

Analysis of institutional responses to gender-based violence and femicide in the South African Police Service

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Abstract: It is argued that gender-based violence (GBV) is described by many as the most prevalent human rights violation in the world. GBV is thus a complex phenomenon that exists in many different forms and may be experienced within family and intimate relationships, in public spaces and workplaces, as well as online. Acts of GBV are usually part of a pattern that can affect all aspects of survivors/victims' lives. This includes their access to education, employment, housing, health care and justice, as well as their physical and mental well-being and health. When survivors/victims have children, such impacts may also extend to them. Moreover, GBV has economic ramifications for survivors/victims, their families, and societies. Eradicating all forms of GBV is thus a global responsibility. While many governments have enacted policies and programmes towards this end, strategic planning, policy co-ordination, and long-term investment in services has often been uneven for GBV, limiting the effectiveness of governmental measures. The gendered profession of police, as well as gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) as a societal problem, is central to the discussion surrounding associations between gender and police response to GBVF in South Africa. It is argued that GBVF, is one of the most oppressive forms of gender inequality, posing a fundamental barrier to the equal participation of women and men in social, economic, and political spheres. A violence directed against another gender, usually directed against women, that undermines, fails to recognise, or violates fundamental rights, equality between gender categories and impacts on social, economic, political and freedom rights of specifically women. The prevalence of GBVF is high in South Africa. This research study aims to investigate, analyse, and evaluate perceptions and responses by the police towards GBVF. Further, it aims to produce an overall summary estimate on the prevalence of GBVF according to different types and its risk factors among women and children as well as the South African Police Service (SAPS) response. In South Africa, like in other jurisdictions, GBVF remains a challenge that significantly constrains service delivery to victims of GBVF. This report uses content analysis as the basis to analyse prevalent GBVF risks in South Africa. It first describes the legislative and policy level frameworks associated with violence against women and girls as well as their implementation at the national and subnational levels. It then provides a detailed analysis of specific social norms that have created acceptance for or at least a lack of condemnation of GBVF at the community level. Finally, based on field research, it delves deeper into some of the interpersonal and individual drivers of various forms of GBVF in the selected communities.

Keywords: Communities, gender-based violence and femicide; global, South African Police Service, victims

Introduction

Violence against women is a major impediment to the fulfilment of women's rights and to the achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) (Griggs, Stafford-Smith, Gaffney, Rockström, Öhman, Shyamsundar, Steffen, Glaser, Kanie & Noble, 2013). Gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) has become a major problem in South Africa and the world over, making headlines on a regular basis (Mofokeng, 2022; Mofokeng & Tlou, 2022). When the president of the Republic of South Africa (RSA), Mr. Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, declared the lockdown in reaction to the worldwide pandemic: COVID-19, one of the expectations was that families would spend more time together in harmony. However, the number of recorded domestic violence (DV) instances increased because of the lockdown. The announcement by the President of the RSA, Ramaphosa pointed out that South Africa holds the shameful distinction of being one of the most unsafe places in the world to be a woman (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 2020, p. 2). Women have historically been subjected to GBVF in their communities, businesses, streets, marketplaces, and even churches; recently, their homes have

proven to be unsafe as well. There have been several marches of women around the country to call for justice for women who are victims of GBVF.

The lives of women were endangered, what was supposed to be a place of solace became a dungeon to them. This paper presents a comprehensive review of literature and empirical research on factors contributing to GBVF and responses to (GBVF) in South Africa. Policy guidelines serve as the guide for sector-specific empowerment policies, capacity development, and a greater emphasis on the implementation of victim empowerment by all relevant partners (Department of Social Development, 1997). The application to the implementation of the policy should boost the interest of the SAPS to serve the victims of gender-based crime. This study desires to demonstrate how far the SAPS monitors the legislative base for the national policy guidelines for victim empowerment, it will likewise be an achievement to make victims of GBVF satisfied with how they handle the cases based on gender violence. South Africa prides itself in having one of the more progressive and modern constitutions in the world, (Njamela, 2021). Njamela pointed out that the constitution was lauded as one of the most progressive in the world, the adoption of South Africa's Constitution, 25 years ago, heralded the intention to make a clear break from the country's apartheid past towards a future that promised human rights and dignity for all (Njamela, 2021). GBVF is a public health issue. The prevalence of GBVF is high in South Africa. Therefore, this study aims to produce an overall summary estimate on the prevalence of GBVF according to different types and its risk factors among women and children as well as the South African Police Service (SAPS) response.

Research Problem

In the pre-and-post-Covid-19 policing era, the SAPS faced many challenges in protecting women and children from violence and in responding effectively to such acts. Relevant legislation seems to be ineffectual or non-existent, resources scarce, there is a culture of impunity among perpetrators which is prevalent and support agencies and services to enhance the protection of women and children is severely lacking. In South Africa, like in other jurisdictions, GBVF remains a challenge that significantly constrains service delivery to victims of GBVF. This report uses content analysis as the basis to analyse prevalent GBVF risks in South Africa. It first describes the legislative and policy level frameworks associated with violence against women and girls as well as their implementation at the national and subnational levels. It then provides a detailed analysis of specific social norms that have created acceptance for or at least a lack of condemnation of GBVF at the community level. Finally, based on field research, it delves deeper into some of the interpersonal and individual drivers of various forms of GBVF in the selected communities. With the national prominence placed on GBVF the contribution of the SAPS, as an acknowledged criminal justice component, toward assisting victims within the crime category is exponentially highlighted and the institutional readiness to comply with the demands needs to be asserted from both a strategic as well as an operational perspective.

Research objectives and hypotheses

The objectives of this study culminate into identifiable components (general objectives), which in themselves, inform the research questions (specific objectives), that need to be answered. Therefore, to investigate the research problem, the following research objectives were pursued:

- To determine the capacity of the SAPS to respond to reported cases of GBVF at the Temba policing area;
- To examine cases of GBVF within the international, as well as at the regional context, by showing its various forms, magnitude, as well as measures other countries have taken to end domestic violence;
- To identify to what extent the SAPS complies with its mandate in addressing GBVF at the Temba policing area;
- To evaluate response of the SAPS regarding the implementation of GBVF legislative framework at the Temba policing area; and
- Based on analysis of the findings; the study aims to offer recommendations to assist the Temba policing area and relevant stakeholders, to combat violence against women and girls at Temba and other policing areas. This comes from the researcher's belief that research should not just be done for the sake of it, but research findings should be made available to both individuals and organisations who can make use of the findings in the work they do.

It has been indicated that when Temba SAPS implement both null and alternative hypothesis, the objectives of the study remain served. The following null as well as alternative hypotheses, guided this study:

H₀₁: The national importance of the GBVF debate does not receive adequate attention at the Temba policing area.

