as researchers have found (see Dobash & Dobash, 2004). At the Interpretation Level, this linguistic strategy works in such a manner that the reader is not consciously aware of the power hidden in the discourse as well as how it is used to negotiate and maintain power. By portraying herself as a powerless victim who was wronged, she enacts and maintains her power to perpetrate violence against her partner. By using the strategies of foregrounding and backgrounding, positive self-representation and the negative

representation of her male partner, female perpetrated IPV in this case is naturalised, neutralised, legitimised and accepted as common sense. In this way, language, as used by the woman, becomes a primary medium of social control and power (Fairclough, 2001).

Similarly, this linguistic strategy was used by another female Facebook user:

[User 26] When I was 7 months pregnant, I drove to my baby daddy's house and assaulted him in front of his friends. I had a gun and almost shot him, luckily his friends acted quickly and took the gun from me. From that day, I pray that I never get that angry in my life. I don't like that side of me 😞

In this particular comment, the woman begins by stating that she was pregnant. This structural strategy immediately informs the public that she may have been in a position of vulnerability as the word 'pregnant' might connote. However, she does not explain what her partner did to infuriate her to the extent of almost killing him. Therefore, there is persuasion through abstraction in her discourse given the lack of clarity in the link between her pregnancy and her perpetration of violence. Importantly, Machin and Mayr (2012) add that the things that are never communicated in the text are equally important and can be revealed by looking at absences. Therefore, the woman excludes what the man had done and rather uses her pregnancy to conceal and preside over her abuse towards him. Therefore, it can be said that she is using her pregnancy to legitimise, naturalise and neutralise her perpetration of IPV so that it is acceptable and justified. At the Description Level, she uses the words "7 months pregnant", which highlight that she was close to giving birth. This choice of words is used to draw sympathy from the public and may produce moral outrage. Her selection of words also highlights that she was not in a position to perpetrate IPV, however, the man must have done something extreme to provoke her to the extent of nearly killing him. The linguistic strategy used here is presupposition, as the woman presupposes that at seven months pregnant, women are not in a position to perpetrate IPV, therefore, her partner was responsible for her angry outburst. This is further cemented by the word 'pray', which is used as a hyperbole that suggests that she needs supernatural intervention to avoid perpetrating this type of violence again in future. The word 'pray' also suggests that the situation was beyond her,

therefore highlighting that her perpetration was not entirely her fault because her partner angered her. In this instance, there appears to be an attempt to negate responsibility for her actions by relegating it to a supernatural entity and to the actions of her partner.

The linguistic strategies used in both comments affirm Fairclough's (2001) statement that indeed, language conceals where the actual responsibility lies. A lexical analysis of the above discourses reveals implicit and hidden meanings, which are centred on the notion that women perpetrated IPV only because their partners wronged them. In this way, female perpetrated IPV is represented through a discourse of shifted responsibility, although this is not explicitly stated. These lexical choices are typical of the way women on Facebook positioned themselves and viewed their perpetration of IPV. Fairclough (2005) also asserts that such linguistic strategies are a form of suppression. Here, both women suppressed the severity and brutality of the perpetration of their physical violence by foregrounding their victimisation and vulnerability, thus shifting the causes and reasons for their perpetration to their male partners.

5.2.2. A Hierarchy of Forms of Intimate Partner Violence

In the discourses below, men were asked if they have ever been abused by their partners. Below were their responses:

[User 27] Yes, emotionally though not physically.

[User 28] Only emotionally.

[User 29] Men experience emotional abuse not physical abuse.

The analysis of the above discourses, particularly at the Description Level of the three-dimensional model by Fairclough (1995) shows the use of overlexicalisation to emphasise emotional abuse. Overlexicalisation here is used to persuade and accentuate emotional abuse as the main form of IPV that men experience. In particular, the word 'only', is used to exclude other forms of IPV and portray them as less significant. The New Act categorises emotional, psychological and verbal abuse as one form of abuse, therefore,

the above comments may also include psychological and verbal abuse. Unconsciously, men place the various forms of IPV on a hierarchy, placing emotional abuse at the top. This emphasises that emotional abuse is the main and possibly the worst form of IPV for men. Furthermore, the emphasis of emotional abuse coincides with findings from Corbally's (2015) study where male victims stated that emotional and psychological abuse were the worst compared to other forms of IPV. This may be a result of NMA, a condition where men experience difficulty in expressing their emotions due to the gender role stereotypes imposed on them during the socialisation process such as 'boys don't cry' (Levant & Powell, 2017). Hence in their adulthood, it may be difficult for men to deal with emotional abuse because they were deprived from expressing their emotions during childhood.

At the Explanation Level, that is, the social practice dimension, the above discourses may be influenced by the social conditions of South Africa. Given that South Africa is a patriarchal country, men may experience difficulty in openly admitting to being physically abused by their female partners as this may suggest that they are weak and 'unmanly', hence the emphasis on emotional abuse. Drawing on Pleck's (1995) GRSP theory as explained in Chapter Three, it is clear that gender roles, such as being strong, are significant to the above Users as they exclusively portray themselves as victims of emotional abuse which is a form of IPV that is not based on physical strength. Physical abuse is often linked to masculinity and physical strength, traits which are strongly associated with men (Alswalqa, 2021). Therefore, men may be ridiculed, embarrassed, and shamed by society for being victimised by women (Thobejane & Luthada, 2019). This positions men to align themselves with the masculinity ideology that is dominant in the country by rejecting the perpetration of physical abuse by women. This supports Fairclough's findings that indeed, "social conditions determine properties of discourse" (2001:16).

5.2.3. A Discourse of Humour

Male victimisation was found humorous, trivial and inconsequential (Douglas & Hines, 2009). The response to the main comment below is an example of how some Users laugh at men who admit to being victimised by women.

[User 30] Yesterday I went to my baby mama's house to give her new baby clothes for Christmas. She looked at the clothes and said, "You're a failure 😞 You failed your own child. Other fathers are buying their children Adidas and Nike and you come here with cheap clothes?" I wanted to cry but I couldn't because they say, 'men aren't supposed to cry'. Honestly, this thing is slowly killing me because I worked very hard to buy those clothes.

Below is the reply to the above comment:

[User 31] You are good at telling lies, you could be a good lawyer 😂😂 But first, you should at least focus on improving your vocabulary because it is affecting your story.

