RESEARCH ARTICLE:

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in South Africa: An Interdisciplinary Discourse of One Selected isiZulu and One Selected isiXhosa Literary Text

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Abstract

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in South Africa is a post-colonial social ill. Women and young girls suffer double oppression in the country. First, they are oppressed for being women and young girls; and second, they are oppressed for being women and young girls of the lower class. This article aims to utilise one selected isiZulu and isiXhosa drama, respectively, to effectuate a meticulous examination of how and why GBV is a recurring pattern. The ultimate aim is to underline the unprejudiced reality that South African literature (isiZulu and isiXhosa, for example) engages contemporary social ills such as GBV, subordination of women and young girls, gender discrepancies, and neolithic stereotypes. African feminist technique is utilised as a conceptual framework to advance the said aims of the article. In the process, the qualitative research methodology is employed to describe and explain the nature of the data source. The discussions and findings demonstrate that although women and gender discourses research has been undertaken extensively, the fact that women and young girls continue to be tormented is enough to prove that there is a conundrum in South Africa and possibly, elsewhere.

Keywords: *African feminism; Gender-Based Violence (GBV); isiZulu and isiXhosa modern literature; inequality; South African context*

Introduction

The continued intensification of GBV in South Africa is a crisis that can be comparable to COVID-19 and Eskom's energy crisis or power cuts. The phenomenon of GBV affects women and men, young girls and boys; however, in this article, the concentration is on women and young girls due to the continuing increase of GBV towards them. Another compelling reason to focus on women and young girls is that women and girls in South Africa, and many parts of the African continent have been subjugated and their roles subordinated (Roy *et al.,* 2022). The problem concerning GBV and the violation of women's rights (including young girls) is a global phenomenon given that many parts of the world have their agonising histories such as a culture that devalues the sociological role of women as well as the presumption that society can better be controlled and managed by men (Alesina *et al.,* 2021). For instance, a considerable amount of existing literature in South Africa underlines that a woman's voice has culturally and historically been overlooked and silenced while the man's voice has been embraced (Cekiso, 2013; Fiske 2017; Shao *et al.,* 2023).

As a result of that and appreciating the constitutional democracy in South Africa, GBV is a transgression of human rights, and a psychological and social conundrum affecting one out of every three women (Zinyemba and Hlongwana, 2022). This problem has complicated almost every aspect of human life. For example, the brutal killing of mothers, as a direct result of GBV, leaves young children with no experience of motherhood while on the other hand, the brutal murder of young girls compromises the constitution and democracy of the country by undermining the principles of justice, human rights, and the rule of law that are fundamental to a democratic society. At the time of writing this article, it has been observed that every one of us has experienced GBV, directly or indirectly. For instance, everyone may be aware of an individual that has experienced GBV – physical, emotional, financial, psychological and so forth. In other instances, print and electronic media have reported several incidents of GBV.

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This is enough to underline that GBV is a social and integral problem that ought to be addressed not only at a theoretical level, but also, at a practical level (recommendations in this regard will be presented towards the end).

With a brief introduction and background to the context above, the principal aim of this article is to unravel how and why GBV is a problematic phenomenon in South Africa. In other words, it is to examine the recurring incidents of GBV in the two selected South African literary texts. Undertaking this scholarly discourse is an attempt to illuminate that South African literature, and in particular, isiZulu and isiXhosa literature, can be used to address some of the social problems such as GBV, and in so doing, enhancing and accelerating social cohesion and consciousness. One would recall that South African literature has historically been deserted from addressing social problems such as politics (it was only confined to apolitical discourses) to such an extent that materials that attempted to speak against South African social ills such as colonialism and apartheid, women and gender matters were often rejected (Diko, 2020; Diko, 2022b; Ennin, 2022; Ordu and Odukwu, 2023). Concerning this, African feminism as a conceptual framework alongside qualitative research methodology is employed to operate in a symbiotic relationship. The reader should also bear in mind that debates in this article will go beyond the limitations of the selected literary texts since the issue of GBV is greater than literary texts. This denotes that practical and social examples will be elicited to support the scholarly arguments herein. The South African literary works that will be used to advance the discussions are *Ubomi, Ungancama!* (life will humble you) (2020) written by Sipho Kekezwa and *Kudela Owaziyo* (it is about whom you know) (2009) by Patrick Bhekizenzo Maphumulo. This article asks the following research questions that it endeavors to address:

i. How is GBV depicted in the two selected literary texts, and why?
ii. Why has it remained contemporary and relevant for South African and global scholars to problematise and address issues concerning women and young girls?
iii. To what extent can the African feminist technique, as a conceptual framework, answer and debate matters adversely affecting women and young girls?