H_{a1}: The national importance of the GBVF debate does receive adequate attention at the Temba policing area.

H₀₂: The operational implementation of GBVF at the Temba policing area, is not in line with the legislative framework.

H_{a2}: The operational implementation of GBVF at the Temba policing area, is in line with the legislative framework.

H₀₃: The SAPS does not have adequate capacity to deal with GBVF incidents at the Temba policing area.

H_{a 3}: The SAPS does have adequate capacity to deal with GBVF incidents at the Temba policing area.

Theoretical and Conceptual Background

The conceptual framework is based on previous research and current conditions. Camarasa and Heim (2007, p. 5) posit that the feminist theories and the feminist movements have vehemently demonstrated that knowledge cannot be considered neutral or objective. Traditionally, researchers have engendered knowledge based on the dominant perspective and behaviour in society, which was the male one (androcentrism). Therefore, knowledge has been blind to the specific historical, political, social and or personal conditions on which it was reported, making invisible gender differences. Feminist epistemologies have claimed that knowledge is dynamic, relative, and variable and that it cannot be considered an aim itself but a process (Berenstain, 2020; Cattien, 2017; Grasswick, 2011). Considering this idea, the theoretical and conceptual background of this paper is based on the following principles:

- gender inequalities and the promotion of women's rights, interests and issues, are the common basis of the feminist studies and their epistemological concerns, despite the fact that there are multiple meanings of gender and the concept of gender itself has been criticised (Arboleda, Sandberg & Vilain, 2014; Butler, 1990; Byrd-Craven & Geary, 2013; Davies, 2023; Taylor & Hoskin, 2023);
- violence against women "constitutes a violation of the rights and fundamental freedoms of women and impairs or nullifies their enjoyment of those rights and freedoms" (Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, UN, General Assembly Resolution 48/1004 of 20 December 2003);
- there are many expressions of violence against women and new ones can appear according to the development of the social changes and the social dynamics;
- violence against women has multiple and multidimensional effects, but all of them have the common denominator of being gender based; and
- from a feminist perspective, the best way to know something about violence against women and its effects is by hearing the voices of the women that have experienced this phenomenon.

Literature Review

Multifaceted forms of violence against women and children

The World Health Organisation (WHO) (2002) and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (2017) define violence as the intentional use of physical force or power (threatened or actual) against oneself, another person or a group/community that results in, or has a high likelihood of resulting in injuries, death, psychological harm, or deprivation. Data on socio-demographics such as but not limited to age, marital status, occupation, income, and highest educational level attained, knowledge of GBV definitions, perceptions of and experiences with GBV health services including reasons for refusing GBV health referrals remain elusive towards understanding the extent of the problem. Given that violence against women and children manifests itself in so many different forms, there is no one single, universally accepted definition to describe the phenomenon. Mofokeng and Tlou (2022, p. 264) posit that the lack of categorisation of GBV phenomenon by the SAPS leads to the misunderstanding of it, since it is perceived differently by many. Vetten (2021, p. 2) concurs with the above that an attempt by researchers to collect secondary data in order to indicate the impact of lockdown on victims of GBV, as well as the extent of the problem through the use of statistics, are "thus limited in their ability to illuminate the problem of violence during the lockdown... any errors that may have been made in the categorisation and analysis of the original data... These confirmed the addends to be correct but the sums wrong." It is important to note that although GBV, DV, and IPV are often used interchangeably, there are subtle differences between them (Uzobo & Ayinmoro, 2021). The United Nations (UN) defines GBV as "any act of GBV that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life" (UN, 2022).

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) (2015) as cited in Hossain and McAlpine (2017, p. 13) expands this definition further as: "An umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e., gender) differences between males and females. The term is primarily used to underscore the fact that structural, gender-based power differentials between males and females around the world place females at risk for multiple forms of violence. This includes acts that inflict physical, mental, or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life." DV is termed as "any incident of threatening behaviour, violence (psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional), or abuse between adults who are or have been an intimate partner or family member, regardless of gender or sexuality" (Karystianis, Adily, Schofield, Greenberg, Jorm, Nenadic & Butler, 2019)

against their will, impacting their daily functioning, psychological health, and identity (Mazars, Mofolo, Jewkes & Shamu, 2013). Moreover, IPV is termed as “abuse or aggression that occurs in a romantic relationship” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). DV remains one of the global public health concerns (Sabri, Hartley, Saha, Murray, Glass & Campbell, 2020) and priority, given the prevalence and incidence of violence in several countries (WHO, 2013).

Materials and Methods

For this study, the research paradigm was rooted in positivism. Consequently, a quantitative approach was adopted following a cross-sectional design was employed. The data-gathering instrument was a paper-based, self-administered structured questionnaire, which included a standardised measuring instrument using a five-point Likert scale. The first author distributed 260 questionnaires between the CSC and community members. The responses from the respondents yielded 30 completed questionnaires from the SAPS members inclusive of the Station Commander and 100 from the community members inclusive of CPF members. In total, 130 respondents participated in this study. Respondents in the survey were asked to state their level of agreement with those given statements, as discussed below from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The data collected was analysed by coding and was computerised. Answers within the questionnaire were assigned numerical codes and entered Microsoft Excel. The codes from Excel were subsequently transported into the Statistical Programme for Social Sciences (SPSS) (Field, 2013; International Business Machines Corporation (IBM), [sa]; SPSS, [sa]) for coding and further analysis (McCormick, Salcedo & Poh, 2015, p. 12). The quality of the data was ensured through demonstrating validity and reliability. A structured questionnaire was used to survey the respondents.

Ethical considerations are an important aspect of any research, especially research that deals with human participants. Hence, all research requires ethical clearance and approval to be conducted. For the purposes of this study, ethical clearance was granted by the university, initially on the condition that the SAPS approved the request to conduct research. This was later changed to full ethical clearance following the approval of the research request by the SAPS. In agreement with the pre-selected police stations, permission was requested and granted by the SAPS, in accordance with the National Instruction of 2006. The Gauteng Provincial Office communicated with the Temba CSC to provide the lead researcher with contact details and allow the researcher to continue with the research. The sample unit are those police officials who work at the Temba policing area and were aware of the GBVF activities and to what extent this concept applied to their respective policing areas, or even more, influence crime prevention, towards the attainment of organisational goals.