Drawing on Pleck's (1995) GRSP theory discussed in Chapter Three, the comment by User 30 is a classic example of gender role discrepancy as the man is unable to fit into the set standards of hegemonic masculinity. In South Africa, men are expected to be strong and not display any emotions or weakness such as crying. This is explicitly stated by the man as he narrates that he wanted to cry but could not because 'men are not supposed to cry'. South African researchers explain that "it is an abomination to see a man crying... a crying man would lose prestige due to the ... stigma attached to crying" (Thobejane & Luthada., 2019: 13). Given these beliefs, the man refrained from crying to avoid being stigmatised and perceived as weak. Instead, he lived up to the expectations placed on men which are evident in South African proverbs such as, "*Monna ke nku o lilela teng*", which means 'a man must suffer in silence' (Thobejane & Luthada, 2019). In addition, the man avoided crying because society may perceive him as weak. Given the patriarchal system that is dominant in the country, the man is deprived of expressing his emotions as a mere human being and is rather expected to live up to the idealised standards of what it means to be a 'real' man.

Gender role discrepancy, as explained in Chapter Three, is high in this case and has negative outcomes as Mahalik (2003) explains. These outcomes are portrayed in the selection of words. At the Description Level, the word 'killing' may not necessarily allude to death. It may mean that the reaction by the child's mother affected him severely that it felt like death. Therefore, it is used metaphorically. His child's mother's words made him feel like an inadequate provider and father, particularly because he worked hard to provide for his child. This can lead to low self-esteem, mental and physical health issues (Hammers et al., 2019). Drawing on some of Pleck's propositions of the GRSP theory, it is clear violating gender roles, such as crying, does lead to social condemnation as the man fears that crying may lead to societal criticism and ridicule. Therefore, as a way to remedy this, he ends up overconforming to these roles which are 'killing' him slowly.

The reply to the above comment by User 31 is evidence that indeed, male victimisation is regarded with skepticism (Park et al., 2021) and disbelief (Entilli & Cipolletta, 2017). In the reply, the man is blatantly told that he is lying instead of being supported. Although the man's experiences appear authentic, they are rejected as truth and received with humour, as seen with the use of laughing emojis. At the Description Level by Fairclough (2001), the word 'lawyer' is used metaphorically to suggest that the man worked very hard to prove that he is a victim of female perpetrated IPV, just as a lawyer would to prove his client's innocence. This may also be a linguistic strategy to suppress and dismiss the man's victimisation experience and make it appear trivial. This strategy is also evident in how User 31 informs the man to focus on his vocabulary before he speaks about his victimisation, therefore, indicating that his vocabulary takes precedence and is more significant than his victimisation.

Interestingly, the trivialisation and justification of female perpetrated IPV is evident in the tendency to encourage and excuse the same by women. This is uniquely demonstrated in the comment below by User 32 and the subsequent replies:

[User 32] He came to break up with me at my college so I put two litres of coke in his petrol tank. He couldn't drive back to his province and I refused to allow him to sleep over at my place. Tsek 🤔🤔🤔🤔

Below were the replies to the above comment:

[User 33] *He deserved it.*

[User 34] *Big time 😂*

[User 35] *Leadership 😂😂😂😂😂😂😂😂😂*

[User 36] *Give that girl a Bells 🎉*

[User 37] *Uyi Bozza 😂 (You are the boss)*

[User 38] *Taking notes 😂😂😂*

On various occasions, Users laughed about the perpetration of IPV by women against men. They also praised and congratulated other Users for this. In the main comment by User 32, the woman explains that she put Coke in her partner's petrol tank. She ends her sentence with the word "tsek" which is fully written as "voetsek", is an offensive expression of dismissal and rejection (Dictionary.com, 2023). This word suggests that she does not care about her actions because the man hurt her by ending their relationship. She also ends her statement with laughing emojis, indicating that she finds her perpetration funny and trivial. What is evident here is a clear act of IPV as explained in the New Act which relates to the destruction of one's property and verbally abusing another person.

Furthermore, the replies to the above comment are dominated with laughing emojis and congratulatory words to User 32. In the first reply, User 33 states that the man deserved what the woman did to his car without knowing the full story. This means that she supports the woman's perpetration of IPV without caring about what the woman might have possibly done to the man for him to end the relationship. This is contradictory to the first post where User 31 provides an in-depth detail of his victimisation which was met with skepticism and disbelief. However, in the above comment, the woman's perpetration is encouraged and celebrated. The way User 31 destroyed her partner's car could also insinuate that she may have been the toxic one in the relationship, hence the man decided to end it. Again, as Machin and Mayr (2012) highlight, the text is strategically written to

exclude the reasons for the breakup. By observing the absences in the discourse, the woman portrays herself as the main victim by foregrounding what her partner did. Using Fairclough's three-dimensional model, the selection of the words in the replies such as 'leadership' and 'you are the boss' portray that she has done something good and positive. The *Give that Girl a Bells* is a phrase for the Bell's Scotch Whisky where the Bell's is given to someone as to celebrate an impressive achievement (Marklives.com, 2018). Phrases such as 'taking notes' by other Users suggest that they are also inspired to perpetrate this type of IPV against their partners. Consequently, such comments can contribute to the ongoing victimisation of men as a large number of Users do not appear to be disturbed by the violence perpetrated by the woman. Given that Users can laugh about men's victimisation, encourage and congratulate women who abuse men validates a clear dichotomy of power between men and women.

However, not all Facebook users reacted positively to the above comment. Others expressed their disapproval towards women who perpetrated IPV:

[User 39] And you're laughing about it 🤔🤔. Perhaps you belong in a mental institution.

In the above reply, User 39 was against how User 32 laughed about the damage she caused to her partner's car. He further states that the woman belongs in a mental institution, therefore insinuating that the behaviour is similar to people who suffer from mental illnesses and are then given care and treatment for their illnesses. The reference to a mental institution is used metaphorically to suggest that the woman needs help with correcting her behaviour as she thinks it is normal and humorous to damage someone's property. The comment by User 39 further shows that although some people find female perpetrated IPV funny and may go as far as celebrating it, to some, it may be indicative of an underlying mental health problem as such behaviour is not normal.

A discourse of humour was also evident in how other Users, presumably male, shared their experiences of IPV, however, in a trivial manner. This is evident in the post by User 40.