With the research questions in mind, the article has the following objectives:

i. To examine and unravel GBV issues as pertinent subjects in the two selected South African literary texts.
ii. To demonstrate that isiZulu and isiXhosa modern literature can systemically be employed to contest, challenge and critique social issues such as GBV, among many more.
iii. And finally, to provide some of the possible recommendations that can be considered to decipher the problematised issues herein.

The following section is solitarily concerned with the review of relevant existing literature in an attempt to acknowledge the strides and achievements that have been made by other scholars in respect of GBV among women and young girls.

Literature Review

This section is dualistic. This denotes that the first component deals with the conceptualisation of the phenomenon of interest; that is, GBV. The second and last component deals with the existing literature that has debated the issue of GBV in South Africa and in a global village. In the last paragraph of this particular section, an identified or located gap will be demoed explicitly.

Dlamini (2021) defines GBV as violence that is directed at an individual based on their sex or gender. This form of violence can be physical, emotional, mental, and sexual among many other determinants. Dlamini (2021: 585) further proclaims that GBV can originate from the family, community, and the state together with its institutions. For instance, there are communities in South Africa that have accepted GBV in the sense that perpetrators are not legally held accountable despite being aware that one or more women are abused. This then validates why the Minister of Police (Bheki Cele) – at the time of writing this article – publicly confirmed that many communities in South Africa have normalised GBV so much that there are more unreported cases of GBV than reported ones (Gould, 2020). Onyejekwe (2004: 34) makes a significant insight in that GBV is a contributing factor to the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome **(**AIDS) pandemic owing to the fact that rape and domestic sexual abuse have a greater potential of infecting GBV victims with these infectious diseases and many others. This may well be the case considering the declaration on the elimination of violence against women adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 1993. The UNGA defined GBV as any act

of "gender-based violence" 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 deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life (Holt and Birchall, 2023). In addition to this, GBV can accelerate health-related problems since victimisation of either women or men can compromise the overall state of one's physical, emotional and psychological health (Shukla *et al*., 2023). In essence, there is an intercorrelation between GBV and health. In simple language, women and young girls that are raped have a greater probability of contracting infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

Bearing in mind what GBV underpins and how problematic it is in the quest for social cohesion, the significance of this scholarly discourse rests on the fact that South Africa is statistically proven to have the highest rates of GBV in the world and this includes rape and domestic violence (Onyejekwe, 2004; Meyiwa *et al.,* 2017; Zinyemba and Hlongwana, 2022). The trauma that GBV, and especially women and young girls, victims suffer could cost them a lifetime. For example, they could be negatively affected psychologically and emotionally, and this could change their perceptions of men. Oparinde and Matsha (2021) accentuate that GBV can have far-reaching consequences in addition to the certainty that it is a social ill that continues to, directly and indirectly, traumatise society. For instance, in 2020, South Africa was and is still traumatised by the brutal killing of Tshegofatso Pule by her boyfriend named Ntuthuko Shoba. She was eight months pregnant when she was found hanging from a tree with her unborn baby. Uyinene Mrwetyana was twenty-one years old when she was brutally murdered after being raped by a South African Post Office (SAPO) employee named Luyanda Botha inside the premises of the post office. These two brutal killings, among many unrecounted ones, demonstrate that South Africa is in a crisis concerning the protection of women and young girls as well as the general public.