Findings and Discussion

Statements and Interpretations

In Table 1 below, most of the respondents agreed (41%) and strongly agreed (43%) that the rest of the community had heard about GBVF. Forty four percent (44%) of the respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed and 39% agreed/strongly agreed that victims often received inconsistent support from the police. Most of the respondents agreed/strongly agreed, that preventing GBVF in Temba SAPS adequately accentuate the implementation of law (58%) and community members heard more about GBVF in the media (86%). Also, a whole lot of the respondents agreed/strongly agreed that SAPS distributes information of GBVF education awareness at schools around Temba policing (60%), the distinction of highest rape cases affected the community to live in fear (71%), the Temba SAPS patrol weekly in the community (52%), though the community raises complaints about the GBVF victims, rape is constantly occurring (78%) and the SAPS do not have enough resources to serve the GBVF community efficiently (56%).

The above findings contradict the findings by the Commission for Gender Equality (2018 as cited in Matiwane, 2018). The findings highlighted that there was a lack of awareness-raising, for example through workshops. Meaning many police stations did not have internal structures dedicated to dealing with GBV as a special category of crime. “[The] VSC as a structure is designed to make proactive interventions to curb GBVF within the community of the police station, but they [also] provide post-incident care, debriefing, psycho-social support, counselling and forensic medical support. The VSC is therefore a reactive/aftercare mechanism,” states the report. The report found that police stations relied on ordinary SAPS officers to handle and investigate cases of GBV, in the same way they would handle any other crime. These officers often lacked the required training and skills, including thorough knowledge of the policy and legislative frameworks on gender rights, as well as the rights of victims of crimes (Commission for Gender Equality, 2018 as cited in Matiwane, 2018).

However, the majority of the respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed that DV is a private matter to be handled in the family (67%), DV can be excused if the victim is heavily affected by alcohol (46%), DV can be excused if, afterwards, the violent person genuinely regrets what they have done (49%) and women going through custody battles often make up or exaggerate claims of DV in order to improve their case of sexual violence (45%). It is encouraging to observe the findings that most respondents (67%), disagreed that DV is a private matter. The findings by Aphane and Mofokeng (2018, pp. 189-204), highlighted that this notion points as a common

perception: DV is often considered a personal, private problem, one that ‘can happen with any family’ and should not be exposed. That perception appears to have informed then-by patriarchy attitudes that DV is a crime motivated by ‘personal’ and ‘private’ reasons, not a victim’s membership in a ‘particular social group’. The above findings clearly indicated that the attitudes toward DV in the Temba policing area have been changing over the past decades. Since the study by Aphane and Mofokeng (2018, pp. 189-204) that investigated the views of the SAPS and community members on their perception of the prevalence of DV. Moreover, the SAPS and other first responders have been better equipped and better trained to deal with IPV, and a public-private safety net has been better funded and developed (Aphane & Mofokeng, 2018, pp. 189-204).

Table 1: Factors that influence response to service victims of GBVF at Temba policing area according to the community members (N=100)

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Missing
1. The rest of the community have heard about the Gender-based Violence and Femicide (GBVF).	3% (3)	5% (5)	8% (8)	41% (41)	43% (43)	
2. Victims often receive inconsistent support from the police.	9% (9)	35% (35)	17% (17)	33% (33)	6% (6)	
3. Preventing GBVF in Temba SAPS adequately accentuate the implementation of law.	2% (2)	18% (18)	22% (22)	39% (39)	19% (19)	
4. Community members heard more about GBVF in the media.	1% (1)	4% (4)	9% (9)	49% (49)	37% (37)	
5. SAPS distributes information of GBVF education awareness at schools around Temba policing.	2% (2)	22% (22)	15% (15)	47% (47)	13% (13)	1% (1)
6. The distinction of highest rape cases affected the community to live in fear.	5% (5)	15% (15)	9% (9)	40% (40)	31% (31)	
7. Parole officers examine the sex offenders that were released back to the society frequently.	10% (10)	23% (23)	33% (33)	28% (28)	6% (6)	
8. The Temba SAPS patrol weekly in the community.	4% (4)	18% (18)	26% (26)	33% (33)	19% (19)	
9. Though communities raise complaints about the GBVF victims, rapes are still constantly occurring.	3% (3)	9% (9)	10% (10)	39% (39)	39% (39)	
10. SAPS do not have enough resources to serve the GBVF community efficiently.	12% (12)	22% (22)	9% (9)	32% (32)	24% (24)	1% (1)
11. Temba SAPS promptly respond to the GBVF cases	4% (4)	12% (12)	20% (20)	35% (35)	29% (29)	
12. Community expectations are met with the hardworking Temba SAPS.	7% (7)	20% (20)	20% (20)	32% (32)	21% (21)	

13. Reliable service of GBVF is very beneficial to the country and at the local level.	2% (2)	8% (8)	17% (17)	33% (33)	40% (40)	
14. Analysis of the CPF demands is valuable.	9% (9)	7% (7)	13% (13)	38% (38)	32% (32)	1% (1)
15. Temba SAPS attentively listen to its community	6% (6)	13% (13)	19% (19)	34% (34)	28% (28)	
16. Society is ready to take corrective action as they led the country about rape reported cases.	14% (14)	12% (12)	20% (20)	36% (36)	18% (18)	
17. Most people who experience domestic violence are reluctant to go to the police.	6% (6)	10% (10)	12% (12)	43% (43)	28% (28)	1% (1)
18. Support is not always tailored to the needs of the victim.	3% (3)	19% (19)	21% (21)	37% (37)	20% (20)	
19. It's hard to understand why women stay in violent relationships.	14% (14)	10% (10)	11% (11)	37% (37)	28% (28)	
20. Domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family.	41% (41)	26% (26)	5% (5)	19% (19)	9% (9)	
21. Police now respond more quickly to domestic violence calls than they did in the past.	3% (3)	18% (18)	12% (12)	36% (36)	31% (31)	
22. Domestic violence can be excused if the victim is heavily affected by alcohol.	16% (16)	30% (30)	16% (16)	25% (25)	13% (13)	
23. Domestic violence can be excused if the offender is heavily affected by alcohol.	18% (18)	24% (24)	10% (10)	30% (30)	18% (18)	
24. GBVF policy implementation by the SAPS is very effective.	12% (12)	19% (19)	16% (16)	46% (46)	6% (6)	1% (1)
25. Domestic violence can be excused if, afterwards, the violent person genuinely regrets what they have done.	21% (21)	28% (28)	21% (21)	19% (19)	11% (11)	
26. Women going through custody battles often make up or exaggerate claims of domestic violence in order to improve their case of Sexual violence.	21% (21)	24% (24)	27% (27)	19% (19)	9% (9)	
27. Victims of GBVF offences aren't always given consistent and appropriate support through the criminal justice system.	4% (4)	12% (12)	20% (20)	45% (45)	19% (19)	

28. The police have made welcome improvements in recent years, but these aren't enough to tackle the epidemic of GBVF crime.	4% (4)	5% (5)	16% (16)	44% (44)	31% (31)	
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Source: Researchers own illustration