[User 40] My brother was slapped by his girlfriend. #AmINext? 😱😱😱

In the main comment, User 40 was not a victim of female perpetrated IPV. Rather, he explains that his brother was victimised by his girlfriend. Therefore, there is no relation between him and his brother's victimisation. The hashtag #AmINext was dominantly used by South African women on social media following the death of Uyinene Mrwetyana, an undergraduate student from the University of Cape town who was raped and murdered by a Post Office employee in Claremont back in August, 2019 (Levitt, 2019). The hashtag was a response to the high rates of GBV by men against women where women asked if *they were next* to be murdered. In this case, the use of the hashtag #AmINext was a form of discursive cry for men to draw attention to their own plight of IPV at the hands of women, albeit without success and attention. Although the comment by User 40 appears sarcastic, trivial and humorous, it consequently draws attention to the limited focus that is placed on male victims of IPV and how this is not an issue in society.

Below were the comments in response to the post. Users did not offer support or sympathy to User 40. Rather, they responded sarcastically by sharing forms of IPV that were comical:

[User 41] Yesterday my girlfriend kicked me in the balls and the President didn't do anything about it. We are being abused 😞.

[User 42] She deleted all my FIFA files on my laptop 😱😱 She forced me to cut chiskop (bold hairstyle) 😱😱 She even forced me to listen to Cardi B 😱 😱 #AmINext #KulungileBaba (#It is well Father) #NoMeansNo.

[User 43] I tried to escape her claws but they were hard as a rock. She slapped and strangled me until I was breathless. She nearly beat me to death. Just for farting nje (only) 🤔. Is it a sin to fart?!

At the Description Level, hedging was dominantly used to create strategic ambiguity (Wood & Kroger, 2000). In the above comments, it was used to avoid directness despite the detail in the narrations. For instance, User 42 states that his partner made him cut off all his hair and listen to Cardi B, a popular American female rapper.⁵⁹ Similarly, User 43 provides a detailed description of how his partner physically assaulted him because he 'just farted'. He ends his statement with the question, "Is it a sin to fart?" Hedging brings humour to the men's experiences of IPV and in a way, strategically diverts the attention from the seriousness of their victimisation by diluting it with a comical aspect. This strategy mitigates, conceals and deceives the public that their victimisation is not severe without making it too obvious. The linguist strategy of hedging is hidden and implicit and could potentially hinder the public from gauging the depth of this phenomenon as it is concealed through humour.

At the Explanation Level, it is clear that the men are mitigating their victimisation to avoid appearing weak, as society would expect, particularly in the patriarchal South Africa. Again, the masculinity ideology in South Africa is at play here because "a man if in pain is not allowed to show his agony in public" (Thobejane & Luthada, 2019: 11). Hence, they conceal their victimisation through humour to avoid ridicule, shame, embarrassment and marginalisation. The linguistic strategy of hedging is evidence that ideologies are so embedded in the psyche and members' resources (MR) of male victims as they draw on these to narrate their experiences of IPV. The MR of male victims in the above replies shows that they believe, assume and stereotype men's victimisation as a joke. From the above comments, it is clear that masculinity ideology has taken men's power through consent, that is, their ability to directly speak about their victimisation without diluting it

⁵⁹ Cardi B. (2023). IMDb. <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm8054799/>

through linguistic strategies such as hedging. Van Dijk explains that in cases like these when people are denied power, they "... help perpetuate injustice and reproduce dominance and inequality" (cited in Negm, 2015: 284). The comments above can reproduce women's power to continue perpetrating IPV against men as male victims appear unaffected by their victimisation.

Drawing on Pleck's (1995) GRSP theory, it is clear that male gender roles are significant to the men who responded to the post by User 40 as they use hedges of humour to avoid appearing weak. Moreover, masculinity ideology and patriarchy have robbed men of their victimhood as they have to use humour to maintain the masculinity ideal when narrating experiences of IPV. Indeed, "...ideology obscures the nature of our unequal societies and prevents us from seeing alternatives. It limits what can be seen and what we think we can do" (Machin & Mayr, 2012: 25). Certainly, masculinity ideology prevents both society and male victims from seeing alternatives such as normalising the victimisation in order to deal with this phenomenon. These ideologies have positioned men and society at large to accept and normalise male victimisation.

At the Interpretation Level of the three-dimensional model, User 41 draws his discourse from the current conditions of the country. He narrates that his girlfriend kicked him in his private area and states that the President did not do anything about it. Fairclough (2001) describes this as intertextuality, a process where people draw from other texts to produce their own texts. The man may not necessarily refer to the President but rather to the lack of intervention programs and awareness campaigns directed towards male victims, which the President is expected to oversee. As highlighted in Chapter Two, the speech by the President clearly prioritises female victims and holds men accountable as perpetrators. Thus, hedging is used to communicate this without being too direct.

5.2.4. A Discourse of Witchcraft and Demonic Possession

On many occasions, Facebook Users blamed female perpetrated IPV against men on witchcraft and demon possession. The discourses of witchcraft and demon possession

were dominant and therefore, highlight the disbelief and rejection of this phenomenon and only accepted it on the basis of negative spiritual influence.

The Facebook post below was shared by a User who witnessed his neighbour being victimised by his wife. The User also shared pictures of the man bleeding with cuts and bruises all over his head. The pictures were posted with the following caption:

[User 44] IPV is not only experienced by women because men are also victims of it. My neighbour is violent towards her husband and has found a way to silence him. Please help me expose her, she beats and stabs him and his family is helpless. I witness his abuse almost every week.

These were the comments responding to the post:

[User 45] Phahla abuti waka, o go jisitse (Appease your ancestors my brother. She bewitched you). You need to be prayed for.

[User 46] You can see that she is an animal that suffers from certain demonic spirits. Divorce seems to be an option before she kills you.

[User 47] She looks possessed. She's sick!!!

[User 48] Someone take him to Gogo Maweni to remove sejeso (muti).

In the comments above, Facebook Users blamed female perpetrated IPV on the use of *muti* (witchcraft) and demon possession. Drawing on Fairclough's (2001) Description Level of the three-dimensional model, the selection of words, structural positioning and grammar indicate a use of high modality. Modals are words and verbs used for "expressing high degrees of certainty ... in order to convince people" (Machin & Mayr, 2012: 188). They are also used to show commitment and confidence in what people say. At the structural and grammatical level, all the comments are not formulated as questions but rather as statements, therefore, informing, persuading and convincing others of the use of *muti* and demonic possession in the perpetration of physical violence by the woman featured in the post. In the first comment, User 45 responds to the post as though she is actively engaging in conversation with the male victim. The User does not suggest but

rather instructs the man to appease his ancestor and go for prayers because his wife bewitched him. This indicates that User 45 is convinced and certain that the man's wife used *muti* to make him weak, allowing her to physically abuse him. Similarly, User 48 advises that the man should be taken to Gogo Maweni, a popular South African traditional healer.⁶⁰ This indicates that this User also holds the same sentiments, which is that the man was bewitched by his wife. Deontic modality, which refers to compelling and instructing others (Machin & Mayr, 2012), is used to instruct the man to appease his ancestors or consult with a traditional healer. The Users are confident that by doing this, the man's victimisation will cease as the spell she used on him will be reversed. Both Users express greater influence as opposed to using epistemic and dynamic modalities of possibility and uncertainty through hedging terms such as "I think", "I believe" or "it seems" that the man is bewitched.