As a result of GBV, rape survivors often face a myriad of emotional, physical, legal, and medical issues, resulting in significant repercussions (Bhuptani and Messman, 2022). For example, the aftermath of rape, be it marital or otherwise, is compounded by the risk of HIV transmission and many other Sexualy Transmitted Infections (STIs). Many women are helpless and feel a prolonged fear for their safety. What is also interesting to observe is that in South Africa, due to cultural belief systems, rape survivors often do not report GBV cases, especially the ones that emerge within the family. In many indigenous communities, when a woman reports to the family regarding rape or rape attempts from her husband, they are often advised to "negotiate" and resolve issues privately because it cannot be afforded to bring the family's name into "shame and humiliation" (Meyiwa *et al.,* 2017). In other instances, the question of "how can your own husband rape you?" often emerges. This further transcends to the South African Police Services (SAPS) in which GBV survivors are often turned down with suggestions that they must go and negotiate with their partners (Nduna and Tshona, 2021). This is in addition to the reality that some GBV survivors choose to be silent because of the fear of being judged and vilified by society. Thus, it is apparent that even society needs to change its perceptions in respect of GBV survivors and begin to understand that women and young girls do not invite this criminal act. In my position, I argue that all that is required, among other avenues, is to support GBV survivors psycho-socially and in terms of legal processes. Melga *et al.* (2021) concur that the preponderance of GBV victims and their families usually do not report the matter to the police for fear of degradation and humiliation. What remains even more problematic is the fact that certain survivors of GBV do attempt and negotiate with their partners, but there is often no assurance that their safety is guaranteed. In most cases, women are killed during the course of negotiations (Nduna and Tshona, 2021).

In addition to the problems that have been discussed earlier, GBV in South Africa is advanced by economic and financial factors (Melga *et al.,* 2021). Many GBV victims do not have the financial and legal resources to challenge and hold the transgressors accountable. For example, the South African police are not consistently effective in assisting such victims (Melga *et al.,* 2021). Problems of the Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) backlog are some of the issues that characterise the ineffectiveness of the systems within the South African police department (Kempen, 2021). In supporting the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) in South Africa, there is a need to provide DNA evidence that can link the perpetrator and the victim of GBV – women and young girls – through forensic investigations. Another important aspect to observe is the report that South Africa has been marked as the "rape capital" of the world concerning GBV (Boonzaier, 2023).

There is existing literature that has been conducted by different scholars. Despite that, there is a continued increase in GBV occurrences, especially in South Africa – this already proves that there is an existing gap that needs to be addressed. Vibetti (2010) argues that GBV in South Africa dates back to the time when Black women were enslaved. Vibetti (2010) in re-emphasising what Gqola (2004) stated argues that the South African setting was

legally normalised to serve the interests of the White population, the wealthy and Black men. This suggests that South African history was centered around the most powerful as well as men while women were subordinated. This denotes that power dynamics peripheral to GBV in South Africa are pertinent subjects too. Vogelman and Eagle (1991: 220) are unambiguous about this matter underlining the legal definitions of rape and related court procedures, the lack of recourse to effective legislative controls in cases of battery, the legitimisation of rape in marriage, the lack of protection of children in court cases, and the fact that sexual harassment is not subject to designated legislation in South Africa. All these serve as specific illustrations of structural impediments to legal control and deterrence of women abuse. The preconception of such legislation is one of the factors that lead to a low level of conviction in cases of violence against women and young girls and allows offenders to continue without fear of retribution (Olson *et al.,* 2022).

It becomes coherent that in South Africa, GBV was and is located in precise structures that give men a socially recognised power over women and young girls. This power is manifested in cultural, political, and institutional factors which support and/or tolerate violent behavior. This is indicative of the reality that the transformative feminist model is required to develop strategies to end violence against women by altering the structures which support it. This should not be the only option to mitigate and culminate GBV, but isiZulu and isiXhosa modern literature and scholars should be at the forefront to tackle this conundrum. In problematising GBV, Olson *et al.* (2022) debate how this phenomenon intersects with HIV/AIDS in ways too catastrophic to be ignored. Dwindling life expectancy in South Africa is pinned on GBV. Young girls between the age of fourteen and twenty-five, according to Olson *et al.* (2022) are at high risk of contracting HIV compared to any age group. Onyenjekwe (2004) debates that, while South Africa views GBV as a criminal offense, victims of this act are often botched by the legal system in the country in addition to the familiar fact that access to justice is often difficult, especially for victims of the lower class (Malik, 2022). The debates continue to indicate that in such a situation, most women in abusive relationships do not have the financial means to leave home, and at the same time, may be unable to negotiate safer sex or condom use out of fear of their partner's reactions (Malik, 2022; Peacock, 2022). This denotes that men who rape, batter and otherwise molest women and young girls are rarely punished by the legal and justice system (Peacock, 2022).