In reviewing the above responses, several things become clear. First, the SAPS members, including all role-players, have a duty to inform the public about the scourge of GBVF. It is encouraging to observe that the respondents indicated that they were aware of the GBVF in their respective communities. Oparinde and Matsha (2021, p. 3), assert that the increase in reported cases is seemingly paralleled by the growth of the number of cases of GBVF in South Africa. Given the social stigma and misconceptions associated with GBVF, which are increasingly challenged and rejected through counter-discourse, it can be assumed that there are thousands more cases going unreported (Oparinde & Matsha, 2021, p. 3). Moreover, it was realised that a series of GBV cases, including femicide, prompted outrage and calls to action from various sectors of society. A series of senseless killings, assaults, rapes, and cases of abuse in recent years shocked the nation already at grips with frightening levels of violence inflicted on women (Oparinde & Matsha, 2021, p. 3). They continue mentioning that hundreds of women have been brutally assaulted and murdered at the hands of men in South Africa over the years. Some of these women made the headlines; others were privately mourned. Justice was served in some cases; in other cases, perpetrators are carrying on with their lives, while some cases were simply never reported (Oparinde & Matsha, 2021, p. 3).

A researchers anticipated that with South Africa being infamously earning of the status of 'rape capital of the world', our collective voices and outrage must be amplified, and activism, care, and support are needed from all sectors of society, to bring about change. Research and analysis enable a better understanding of the phenomenon and have the potential of informing our responses to it (Oparinde & Matsha, 2021, p. 3). Furthermore, Schwark and Bohner (2019, pp. 1491-1509), pointed out that, on matters related to incarcerated offenders, relevant stakeholders such as probation and parole officials have a central role in responding to and preventing GBVF offenses. Secondly, their role is not limited to supervising GBVF offenders, but also includes performing activities designed to prevent GBVF offenses in the community and protect members of the public (Schwark & Bohner, 2019, pp. 1491-1509). Thirdly, in reviewing each of these items, probation and parole officers do not operate alone in their efforts to supervise GBVF offenders. Instead, they work with other officials to perform each of these tasks (Schwark & Bohner, 2019, pp. 1491-1509). The SAPS officials as well as the CPF members are typically the first responders in cases of GBVF. The duties of the SAPS and that of the CPFs members, in responding to GBVF are often well-defined.

In Table 2, most of the respondents agreed/strongly disagreed that the police needed the capacity to cope with the changing demand (75%), there also needs to be an upwards shift in priority in how the police pursue and disrupt offenders (67%). The SAPS complied with its mandate in addressing GBVF at the Temba policing area (62%), and the SAPS response was adequate regarding the implementation of GBVF legislative framework at the Temba policing area (64%). However, little is known regarding the response of the SAPS toward GBVF during the Covid-19 pandemic. Research indicates that in the context of Covid-19, GBVF, was noted as a 'shadow, twin, silent, parallel' epidemic and yet researchers have long suggested that the government needs to mobilise massive resources and implement stringent measures to ensure the preservation of life, as GBV is responsible for premature deaths in women (Mzikazi & Tshona, 2021). The government is capable, and in a position to galvanise and implement efforts, with precise measures to address gender-based and domestic violence, which has been rightfully declared a national crisis with lives lost daily. As the prognosis of the Covid-19 pandemic is unknown, national consultations with women-led organisations in preparing disaster management interventions to reduce violence against women, are needed (Mzikazi & Tshona, 2021).

Table 2: Assessment of police effectiveness at every stage of their responses to GBVF by the community

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Missing
The police need the capacity to cope with the changing demand	6% (6)	9% (9)	10% (10)	48% (48)	27% (27)	
There also needs to be an upwards shift in priority in how the police pursue and disrupt offenders	1% (1)	8% (8)	24% (24)	44% (44)	23% (23)	

The SAPS complies with its mandate in addressing GBVF at the Temba policing area	4% (4)	8% (8)	26% (26)	45% (45)	17% (17)	
The SAPS response is adequate regarding the implementation of GBVF legislative framework at the Temba policing area	3% (3)	12% (12)	21% (21)	45% (45)	19% (19)	

Source: Researchers own illustration

In Table 3, most of the respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed (64.3%), that victims often received inconsistent support from the police while most of them agreed/strongly agreed (75%), that most people who experienced domestic violence were reluctant to go to the police. More than half of the respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed (53.5%), that support was not always tailored to the needs of the victim. Most of the SAPS members disagreed/strongly disagreed (82.1%), that domestic violence was a private matter to be handled in the family. Eighty-two percent, of the 28 respondents agreed/strongly agreed that police now respond more quickly to domestic violence calls than they did in the past. Almost all the respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed that domestic violence could be excused if the victim was heavily affected by alcohol (85.7%), domestic violence could be excused if the offender was heavily affected by alcohol (89.3%) and domestic violence could be excused if, afterwards, the violent person genuinely regretted what they had done (92.9%).

Table 3: Factors that influence response to service victims of GBVF at Temba policing area (N=28) (Temba SAPS)

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Victims often receive inconsistent support from the police	39.3% (11)	25% (7)	0	32.1% (9)	3.6% (1)
Most people who experience domestic violence are reluctant to go to the police	0	10.7% (3)	14.3% (4)	64.3% (18)	10.7% (3)
Support is not always tailored to the needs of the victim	21.4% (6)	32.1% (9)	17.9% (5)	25.0% (7)	3.6% (1)
It's hard to understand why women stay in violent relationships	0	14.3% (4)	21.4% (6)	32.1% (9)	32.1% (9)
Domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family	46.4% (13)	35.7% (10)	7.1% (2)	3.6% (1)	7.1% (2)
Police now respond more quickly to domestic violence calls than they did in the past	0	7.1% (2)	10.7% (3)	32.1% (9)	50.0% (14)
Domestic violence can be excused if the victim is heavily affected by alcohol	60.7% (17)	25.0% (7)	3.6% (1)	10.7% (3)	0
Domestic violence can be excused if the offender is heavily affected by alcohol	67.9% (19)	21.4% (6)	0	10.7% (3)	0
Domestic violence can be excused if, afterwards, the violent person genuinely regrets what they have done	50.0% (14)	42.9% (12)	3.6% (1)	3.6% (1)	0
Women going through custody battles often make up or exaggerate claims of domestic violence, in order to improve their case Sexual violence	10.7% (3)	39.3% (11)	25.0% (7)	14.3% (4)	10.7% (3)