Similarly, Users 46 and 47 also show no devices of lowering modality such as 'sort of' or 'the chances are' (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Rather, they also use high modal verbs to express certainty of demon possession. In the second comment, the User compares the female perpetrator to an animal that suffers from the possession of demonic spirits. He is expressing his judgement and attempts to influence and convince others. The words "you can see", are used to highlight the obvious evidence that indeed, she is possessed from the way she looks. As opposed to other Users who instructed that man to consult with traditional healers, User 47 instructs the man to file for divorce as the demonic spirits might make the woman kill him.

A crucial point to note here is that Users are confident that the man has been bewitched by his demon-possessed wife. This implies that a man cannot be physically assaulted by his wife unless unknowingly coerced and manipulated spiritually through the use of *muti*, making his victimisation a problem that is beyond his control. Similarly, the woman is also accused of being possessed by demons, insinuating that she also cannot perpetrate physical violence unless coerced by demons. In the same vein, this suggests that her perpetration of physical violence is beyond her control and is not entirely her fault as the

⁶⁰ IOL. (2023). The 'Snake Lady' Gogo Maweni shares her passion. Available from: <https://www.iol.co.za/the-star/news/the-snake-lady-gogo-maweni-shares-her-passion-7a45fc16-ed80-4a43-b3e3-a527a78ac0a9>

'demons' made her do it. By drawing on spiritual influence to make sense of female perpetrated IPV, the above discourses highlight the difficulty in accepting this phenomenon, thereby, absolving the woman of any wrongdoing.

Machin and Mayr (2012) explain that CDA, particularly the term critical, centres on *why* and *how* linguistic features are produced and what possible ideological goals they might serve. Ideologically, as stipulated in Fairclough's (2001) Explanation Level, the Users who commented on the post are clearly drawing on traditional and cultural beliefs that are shaped by patriarchy and masculinity ideology, such as 'men are dominant and stronger than women' (Alsawalqa, 2021). Therefore, it is obvious that these ideologies are so embedded in their psyche that they manifest in their denial of female perpetrated IPV. This also demonstrates that they have no other explanation pertaining to why a woman could have so much power over a man and assault him to the point where he bleeds. This opposes the expectations placed on men in the patriarchal South Africa and rather appears to be a strange phenomenon to them. Hence, witchcraft and demon possessions seem to be the only way they understand and make sense of this problem. These discourses suggest that the man is not weak, and neither is the woman strong enough to assault him. Therefore, the perpetration occurred only as a result of spiritual influence.

By analysing the comments critically, the absences and taken-for-granted assumptions are exposed. What is absent in the texts is the Users' failure to hold the woman accountable for her perpetration of physical violence without blaming it on spiritual powers and entities. This is a clear rejection of the woman's perpetration of IPV and may reproduce her power to continue with this scourge and oppress her husband as her perpetration is justified, reasoned, negotiated and maintained through a discourse of demon possession. Such beliefs can contribute to the inequalities of victimhood where men are dismissed as victims because the women who assaulted them were possessed by demons. This supports findings by Fairclough and Wodak (1997) that discourses perform ideological work and can produce unequal relations of power.

This post received a significant number of comments from other Users who shared the same views. This suggests that certain beliefs pertaining to spiritual forces play a significant role in the area of female perpetrated IPV. This is also highlighted in

Barkhuizen's study where one male victim consulted with a traditional or voodoo doctor to cast a spell on his abusive wife to end his victimisation, although "it did not help his situation at all" (2015: 297). Fairclough (2003: 166) explains that modality is crucial in the texturing of identities and can reveal the kind of people we are. The discourses here reveal that the Users are the kind of the people who believe that demons and witchcraft are *real* and are responsible for the perpetration of IPV by women against men.

5.2.5. The Weaponisation of the Justice System

Many Users, supposedly male, expressed that the justice system plays a crucial role in legitimising and reproducing women's power to perpetrate IPV against men. Legal and administrative aggression as explained earlier in the chapter, refers to the manipulation of legal systems by one partner against the other (Dim & Lysova, 2022). In some instances, women often perpetrate IPV against men with confidence that the authorities will acquit them. This is evident in the comment below:

[User 48] I was afraid to share my story because people will judge me and say I made it up. It was the most terrifying thing I've ever experienced. I live in fear knowing I'm not safe. I will not mention her name. Our justice system is failing us. She was arrested and released the same day because there was no evidence and witnesses. We are not safe as amadoda(men).

User 48 explains that he was afraid of sharing his story because people would judge and accuse him of fabricating it. His statement highlights the skepticism associated with female perpetrated IPV and reveals some of the reasons little is known about this phenomenon is due to disbelief and negative reactions from society (Hines & Douglas, 2009; Thobejane & Luthada, 2019). This may also explain the lack of detail and specificity in his comment as he does not share what exactly transpired between him and his partner. However, his comment suggests that his partner perpetrated a serious form of IPV as she was arrested but released the same day. At the Description Level, the rhetorical trope used here is synecdoche, a figure of speech where a part represents the whole and allows

the speaker to avoid specificity in their language (Machin & Mayr, 2012). The man refers to the entire justice system to explain how the system has failed him. In actuality, the man blames the *criminal* justice system, a part of the entire system comprising various agencies, establishments, and institutions for failing to serve justice by keeping the woman in jail. Thus, reference to the entire justice system is used as a hyperbole to exaggerate the 'failure' of the *criminal* justice system by negatively portraying the entire justice system. Additionally, the use of the synecdoche is also evident in the selection of the word 'us', a reference to himself and other male victims who are all part of the group of men failed by the justice system. The above comment coincides with another male victim in Zinyemba and Hlongwana's (2022) study who expressed that the government and the justice system do not provide men with the same protection given to women. Additionally, the male victim added that women purposely abuse men because they know that the law prioritises, protects and defends them.

Other Users shared the same sentiments and added the following:

[User 49] There are many women who abuse men. It's so sad because if he defends himself, she will immediately run to the police station because she knows the police will take her side 😭

[User 50] Men know that the law favours women more than men. If he retaliates, they will arrest him and tell him that he could've just walked away.