While Onyenjekwe (2004) discusses the relationship between GBV and HIV/AIDS, Dlamini (2021) focuses on GBV and the COVID-19 era. Here, Dlamini (2021) argues that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated pre-existing toxic social norms and gender inequality. It is mentioned by Dlamini (2021) that at the time when half of the world population was in lockdown due to COVID-19, the number of women and girls between the ages of fifteen and forty-nine who had been subjected to sexual and/or physical violence perpetrated by an intimate partner was no less than two-hundred and forty-three million. In supporting the arguments, the research reports that many countries from developing and developed economies reported an escalation of GBV during the lockdown. For instance, France reported an increase of 30% in domestic violence cases since the lockdown in March 2020; Cyprus and Singapore reported an increase in helpline calls by 30% and 33%, respectively; in Argentina, emergency calls for domestic violence cases increased by 25% since the beginning of the lockdown; in Canada, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA), government authorities, women's rights activists and civil society partners have indicated increasing reports of domestic violence during the crisis, and/or increased demand for emergency shelter (Nabukeera, 2020; Lokot *et al.,* 2021; Roy *et al.,* 2022). Therefore, it stands to reason that during the period of COVID-19, there has been a surge in GBV cases (both reported and unreported cases).

Zain (2012) forms part of the existing literature in flagging that GBV affects both men and women. However, Zain's (2012: 134) debates are concentrated on young girls and women at higher education institutions in South Africa. The discussions highlight that women in higher education settings are directly or indirectly affected by GBV. Using higher education institutions as a case study, the study denotes that many young girls entering the system of higher education, and especially those of the middle-to-lower class are predominantly victims of all kinds of GBV. As a result, Graaff and Heinecken (2017) contend with Zain (2012) that GBV within South African higher institutions is an international problem that should be recognised and investigated in an attempt to find reasonable solutions. Mutinta (2022) proposes that if consciousness is satisfactorily and decently made, the chances of this pandemic (in 2021, the South African president, at the time, declared GBV as a country's pandemic) occurring in the near future are low. This suggests that being versed in GBV could lead victims such as women and young girls in taking necessary steps to avoid the problem. For example, when a woman observes abusive traits from her partner, they can begin to address them accordingly or avoid the situation altogether.

Based on the reviewed literature, it is comprehensible that South African literature, in particular, isiZulu and isiXhosa modern literature has not been extensively examined in respect of this conundrum especially in modern-day society and in the COVID-19 era. Therefore, this article should be appreciated and accepted as one that underlines the necessity to infuse themes or subjects that are interconnected to GBV as a manifestation that this is a problem that should form part of society's continued discourses. Similarly, it is necessary to point out that isiZulu and isiXhosa modern literature are epistemologically multidimensional in nature in that two research approaches can be applied (qualitative research methodology and African feminist framework). The deficit of comprehensive research concerning GBV in South African literature is an exemplification of colonial privileges that were accorded to men as well as the legacy of post-colonial agents – a legacy that often did not embrace and honour women. The following section, therefore, deals with the research methodology and conceptual framework that has been employed in this article. The reader must be reminded that the two approaches to research operate in a synergetic relationship for the very reason that seeks to form a balancing act.

Research Methodology and Conceptual Framework

Qualitative research methodology is used herein given that two selected literary texts will serve as a source of data. Qualitative research methodology concentrates on words, and thus describes and explains the phenomenon of interest (Diko, 2022b). Qualitative research methodology has been extensively explained elsewhere (Mohajan, 2018; Diko, 2020; Braun *et al.,* 2021; Majumdar, 2022), but two crucial features deserve particular attention hereunder. First, qualitative research methodology recognises South African literature (modern and oral) as a source of data that can be used to solicit original or novelty views for different contexts. Second and last, the selected literary texts are viewed and embraced as primary sources of data. This suggests that *Ubomi, Ungancama!* and *Kudela Owaziyo* are the primary sources of data. Qualitative research methodology further highlights that the chosen literary texts must cohere to the following:

i. Continuous reading of the texts so that a recurring pattern may emerge for scholarly examination. The recurring pattern of interest is GBV in this article.
ii. The process of note-taking must ensue in order to underline the pertinent subjects that relate to the phenomenon of GBV.
iii. The identified patterns must be integrated in order to form one or more themes. In this article, identified patterns have been located to form one theme, which is, GBV.