Source: Researchers own illustration

The above responses Table 3 indicate that that most forms of GBVF are rarely an isolated, one-time incident; rather, they are part of an on-going pattern of abuse. This is particularly true in scenarios of IPV and DV. Furthermore, GBVF may proliferate (or manifest in different ways) in various contexts, including in crises or emergency situations. Research from the United States (US), for example, demonstrates that periods of economic hardship and uncertainty can exacerbate IPV, including coercive control (Schneider, Harknett & McLanahan, 2016, p. 471; Lucero, Lim & Santiago, 2016, p. 395). Therefore, a holistic approach to GBVF should be undertaken to adequately respond to the phenomenon. Actions and objectives should be taken at all stages in the

journey of addressing GBVF, across all levels of government and society, and within all social, economic, and political contexts (Lucero et al., 2016, p. 395). A key part of a holistic approach is recognising that GBVF manifests across a social ecology. GBVF reveals to be a result of various factors that cut across different levels of life (i.e., individual, interpersonal, community, and societal) (Heise, 1998, p. 262; Michau, Horn, Bank, Dutt & Zimmerman, 2015, pp. 1672-1685). For example, GBVF can emerge from, and be sustained by discriminatory laws and policies (i.e., societal factors); gender norms and attitudes (i.e., community factors); familial or intimate-partner acceptance of GBVF (i.e., interpersonal factors); and harmful internalised notions of masculinity and femininity (i.e., individual factors). Accordingly, preventing and responding to GBVF requires action at each of these levels of intervention.

In Table 4, only half of the respondents disagreed that victims of GBVF offences weren't always given consistent and appropriate support through the CJS. Most of them disagreed/strongly disagreed (67.9%), that the police did not always investigate GBVF related offences effectively. Half of the respondents agreed that GBVF caused a high demand for the police and other public services, while 21.4% strongly agreed. Almost all the respondents agreed/strongly agreed (96.5%), that the police needed the capacity to cope with the changing demand and the roles and responsibilities needed to be clearer and more consistent in multi-agency working (85.7%). Also, the majority agreed/strongly agreed that there was a major need for an immediate, coordinated, and relentless focus on the whole system to tackle these offences (92.9%). There also needs to be an upwards shift in priority in how the police pursue and disrupt offenders (89.3%) and the SAPS response was adequate regarding the implementation of GBVF legislative framework at the Temba policing area (89.3%). The findings above corroborate with the study by the Commission for Gender Equality (2018 as cited in Matiwane, 2018) investigating the policing of violence against women in South Africa. The findings of Commission for Gender Equality (2018) painted a grim picture of the capacity of the police to effectively tackle DV. The responses from the respondents, could have been informed by the 2020/2021 financial year where COVID-19 ran havoc across the globe. During this period, research indicates the GBVF cases escalated both in South Africa and elsewhere. Research indicates that South Africa saw the surge of GBVF since the implementation of the national lockdown, with 87 000 GBVF complaints in the first month (Tisane, 2020). South African news reported that the SAPS statistics for the first week of lockdown, showed that more than 2 300 complaints of GBVF were recorded. An interpretation of the SAPS's data suggested a reduction in reported cases of DV (Dartnall, Gevers, Gould & Pino, 2020). However, an examination of routinely collected data from the GBVF command call centre (the GBV CCC) suggested an increase of GBV toward women in the domestic sphere.

Table 4: Assessment of police effectiveness at every stage of their response to GBVF

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Victims of GBVF offences aren't always given consistent and appropriate support through the Criminal Justice System	7.1% (2)	42.9% (12)	14.3% (4)	32.1% (9)	3.6% (1)
The police don't always investigate GBVF-related offences effectively	28.6% (8)	39.3% (11)	7.1% (2)	25.0% (7)	0
GBVF causes high demand on the police and other public services	3.6% (1)	10.7% (3)	14.3% (4)	50.0% (14)	21.4% (6)
The low prosecution rates in cases involving GBVF offences are indefensible	7.1% (2)	28.6% (8)	39.3% (11)	21.4% (6)	3.6% (1)
The police have made welcome improvements in recent years, but these aren't enough to tackle the epidemic of GBVF crime	10.7% (3)	7.1% (2)	0	32.1% (9)	50.0% (14)
The police need the capacity to cope with the changing demand	0	0	3.6% (1)	28.6% (8)	67.9% (19)
The police need the capability to cope with the changing demand	57.1% (16)	35.9% (10)	3.6% (1)	3.6% (1)	0
In multi-agency working, roles and responsibilities need to be clearer and more consistent	3.6% (1)	0	10.7% (3)	57.1% (16)	28.6% (8)
There is a major need for an immediate, coordinated, and relentless focus on the whole system to tackle these offences	0	0	7.1% (2)	39.3% (11)	53.6% (15)

There also needs to be an upwards shift in priority in how the police pursue and disrupt offenders	0	7.1% (2)	0	46.4% (13)	42.9% (12)
The SAPS complies with its mandate in addressing GBVF at the Temba policing area	0	7.1% (2)	0	35.7% (10)	57.1% (16)
The SAPS response is adequate regarding the implementation of GBVF legislative framework at the Temba policing area	0	10.7% (3)	0	39.3% (11)	50.0% (14)
The national importance of the GBVF debate does not receive adequate attention at Temba policing area	32.1% (9)	46.4% (13)	14.3% (4)	7.1% (2)	0
The operational implementation of GBVF at the Temba policing area, is not in line with the legislative framework	28.6 (8)	42.9% (12)	7.1% (2)	17.9% (5)	3.6% (1)

Source: Researchers own illustration

The responses above indicate that the respondents were of the view that a functioning CJS can play an important role in ensuring that victims of GBVF are able to access justice. In South Africa, the prevalence of GBVF is both undermining the functioning of the justice system and bringing its shortcomings, due to a lack of service delivery, into focus. South Africa, especially the Temba policing area, could use this opportunity to become more innovative in its response to GBVF. The SAPS members are often the first responders in femicide or severe assault cases, and are responsible for gathering evidence, ensuring survivors obtain medical treatment and finding them suitable accommodation. Research on DV and GBV shows that some police stations do not adequately respond to victims. They still lack dedicated and trained personnel to attend to such matters and to give victims legally correct information and other support (Aphane & Mofokeng, 2018, pp. 189-204). Yesufu (2022:98), asserts that government must protect women from violence, hold perpetrators accountable, and provide justice and remedies to victims. Eliminating violence against women remains one of the serious challenges of our time. Violence against women is a global, systemic social phenomenon we cannot ignore any further (Yesufu, 2022:98). Hence, a researcher clarifies that the GBVF indeed needs to receive tolerable attention by national governments, regional bodies, and international organisations, to curb its pervasiveness. Violence against women prevents them from making valuable contributions to society. It restricts their potential as they live in constant fear and anxiety as they do not know when they are going to be verbally or physically attacked by men at home, at work, and in communities (Yesufu, 2022:98). Women are subjected to living in poverty and dependency, created and sustained for years through male dominance in all spheres of society. All these discriminatory practices and oppression against women must stop now.