[User 51] I beat him and he came with the police to our house. When the police arrived, I began crying hysterically and pretended like I couldn't even lift up the TV 🤔🤔🤔 They believed me and left.

The above comments explain why men feel that the justice system fails them. Women are aware that if they perpetrate IPV against their male partners and pretend to be the victims, police officers might take their side. Looking at the above comments, it is clear that power by women is enacted and maintained through the criminal justice system as police are required to prioritise women due to the high rates of femicide in the country. With that, it is difficult for male victims to retaliate or defend themselves against violent

women. This is explicitly stated by User 50, who narrates that men may be arrested for retaliating instead of walking away. This is a repeated narrative by another male victim in Barkhuizen's study who stated that "... if I retaliated, I would have been in big trouble and would possibly have ended up in jail..." (Barkhuizen, 2015: 296). Moreover, User 51 states that the police did not arrest her after her partner reported her as her theatrical performance convinced the officers that she was incapable of perpetrating IPV against a man. This supports Van Dijk's (2000) findings that the words of the oppressors are taken as truth whilst the oppressed are dismissed as irrelevant.

Additionally, another User highlighted that the high level of femicide in the country play a significant role in the concealment of female perpetrated IPV:

[User 52] Men abuse is something that men experience every day. It is overlooked and shadowed by femicide.

In the above comment, User 52 explains that male victimisation is a prominent issue. The words 'every day' are used as a hyperbole to accentuate that it is a continuous and prominent issue. The User also states that the femicide pandemic in the country has led to the lack of recognition and acknowledgement for male victims. This may be understandable, particularly because South Africa is actually the destination of femicide (Minisini, 2021) and the rape capital of the world (South Coast Herald, 2018). These current conditions of the country have somewhat given women power to dominate and oppress male victims. In fact, Fairclough (2001) states that the exercise of power becomes legitimate when institutionalised. Politically, as seen in the speech by President Ramaphosa in Chapter Two, female victimisation is institutionalised through the prioritisation, recognition and support from local government such as the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children, a campaign that excludes male victims. Although the prioritisation of women is justified due to the high rates of femicide, it has, inadvertently "discount[ed] men subjected to abuse" (Eckstein, 2010:72). This is evident in the comment below by another male victim:

[User 53] Ahhhh (sigh) I went to the police station and they said, "Voetsek!!Get out!!"💔😭 We are no longer safe la (here) because the police are always taking women's side.

In the comment above, the man was cursed and dismissed by the police officers when reporting a case of female perpetrated IPV. At the Description Level, the use of the exclamation marks, broken heart and crying emojis are used to highlight the gravity of the negative treatment by police officers. This also indicates that he was hurt their reaction. The male victim here was treated as the perpetrator who broke the law by trespassing his way into the police station and told to "Get out!!!" This coincides with findings from various scholars who reported that the police, courts, and other support services often expose abused men to secondary abuse by treating men as the perpetrators (Barkhuizen, 2015; Dim & Lysova, 2022). This type of treatment by police officers also explains the lack of reporting by male victims, leading to insufficient knowledge on the subject.

Another member agreed with the above comment, stating:

[User 54] It's Gender-based Violence, NOT Girl-based Violence. The SAPS (South African Police Service) is biased.

The bias that User 54 speaks about coincides with Bafana Sithole's suicide note in Chapter Two where he states that he was going to get arrested for a crime he did not commit because nobody believed him. This confirms that indeed in some cases, the SAPS is biased and are likely to dismiss male victims. The negative treatment and dismissal of male victims is congruent with Barkhuizen's (2015) study where South African male victims admitted that police officers did not take them seriously when they reported cases of IPV by their female partners. Drawing on the Explanation Level of Fairclough's (2001) dimensional model, police officers are human first before their occupation. This means that they are also influenced by their MR and the ideologies

embedded in their psyche which may affect how they view and treat male victims. Importantly, these ideologies are so entrenched in their psyche that they affect their occupation and the institution they represent, which is expected to serve fairly, honestly and without bias.

The selected posts, comments and replies indicate that language is equal to power and can be used to reproduce inequalities and exert control over male victims. However, the social media space serves as a platform where such power and inequalities can be challenged. With that, this chapter will subsequently discuss the role of social media as a platform for social engagements in the area of female perpetrated IPV.

5.3. Social Media as a Platform for IPV Engagements

5.3.1. Heightened Sense of Freedom of Speech, Expression, Privacy and Protection

The use of social media enhances freedom of speech and expression promoted by anonymity and masked identities in virtual spaces. These play a crucial role in how Users engage on the subject of female perpetrated IPV which is evident in the way they openly confess to perpetrating grievous forms of IPV against men. Social media also provides a heightened sense of privacy and protection, leading Users to engage in ways they would not in physical spaces. The post below is an example of how social media allows people to freely express themselves:

[User 55] I put rat poison in his breakfast, lunch and supper. It made him sick with diarrhea for a whole month. Ne ke mo rekela di pilisi tsao stoppa mala ke ntse ke le busy ke mmolaya gannyane till a ota ebile a nna montsho worse 😊😊he a lla a re bamoloya ne ke mo lebeletse fela go fitlha ke mmotsa gore motlhomongwe difebe tsagao dibatla go mpolaela wena ene ka nako e we ke lla gorr. 😞😞😞

Translation:

[User 55] I put rat poison in his breakfast, lunch and supper. It made him sick with diarrhoea for the whole month. I was busy buying him pills to stop the diarrhoea while I was killing him bit by bit until he was thin and very dark in complexion 😊😊 When he cried saying someone was bewitching him, I just looked him and told him that maybe his whores wanted to kill him and take him away from me whilst crying hysterically 😭😭😭

The comment above is a case of multiple counts of attempted murder that the woman could get arrested for. In her comment, she confesses to ‘killing her partner bit by bit’, clearly indicating that she was aware that the poison could have ended the man’s life. As explained earlier in the chapter, this form of IPV falls under the category of ‘Physical Abuse’ as stipulated in the New Act. The male victim unconsciously consumed poison that harmed his health that he could have died. Drawing on Papacharissi’s (2002) theory of the Virtual Space, it is clear that social media has given the woman a heightened sense of freedom, anonymity and protection that she provides a detailed description of how she perpetrated a form of IPV that could have killed her partner. Her discourse is unfiltered and unguarded. Her tone does not suggest remorse or regret, but pride and satisfaction. Indeed, the Virtual Space promotes and enhances engagements (Papacharissi, 2002). In a physical setting, there are chances that the woman would possibly omit and carefully select which information she would share. This shows that anonymity can increase visibility of IPV perpetration and demonstrate the various ways in which women perpetrate violence against men (Davis & Meerkotter, 2017).