▪ **Objective 1: To determine the capacity of the SAPS to respond to reported cases of GBVF at the Temba policing area**

According to the community members, the Temba SAPS patrol weekly in the community (52%), Temba SAPS promptly respond to the GBVF cases (64%), Temba SAPS attentively listen to its community (62%), and Police now respond more quickly to domestic violence calls than they did in the past (67%). However, according to Temba SAPS, GBVF causes higher demands on the police and other public services (71.4%), therefore, the police need the capacity to cope with the changing demand (96.5%). Based on the responses from the SAPS, DV and GBVF related police calls have been found to constitute the single largest category of calls received by the local police, accounting for seventy one percent (71.4%), therefore, the police need the capacity to cope with the changing demand (96.5%). The implications for the SAPS are that given the large numbers adversely affected by GBV, and those victims, especially women and prime countermeasure of leaving their abusers, may not stop the abuse. The SAPS must commit equal time, resources and attention to both the challenges brought by the DV and GBV, as they do to confront any other major crime. For this reason, Temba CSC, including any other local CSC, should have a GBV Policy that specifies, at a minimum, that written reports be completed on all DV and GBV calls and, if no arrest is made, the reports should fully explain the circumstances why not. Early literature (Dobash & Dobash, 1980; 2004 & 2015), has described the police responses to DV as insufficient and inconsistent. Edwards (1986), study into two London Boroughs, concluded that many officers did not comprehend the crime's dynamics and seriousness. As a result, domestic-related calls were commonly viewed as a non-criminal incident and referred to as a waste of police time.

Edwards' (1986) study found that, despite physical violence being present on many occasions, the police saw the incidents as disputes, rather than as assaults and therefore, arrest and investigations were exceedingly rare. More recent investigations (Aphane & Mofokeng, pp. 2018:189-204; Strickland & Allen, 2018, p. np) demonstrate that much has changed since the 1980s in terms of investment, attitudes, responses, legislation and support for victims. An example of improvement is establishing the specialist domestic abuse officers and units, which are 'experts'

on domestic abuse dynamics in high-risk cases. Likewise, domestic-related emergency calls have significantly improved according to the national standards (right categorisation and prioritisation), ensuring that first response officers are immediately at the scene for medium and high-risk calls (Gover, Paul & Dodge, 2011, pp. 619-636). As with any crime, not all incidents of IPV, DV or GBV are reported to the local CSC, not all incidents reported to the SAPS are forwarded to prosecutors, and even fewer are prosecuted. In multi-agency working, roles and responsibilities need to be clearer and more consistent (85.7%). There is a major need for an immediate, coordinated, and relentless focus on the whole system to tackle these offences (92.9%), and there also needs to be an upwards shift in priority in how the police pursue and disrupt offenders (89.3%).

- **Objective 2: To examine cases of GBVF within the international as well as at the regional context by showing its various forms, magnitude as well as measures other countries have taken to end domestic violence.**

This objective was realised through the literature review that highlighted the fact that some scholars, academics and policy makers maintain that, in contemporary society, the position and view of DV and GBVF against women has improved considerably in terms of fundamental rights and legal protection (Stark, 2012, p. 199). However, if these legal protections rely on interpretation, there is a possibility they are interpreted through a masculinity filter. Klockars (1985, p. 142), claimed that the exercise of personal views and beliefs contrasted the notion of 'the full enforcement of the law'. Nevertheless, legislation is sufficiently broad to require practitioners' interpretation, including the definition of DV, IPV and GBVF, and it may allow officers to reflect underlying attitudes, views and beliefs (Reiner, 2010). It is essential to highlight that these negative views regarding officers' use of discretion, stand in contrast to how discretion is regarded and valued in other professional fields, including general practitioners (GPs), where judgment is rarely doubtful or mistrusted (Stark, 2012, p. 204). In 2016, the British government introduced the 'Ending Violence against Women and Girls strategy (2016/20), which acknowledged that violence against women is an intergenerational and disproportionately gendered crime. This strategy launched new training for the police to focus on, making changes in the culture of policing domestic abuse. For instance, workshops facilitated specific support to officers, including a more positive approach that shows compassion and understanding towards victims (HM Government, 2018, 2016). However, the trainings' effectiveness relies on the officer's willingness to take on board the training beyond their personal views and the views of their colleagues (cop culture), along with the understanding of their role in addressing it (Dempsey, 2002, p. 96).

- **Objective 3: To identify to what extent the SAPS complies with its mandate in addressing GBVF at the Temba policing area**

It is encouraging to observe that, the majority of the respondents (64%), were of the view that, Temba SAPS promptly respond to the GBVF cases, 52% reported that the Temba SAPS patrolled weekly in the community. Temba SAPS attentively listen to its community according to 62% of the respondents. The SAPS complies with its mandate in addressing GBVF at the Temba policing area. Research indicates that in theory, before investigating crimes, officers must ensure the victim's initial safety, as arresting a suspect relies on the evidence available; however, the judgment rests with the officer (Reiner, 2010). Buzawa and Buzawa (2017, 1996) concur that domestic abuse disputes are often judged within the traditional 'cop culture' as a waste of police time. They argue that some officers construct their attitudes upon a set of organisational cultural norms and beliefs that might influence their views of the crime's seriousness and whether they record incidents.

- **Objective 4: To evaluate response of the SAPS regarding the implementation of GBVF legislative framework at the Temba policing area**

According to 64% of the community members, the SAPS response is adequate regarding the implementation of GBVF legislative framework at the Temba policing area. However, research on DV and GBV in South Africa shows that some police stations do not adequately respond to victims. They still lack dedicated and trained personnel to attend to such matters and to give victims legally correct information and other support (Aphane & Mofokeng, 2018, pp. 189-204).

- **H₀2: The operational implementation of GBVF at the Temba policing area, is not in line with the legislative framework**

According to 64% of the community members, the SAPS response was adequate regarding the implementation of GBVF legislative framework at the Temba policing area. The responses of the community members did not differ by gender, age, years of service in the SAPS and candidate portrayal. Based on the responses, this hypothesis is not proven or accepted. Thus, the SAPS responses deemed to be adequate. Therefore, this null hypothesis not accepted based on the research findings. The below Tables 5.1a-d provided with the Chi-Square regarding the SAPS response to GBVF.

Table 5.1a: Chi-Square of SAPS response and Gender

			Gender		Total	P-value	
						0.419	
			Female	Male			
The SAPS response is adequate regarding the implementation of GBVF legislative framework at the Temba policing area	Strongly disagree	Count	0	3	3		
		% within Gender	0.0%	5.6%	3.0%		
	Disagree	Count	7	5	12		
		% within Gender	15.2%	9.3%	12.0%		
	Neutral	Count	11	10	21		
		% within Gender	23.9%	18.5%	21.0%		
	Agree	Count	19	26	45		
		% within Gender	41.3%	48.1%	45.0%		
	Strongly agree	Count	9	10	19		
		% within Gender	19.6%	18.5%	19.0%		
	Total		Count	46	54	100	
			% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Chi-Square Tests							

Source: Researchers own illustration

Table 5.1b: Chi-Square of SAPS response and Age

			Age:				P-value	
							0.172	
			21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60		
The SAPS response is adequate regarding the implementation of GBVF legislative framework at the Temba policing area	Strongly disagree	Count	3	0	0	0		
		% within Age:	7.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%		
	Disagree	Count	6	2	4	0		
		% within Age:	14.3%	6.7%	17.4%	0.0%		
	Neutral	Count	7	11	1	2		
		% within Age:	16.7%	36.7%	4.3%	40.0%		
	Agree	Count	20	12	11	2		
		% within Age:	47.6%	40.0%	47.8%	40.0%		
	Strongly agree	Count	6	5	7	1		
		% within Age:	14.3%	16.7%	30.4%	20.0%		
	Total		Count	42	30	23	5	
			% within Age:	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Chi-Square Tests				
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Source: Researchers own illustration

Table 5.1c: Chi-Square of SAPS response and Years of service in the SAPS

			Years of Service in the SAPS					p-value	
								0.751	
			1-10 Years	11-20 Years	21-30 Years	21-30 Years	Above 31 Years		
The SAPS response is adequate regarding the implementation of GBVF legislative framework at the Temba policing area	Strongly disagree	Count	2	1	0	0	0		
		% within Years of Service in the SAPS	7.7%	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%		
	Disagree	Count	1	5	0	4	2		
		% within Years of Service in the SAPS	3.8%	15.2%	0.0%	17.4%	11.8%		
	Neutral	Count	6	6	1	5	3		
		% within Years of Service in the SAPS	23.1%	18.2%	100.0%	21.7%	17.6%		
	Agree	Count	12	17	0	8	8		
		% within Years of Service in the SAPS	46.2%	51.5%	0.0%	34.8%	47.1%		
	Strongly agree	Count	5	4	0	6	4		
		% within Years of Service in the SAPS	19.2%	12.1%	0.0%	26.1%	23.5%		
	Total		Count	26	33	1	23	17	
			% within Years of Service in the SAPS	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Chi-Square Tests									

Source: Researchers own illustration

Table 5.1d: Chi-Square of SAPS response and candidate portrayal

			Candidate portrayal		P-value
					0.269
			Community Policing Forum	Member of the community	
	Strongly disagree	Count	0	3	

The SAPS response is adequate regarding the implementation of GBVF legislative framework at the Temba policing area		% within Candidate portrayal	0.0%	3.7%	
	Disagree	Count	5	7	
		% within Candidate portrayal	26.3%	8.6%	
	Neutral	Count	3	18	
		% within Candidate portrayal	15.8%	22.2%	
	Agree	Count	8	37	
		% within Candidate portrayal	42.1%	45.7%	
	Strongly agree	Count	3	16	
		% within Candidate portrayal	15.8%	19.8%	
	Total		Count	19	81
% within Candidate portrayal			100.0%	100.0%	
Chi-Square Tests					

Source: Researchers own illustration

H₀₃: The SAPS does not have adequate capacity to deal with GBVF incidents at the Temba policing area. According to more than half (56%) of the respondents, SAPS do not have enough resources to serve the GBVF community efficiently. However, there was no difference in this response regarding gender, age, and years of service and candidate portrayal. This hypothesis has been proven to be true based on the responses.

Table 5.2a: Chi-Square of having enough resources and gender

		Gender		P-value	
		Female	Male		
				0.273	
SAPS do not have enough resources to serve GBVF community efficiently	Strongly disagree	Count	5	7	
		% within Gender	11.1%	13.0%	
	Disagree	Count	10	12	
		% within Gender	22.2%	22.2%	
	Neutral	Count	4	5	
		% within Gender	8.9%	9.3%	
	Agree	Count	19	13	
		% within Gender	42.2%	24.1%	

	Strongly agree	Count	7	17	
		% within Gender	15.6%	31.5%	
Total		Count	45	54	
		% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	
Chi-Square Tests					

Source: Researchers own illustration

Table 5.2b: Chi-Square of having enough resources and Age

		Age:				P-value	
		21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	0.310	
SAPS do not have enough resources to serve GBVF community efficiently	Strongly disagree	Count	5	2	5	0	
		% within Age:	11.9%	6.9%	21.7%	0.0%	
	Disagree	Count	13	5	4	0	
		% within Age:	31.0%	17.2%	17.4%	0.0%	
	Neutral	Count	4	4	1	0	
		% within Age:	9.5%	13.8%	4.3%	0.0%	
	Agree	Count	11	13	6	2	
		% within Age:	26.2%	44.8%	26.1%	40.0%	
Strongly agree	Count	9	5	7	3		
	% within Age:	21.4%	17.2%	30.4%	60.0%		
Total		Count	42	29	23	5	
		% within Age:	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Chi-Square Tests							

Source: Researchers own illustration

Table 5.2c: Chi-Square of having enough resources and Years of service in the SAPS

		Years of Service in the SAPS					P-value	
		1-10 Years	11-20 Years	21-30 years	21-30 Years	Above 31 years	0.380	
SAPS do not have enough resources to serve GBVF community efficiently	Strongly disagree	Count	4	2	0	2	4	
		% within Years of Service in the SAPS	15.4%	6.1%	0.0%	9.1%	23.5%	
	Disagree	Count	6	10	1	4	1	
		% within Years of Service in the SAPS	23.1%	30.3%	100.0%	18.2%	5.9%	

	Neutral	Count	1	5	0	2	1	
		% within Years of Service in the SAPS	3.8%	15.2%	0.0%	9.1%	5.9%	
	Agree	Count	8	12	0	8	4	
		% within Years of Service in the SAPS	30.8%	36.4%	0.0%	36.4%	23.5%	
	Strongly agree	Count	7	4	0	6	7	
		% within Years of Service in the SAPS	26.9%	12.1%	0.0%	27.3%	41.2%	
Total	Count	26	33	1	22	17		
	% within Years of Service in the SAPS	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		
Chi-Square Tests								