5.3.2. Online Brawls

Social media was used as a space for people to swear at others, and to express anger and frustration. The post below has already been discussed in relation to the discourses used to narrate female perpetrated IPV. However, in this instance, it is used to show how users engage on the subject of female perpetrated IPV, the man stated that his brother was slapped by his girlfriend. The post was interpreted in different ways by Users. However, humour was the dominant interpretation as a large number of Users believed

that the man was joking. However, some Users were offended by this post and expressed their anger towards the man who posted:

[User 40] My brother was slapped by his girlfriend. #AmINext?😭😭😭

*[User 56] If this is a joke to you f*ck you bro! And f*ck all of you that are laughing at this post.*

The subject of female perpetrated IPV may be sensitive to User 56 who uses the *F-word* to express his anger towards User 40 and other Users for mocking and laughing about men's victimisation. Although it is not clear why he reacted this way, possible reasons could include being raised in a violent home where he witnessed this issue first-hand or being a victim himself. Hence, when people laugh about this issue, he is easily triggered and offended. Social media allows User 56 to "shout more loudly" (Jones, 1997: 30), giving him the freedom to loosely use the *F-word*. His comment on the post is a clear indication that the Virtual Space is so free that one can use derogatory language to express themselves. Due to the privacy and anonymity available in the Virtual Space, User 56 is assured of a heightened sense of protection and privacy.

On a more interesting note, whilst other Users trivialise their victimisation through hedges of humour, User 56 uses direct offensive language in his response. By so doing, he might actually suggest the desire among some men to move away from trivialising IPV and begin to take it seriously. Given that IPV experienced by men has been an ongoing, hidden phenomenon may propel some men to react negatively because of the consequences they dealt with silently as a result of this issue. The way Users engage on this post also indicates that the social media space is real as some people are negatively affected by the interactions that take place exclusively online.

However, other Users were offended by User 56's use of the *F-word* and told him to calm down as it was only a joke:

[User 57] Calm down.

[User 58] Aii, s'ya dlala wena.!!!!!!😏(We are just playing).

[User 59] He's got anger issues. Motho o depressed mofeng metsi a sukiri a theose moya hleng😭😭😭😭😭 (He is depressed. Please give him water with sugar so he can calm down).

[User 60] There's no need to take this seriously😏😏

[User 61] Y'all catch feelings even although it's a joke👉

In the above replies to the comment, the Users who found the post funny told User 56 to calm down as the post was only intended to be funny. The above replies show that ideology is undeniably and pervasively embedded in language (Fairclough, 1995), because even without being aware of it, Users defend themselves for laughing about men's victimisation. To them, the subject is trivial and funny (Hines & Douglas, 2009). Such ideologies contribute to the domination, oppression, shame and embarrassment of male victims as they may continue to remain silent due society's negative reactions. However, by laughing at the victimisation of men, other Users became angry and stated that the post was only funny because the victim was male. The Users highlighted that had it been a woman who was victimised and posted the same issue, the post would not have been interpreted as a joke:

[User 62] So, it's a joke because it's a guy?

[User 63] If he slapped her, we would be talking a different story right now😏
labora yong (You are so annoying).

[User 64] So, if a man gets slapped it's a joke? And if he had hit back, what would you have said?

[User 65] I wonder if u were also going to joke about if it was your sister who was raped and murdered...👍

[User 66] I didn't know that men actually go through this.

[User 67] I can't believe you guys are joking about this. Anyways, it's South Africa 🇿🇦

An analysis of the above discourses highlights that social media platforms have indeed become important in African societies as Users can express dissent from issues such as the perpetration of IPV by women against men. These platforms promote debates and conflicting ideas. In fact, the above replies are examples of disrupting “dominant heteronormative narratives which are culturally sanctioned” (Mutsvairo, 2016: 12). Given that female perpetrated IPV is a sanctioned phenomenon in South Africa enhanced by patriarchy and masculinity ideology, the above replies challenge and disrupt such narratives by defending male victims and stating that men’s victimisation should not be treated as a joke. These engagements support findings by Li and Luo (2020) as they allow counter-hegemonic discourses to emerge by highlighting that the post is not humorous. In their above replies, the Users resist the power hidden in the legitimization of IPV by making it appear as a joke and instead, highlight that it is not a laughing matter. Central to CDA is the resistance of power which is clear in the above discourses as they challenge the status quo of the dominant cultural and structural ideologies in South Africa which do not acknowledge male victims. In addition, these engagements highlight that people have different views of IPV as some oppose this phenomenon whilst others find it funny. This shows that engagements on social media are not fixed but diverse and can expose the seriousness of this problem as some people, such as User 66 were not aware of it.

5.3.3. A Space to Grieve and Receive Support

Social media serves as a space for male victims to vent about their victimisation, allowing others to offer them support. Given that South Africa is a patriarchal country where researchers have highlighted the difficulty that men experience in publicising their victimisation (Barkhuizen, 2015; Kgatle et al., 2021; Thobejane & Luthada, 2019), social media is crucial as it allows them to engage with others in their own desired way. Earlier in the chapter, the discourses selected showed the use of crying and broken heart emojis by male victims. Men also used words that clearly indicated that they were hurt by their

partners' perpetration of IPV. Given the emotional inexpression and the tough guise that men often display when narrating experiences to appear strong, it is clear that social media does provide a heightened sense of freedom, privacy and protection for authentic and free expressions. This allows men to provide great detail about their victimisation, therefore, leading to further insight into female perpetrated IPV.

The comment below was a response to how men have been abused by their partners (also discussed earlier in the chapter).

[User 8] One morning I was sleeping and she woke me up with multiple slaps because she didn't have clean panties to wear. I had to wake up, wash and dry them with a hairdryer. It was my responsibility to make sure she had clean clothes and panties because I was not working 😞 I cleaned, cooked and ironed. It really hurt me when she told me that I'm useless, when she hit me for asking about her whereabouts and made me take off my clothes because she bought them. She told me that sex was for men with jobs and I didn't deserve it because I was unemployed. I became her punching bag when she had a bad day at work. I was so scared of her that I couldn't even change a tv channel or say something. I stayed because I loved her.