Source: Researchers own illustration

Table 5.2d: Chi-Square of having enough resources and candidate portrayal

			Candidate portrayal		Total	P-value
			Community Policing Forum	Member of the community		0.347
SAPS do not have enough resources to serve GBVF community efficiently	Strongly disagree	Count	2	10	12	
		% within Candidate portrayal	10.5%	12.5%	12.1%	
	Disagree	Count	4	18	22	
		% within Candidate portrayal	21.1%	22.5%	22.2%	
	Neutral	Count	1	8	9	
		% within Candidate portrayal	5.3%	10.0%	9.1%	
	Agree	Count	4	28	32	
		% within Candidate portrayal	21.1%	35.0%	32.3%	
	Strongly agree	Count	8	16	24	
		% within Candidate portrayal	42.1%	20.0%	24.2%	

Total	Count	19	80	99	
	% within Candidate portrayal	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Chi-Square Tests					

Source: Researchers own illustration

Conclusion

The findings of this study highlighted that the respondents, namely, the community members strongly agreed to most of the statements. Regarding the first objective (*to determine the capacity of the SAPS to respond to reported cases of GBVF at the Temba policing area*), the findings highlighted that the SAPS members need the capacity to cope with the changing demand because GBVF causes high demand on the police and other public services. There is a need for an immediate, coordinated, and relentless focus on the whole system to tackle the prevalence of GBVF. There is also a need for prioritisation of GBVF by the SAPS as well other relevant stakeholders. The SAPS alone cannot adequately respond to the challenges brought by GBVF. Despite that the responses by the community and the CPF members were encouraging, there was clear indication from the findings that the Temba SAPS had challenges with resources. It was encouraging to observe that the Temba SAPS patrol weekly in the community and, they promptly responded to the GBVF cases. The findings indicated that the SAPS members at the Temba CSC attentively listen, and address community needs especially related to GBVF. This could mean that the SAPS members respond more quickly to GBVF calls than they did in the past. With the second objective (*to examine cases of GBVF within the international as well as at the regional context, by showing its various forms, magnitudes as well as measures other countries have taken to end domestic violence*), the findings from literature review confirmed that gender-blind government policies may increase vulnerability to GBVF as social networks and systems breakdown and survivors are trapped inside homes with their perpetrator (John, Bukuluki, Casey, Chauhan, Jagun, Mabhena, Mwangi & McGovern, 2023, p. 2). It further indicates that governments often de-prioritise GBVF services and programmes (John, *et al.*, 2023:2). For the third objective (*to identify to what extent the SAPS complies with its mandate in addressing GBVF at the Temba policing area*), the findings confirmed that Temba SAPS promptly respond to the GBVF cases, they patrol weekly in the community, they attentively listen to the community, and they comply with their mandate in addressing GBVF at the Temba policing area. Regarding the fourth objective (*to evaluate response of the SAPS regarding the implementation of GBVF legislative framework at the Temba policing area*), the SAPS response the responses indicated that the actions of the SAPS were adequate regarding the implementation of GBVF legislative framework at the Temba policing area.

The findings in this study suggested that there had been considerable improvement in Temba CSC in terms of training, attitudes, responses, legislation and support for victims. However, challenges surrounding policing of GBVF continue to persist. While there are vast ranges of training and guidelines, the effectiveness of these approaches relies on the officer's willingness to take the training beyond their personal views and cultural settings. These developments are provided with a glimmer of hope however, considering the high prevalence of GBVF in South Africa, there is still a long way to go for the SAPS nationally and provisionally, to eradicate, or at least decrease, gender-based crimes until all the communities can shift attitudes and social norms regarding the treatment of women and children in general. Considering that males are over-represented in the SAPS, a central area of concern is that early and contemporary literature, continuously emphasise that some police officers' views and attitudes do not vary in terms of sexism and gender stereotypes from other males in patriarchal environments. The SAPS members as well, play a pivotal role in the fight against GBVF; therefore, they should also have the right attitudes and skills to deal with this gendered crime. A central finding of this research was that, when evaluating the views of both the community, CPF as well as the SAPS members, it became noticeable that there was agreement that the SAPS members attempted to respond adequately to the cases of GBVF. Thus, though the SAPS highlighted that it is still a waste of time to attend to some of the cases, respondents were of the view that the SAPS response was adequate. The findings by Retief and Green (2015), highlighted that it is evident that there is tacit agreement amongst police officers that historically, female officers take the lead when attending to DV complaints. This means that female police officers are becoming more skilled at treating DV and GBVF victims with the necessary dignity and respect, while male participants stay inept and tend to have less practical experience in dealing with domestic violence. Male police officers generally tend to take charge of the so called "hard-core crimes", whilst their female counterparts mostly handle "social crimes", which mainly involves vulnerable victims, who are perceived to be more "emotional" and "softer" in nature (Retief & Green, 2015, pp. 137-139).

In conclusion, initiatives must be designed appropriately to target societal gender stereotypes and sexist views, as they are not exclusive to some police officers. Therefore, there is a need for more investment in public education related to awareness of gender-based crimes to shift the public and police officers' attitudes that could further

victimise GBV survivors. There are indications that the COVID-19 pandemic did not cause GBVF, it only exposed the long-standing and hidden domestic abuse crisis. Although COVID-19 recovery plans could be an excellent opportunity to reshape public opinions concerning GBVF, as in the lockdown period, there has been a remarkable increase in reports and headlines in mass media outlets, illustrating that GBVF is a significant social problem worldwide. South Africa reports a high femicide rate, which is five times the global average (Mathews, Jewkes, & Abrahams, 2014, p. 107). Police records (Brodie, 2020, p. 196), show that nearly 3 000 women were killed in South Africa in 2017/2018, an increase of 11% from the previous year. Sexual assault also increased by 8.2% from 6 271 to 6 786. A 2013 study conducted by Gender Links (2011:np) in four provinces, reported that a large proportion of men (Gauteng 78%; Limpopo 48%; Western Cape 35% and Kwa-Zulu Natal 41%), admitted to committing some form of violence against women in their lifetime (Mpani & Nsiband, 2015, p. 5). In the domestic sphere, perceptions that a woman has transgressed gendered sex-role expectations, may cause tensions and arguments that turn violent (Brear & Bessarab, 2012, p. 31-43; Gibbs, Dunkle, Ramsoomar, Willan, Jama Shai, Chatterji, Naved & Jewkes, 2020, p. 323). Service centre data, including police statistics, are a gross underestimation of violations against women, because many of these experiences are not reported (Brodie, 2020, p. 196). Consequently, post-pandemic emergency plans and policies must uphold international human rights standards, along with considering gender disparities when allocating resources. It is important to emphasise that any attempts to improve gender views and gender disparities must address underlying social structures and norms.

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