The post above by the male is evidence the internet has dismantled inequalities, hidden issues and discourses of female perpetrated IPV that society may not know. Given that men were and are still marginalised as victims of IPV, the internet plays a crucial role in exposing such inequalities and demonstrates that men experience severe forms of IPV. Virtual spaces allow men to speak about their own victimisation experiences verbatim without being misrepresented. Given the dominance of gender roles, masculinity ideology and patriarchy in South Africa, it may be difficult for a man to publicly admit that his wife is making him wash her underwear. This may result in colossal embarrassment and humour from society. Thus, anonymity and masked identities available in online spaces have exposed some of these hidden forms of IPV. The post by the male victim is a sign that he wanted to vent and speak about what he was going through. The detail he provides in the description of his IPV experiences indicates that he is also emotionally

and physically drained. Pleck's (1995) GRSP theory explains that it is important for men to grieve in order to deal with trauma and dysfunction. Thus, the absence of physical interactions in social media spaces contributes to men's ability to openly grieve and receive support from other Users. In the comments below, other Users sympathised with the male victim and offered words of support and encouragement:

[User 68] I couldn't help but shed a tear whilst reading your story 😭😭 I am so sorry you had to experience all of this. I wish you healing and that you leave the relationship ❤️

[User 69] This post made me so angry! I pray you find strength to leave this toxic woman. Please LEAVE!!!! There are good women out there.

[User 70] This post just showed me that men are going through a lot! This is clearly GBV but we cannot openly speak about it because the victim is a man. Love and light brother ❤️🌻

[User 71] Ke bora ke gore (what annoys me) is that when men speak out, they are portrayed as weaklings. Abutaka (my brother) be strong, go home, find peace. Modimo o tla go araba lwena (God will answer your prayers).

Based on the above comments, it is clear that social media plays an important role in how Users comfort and encourage male victims. Social media is not only used as a platform for expressing views and opinions, but to offer sympathy, support and understanding. The above comments are important because they coincide with Barber (2008) assertion on the significance of allowing male victims to express themselves and support them. Importantly, a denied sense of existence, exclusion and marginalisation by society is now replaced with social capital comprising a sense of belonging, a shared sense of identity, understanding and values in online spaces (Hampton & Wellman, 2003).

Despite the positive aspects of social media in supporting male victims, other Users expressed their anger towards User 8 and blamed him for his victimisation:

*[User 72] WTF?! Do you not have any sense of self respect? How can you allow some miserable excuse for a woman treat you like this? Do you think your parents gave birth to you to end up like this? GO THE FU*K HOME! 🤬🤬🤬🤬.*

[User 73] Find a job and move out. Why are you so dependent on her? You're a man for goodness' sake!

Drawing on Papacharissi's (2009) theory of the Virtual Space, social media spaces, particularly Facebook, are so flexible that they lead to hasty, unfiltered and unguarded opinions as opposed to rational, focused and controlled ones. The two comments above show that the Users engaged on the post without being too careful or too calculated as they probably would have in a physical space (Papacharissi, 2010). The comments are mean, rude and too harsh – a direct opposite of the sympathetic discourses. User 72 accuses the man of not having any self-respect as he tolerates the worst form of abuse from a woman. In both comments, Users advise the man to leave the relationship, find a job and go back home. The comment by User 73 is ideologically influenced as men are expected to be able to provide for themselves. The statement, 'you're a man for goodness' sake', shows that there are expectations placed on men to be in positions of power and authority, and to be able to provide for themselves. Thus, the man is blamed for his own victimisation because his 'power' and 'authority' grant him the privilege to leave such a toxic relationship.

The variety and diversification of viewpoints, opinions and perspectives are evidence that indeed, the Virtual Space allows people to choose their own language to "shout more loudly" (Jones, 1997: 30). All Users who replied to the above post advised the male victim in their own way. The comments above show that Users respond and engage in different ways on the subject of female perpetrated IPV. Whilst some are sympathetic, others express anger and in a way hold the man responsible for his victimisation. The way Users engage shows that different tones can be used to deliver the same message.

Other Users felt that User 72 was too harsh in his advice to User 8. Therefore, this led to continuously engagements:

[User 74] No, my brother, I think you are being a bit harsh. Let's advise him in a nice way. I agree he might be to blame somehow, but this is not the time. It is good that he told the truth. Let's advise him to find a solution to get out of this toxic relationship. These things happen gradually until they spiral out of control. I think the first thing he must do is to go for counselling. This will help to sustain him even when he decides to get into another relationship.

In the replies above, User 74 opposes the harsh advice by the User 72. He states that it does not help to be harsh but rather to advise him in a nice way. This is because he senses that the male victim is experiencing severe forms of IPV and being harsh might worsen his mental health state. Again, his comment coincides with Barber's (20) study that it is important to support male victims given that they already have little support from society and government. Additionally, the above comment coincides with Fairclough and Wodak's (1997) statement that discourse is equal to power and can be used to intervene for the oppressed as seen in the reply above.

Some Users went as far and opening their virtual doors and inviting male victims to speak to them if they ever needed support:

[User 77] My brother please inbox me because you need a shoulder to cry on. I believe I can help you.

The comment above shows that online engagements can result in physical engagements if both Users decide to meet. Therefore, there is an intersection of offline and online lives. Social media plays an integral role for men who are victims of female perpetrated IPV as

they can receive help from other Users who are willing to talk to them. This supports findings by Lieberman and Schroeder (2020) that without a doubt, online interactions create opportunities to form new social ties. To add, such engagements are important for male victims, given the already existing lack of acknowledgment, visibility and support. Indeed, “online communities are becoming “places” of belonging, information, and emotional support that people cannot do without” (Kurikko & Tuominen, 2012: 12). Such engagements can be liberating to male victims and potentially help in addressing female perpetrated IPV in South Africa.

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter provided an analysis of the three research questions of the study. Firstly, the various forms of IPV perpetrated by women against men were discussed in relation to the New Act. Out of all the forms of IPV perpetrated, men described emotional, verbal and psychological abuse as the worst form of IPV. The forms of IPV perpetrated against men were mostly out of anger due to men’s infidelity. Physical violence perpetrated by women further indicated that women do not always rely on physical strength to abuse men. Secondly, various linguistic strategies were used to enact, reproduce and resist the dominance, inequalities, injustices and oppression emanating from female perpetrated IPV. In their discourses, Users concealed and naturalised their perpetration through modals, hedges of humour, positive self-representation and negative representation of the other. However, social media spaces serve as platforms to challenge and resist the dominance and inequalities of female perpetrated IPV against men.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1. Introduction

The aim of this study was to gain further insight into female perpetrated IPV against South African heterosexual males on Facebook. To achieve this, online discourses in the form of posts, comments and replies from publicly available groups, pages and accounts on Facebook were selected and analysed. This chapter concludes the study by providing a summary of the findings in relation to the research questions, and further provides the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

The study was guided by the following questions:

1. What forms of IPV are perpetrated against men by their female partners on Facebook?
2. Which discourses are used to narrate female perpetrated IPV against men on Facebook?
3. What role does social media play as a platform for social engagements, particularly in the area of female perpetrated IPV?

6.2. Summary of Findings

This study found that men experience all forms of IPV perpetrated by their female partners as stipulated in the DVA 14 of 2021, also referred to as the New Act. Physical abuse included slapping, stabbing, pouring men with boiling water and using harmful substances such as rat poison to harm their health. In some cases, physical violence by women was fatal as they had to resort to severe forms of IPV to protect themselves from their violent partners. This study found that women do not always rely on their physical strength and size to perpetrate IPV. However, it was also established that women also incapacitated

their partners so that they could victimise them. Therefore, the main conclusion that was drawn from this finding is that the physical size debate is subjective and unique under certain circumstances.

The main form of abuse that male victims emphasised was the most prominent and worst for them was emotional, verbal and psychological abuse. This form of abuse included name calling and hurling insults due to varying reasons such as unemployment, infertility, sexual performance and the size of men's genitalia. The study also found that women used children to perpetrate emotional and psychological abuse. This was achieved through paternity fraud, denied access to children, and lying about the death of the child. Furthermore, women also perpetrated legal and administrative aggression by making false allegations against their partners which lead to their arrest. The prioritisation of women as the primary victims of IPV was identified as the core reason women were able to weaponise the law because police believed them more than men. This study found that Users felt that the plight of male victimisation is overshadowed by the high levels of femicide in the country, resulting in less attention paid to men.

Various linguistic strategies were used to enact, reproduce and resist the dominance, inequalities, injustices and oppression emanating from the violence perpetrated by women against men. The three-dimensional model by Fairclough (1995) exposed the hidden power relations hidden in the discourses. For example, at the Description Level, Users employed structural and linguistic strategies such as foregrounding their own victimisation by men and backgrounding their perpetration by placing it at the end of the sentence. This structural strategy signified and that the man wronged the woman first, leading to her perpetration of violence towards him. As a result, women's perpetration of their violence was justified, legitimated and blamed on the man. At the Explanation Level, some male Users used hedges of humour to conceal and trivialise their victimisation to avoid appearing weak. Given that South Africa is a patriarchal country shaped by masculinity ideology, the study showed that men avoided directly admitting to being victimised by women as this may have led to ridicule, embarrassment and societal condemnation. The application of Pleck's (1995) GRSP theory showed that indeed, male gender roles and masculinity ideology cause strain, trauma and dysfunction in men as it

is difficult for them to meet and maintain these masculinity standards. Ideologies determined properties of discourse and were central to how Users spoke about their victimisation and perpetration experiences. For instance, the discourse of witchcraft was drawn upon to make sense of women's violence towards men as masculinity ideology holds that men are stronger than woman and can only be abused by women if they have been bewitched. This is a clear rejection of female perpetrated IPV determined and rooted in ideology. This study also found that humour was a major discourse that emerged. Users laughed at men who narrated their experiences of IPV and congratulated and encouraged women to continue with their perpetration. These negative reactions indicated that some Users are oblivious to the catastrophic emotional and psychological pain and trauma that men are subjected to.

This study further established the importance of social media in enhancing engagements on the subject of female perpetrated IPV against men. Papacharissi's (2001) theory of the Virtual Space showed that social media provided a heightened sense of freedom, privacy and protection for Users to discuss, debate and insult each other. Social media allowed Users to shout more loudly and to express dissent on the subject by stating that IPV should not be a laughing matter because the victims are male. By engaging in this way, Users resisted and challenged hidden power relations that legitimate men abuse by women.

6.3. Limitations

The study has potential limitations. Firstly, some Users did not provide sufficient details of their experiences. For example, User 7 stated, "my girlfriend raped me" and did not provide further explanation about his sexual victimisation. Therefore, I was limited in this instance as I was not able to detect how User 7 felt about his ordeal as I could not read his emotions online. To remedy this, I relied on emojis such as crying faces, broken hearts and the actual words used in the texts. I also relied on my own understanding and interpretation of the data. Furthermore, the fact that someone uses a 'female' username and also makes reference to a boyfriend or husband is no guarantee that this is a female in a heterosexual relationship. However, to address this, most of the data was collected

from posts where women were specifically asked to share how they have abused their male partners. For instance, one post read, “Ladies, tell us about the worst manner you have abused him” or “Gents, what did she do that you cannot seem to get over.” Such posts increased the validity that they were male or female. Last, the findings cannot be generalised to all male victims and female perpetrators of IPV as the study was strictly based on the public groups, pages and posts on Facebook.

6.4. Scope for Future Research

The subject of female perpetrated IPV is one that is significant and relevant. Future research can address the limitations of this study by conducting face-to-face, in-depth interviews with male victims and female perpetrators of IPV to gain clarity on this phenomenon. Future studies could also explore strategies to deconstruct and dismantle ideologies that are imbedded in people’s psyche as they draw on these to make sense of women’s perpetration of violence towards men. Last, future research can use other methodological approaches to increase a heightened sense of freedom and privacy that will allow people to discuss IPV in physical spaces as they do on social media.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Letter from the Faculty of Higher Degrees Committee approval letter



**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

13 October 2023

ETHICAL CLEARANCE NUMBER	REC-01-501-2023
REVIEW OUTCOME	Approved
APPLICANT(S)	Miss Letecia Sekanka
TITLE OF PROJECT	Take it Like a Man! An Investigation of Female Perpetrated Intimate Partner Violence Against South African Heterosexual Males on Facebook
DEPARTMENT	Communication and Media
SUPERVISOR(S)	Dr Sifiso Mntsi

Dear Miss Sekanka

The Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee (FREC) has reviewed your research proposal and is satisfied that it is compliant with the approved ethical standards of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Johannesburg. Approval is granted for one year, 13 October 2023-12 October 2024.

Renewals: Please note that this ethical clearance must be renewed annually, within two weeks of the end of the approval period.

Amendments: Any required changes to the approved research proposal and materials must be submitted to the FREC for approval (See Section 10 of the REC Standard Operating Procedures).

The FREC would like to extend its best wishes to you in your research project.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Neo Morojele".

Prof Neo Morojele

Chairperson: Faculty of Humanities REC
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E-mail: nmorojele@uj.ac.za