The use of qualitative research methodology is informed and inspired by the fact that it compels the researcher to scrutinise and ask questions such as "how" things occur, and "why" they occur the way they do. In other words, qualitative research methodology can be pinned on argumentation and conceptualisation (Truman, 2023). Other scholars of African literature and research who support the use of qualitative research methodology include Ngozwana (2018), Diko (2022b) and Ejie *et al.* (2021).

As far as qualitative research methodology is involved, the African feminist approach as a theoretical framework is used. The reason to employ it alongside qualitative research methodology is to form a process of juxtaposing and triangulation. This indicates that, a process of eliciting much more rational insights regarding the two literary texts and in reference to the aims of this article. African feminism is defined and understood as a category of feminism innovated by African women that specifically addresses the conditions and needs of continental African women (African women who reside on the African continent) (Potasse and Yaya, 2021). The "feminism" in "African feminism" refers to the advocacy of women's rights based on the equality of the sexes (Maingi-Ngwu, 2022). African feminism includes several determinants of its own, including motherism, femalism, snail-sense feminism, womanism/women palavering, nego-feminism, and African womanism (Kamlongera and Katenga-Kaunda, 2023). All these determinants are centered on the notion that seeks to argue and address women's issues inclusive of those that affect the girl child. African feminism is a feminist epistemology and a form of rhetoric that has provided arguments, which validate the experience of women of Africa and of African origin against a mainstream feminist discourse (Goredema, 2010: 35). It is a justice that aims to create a discernible difference between women who were colonised and those who have been deemed the colonisers; and a social movement that aims to raise a global consciousness that sympathises with African women's histories, present realities and future prospects (Goredema, 2010; Okech, 2020). African feminism concerns itself not solitarily with the rights of women from Africa but is also inclusive of those living in the diaspora as many of the contributors to the literature have often lived

abroad. Therefore, let us commission our inquiring minds not to be limited and confined by a geographical location as the name "African" in "African feminism" would insinuate (Goderema, 2010; Maingi-Ngwu, 2022).

What does all this denote for this scholarly discourse? It means that the use of qualitative research methodology and the African feminism as a theoretical framework are important in educational research as they address the "how" and "why" research questions and enable a deeper understanding of experiences (both direct and indirect), phenomena and context. The utilisation of the two research techniques allows one to interrogate questions that cannot be effortlessly put into numbers to understand the human and social experience. The next section will deal with a brief summary of the two selected texts in order to bring the reader to the fore.

Summary of the selected South African literary texts

This section is dual. The first sub-section deals with the summary of *Kudela Owaziyo* whereas the second sub-section deals with the summary of *Ubomi, Ungancama!*

Kudela Owaziyo presents Mdaluli Memela's family comprising his wife MaMlanduli, and their daughters: Londiwe, Khombephi and Nenelezi. Mdaluli is a male and the only person working in the household. They (family members) solely rely on Mdaluli's income as Londiwe, their firstborn girl is doing her final year at Mangosuthu Technikon. Mdaluli is later retrenched from the firm he was working for and he opts to go back to his skilled job of being a builder. He is appointed by community members to build houses around his location or village (this is his daily informal job). Another builder by the name of Chivenga emerges to be his competitor. Chivenga is a foreigner from Zimbabwe. Community members choose to hire Chivenga to build their houses given that he charges less (cheap labour). Losing his second job (of being a builder) made Mdaluli violent and vicious at his home. On one occasion, he had an argument with MaMlanduli (his wife) who dished up food for him and he told her he had no appetite. MaMlanduli insisted that he needs to eat, however, Mdaluli was annoyed and ended up violently beating his wife. According to the story, that was the first incident in which he beats his wife. The next incident was when he physically struck MaMlanduli for sex. When Londiwe intervenes to rescue her mother, she was beaten up too, and she sustained critical injuries. Londiwe called the police and Mdaluli was arrested. MaMlanduli had an argument with Londiwe about reporting Mdaluli to the police, and they agreed to drop the charges against Mdaluli. When Mdaluli came back from prison, he chased his daughters out of their home with a gun. MaMlanduli was supporting her husband (while neglecting her daughters) and eventually, their daughters were taken by social workers for further care and support. Towards the end of this drama, Mdaluli got another job and he became a better head of the family. He went for a vacation and died because of the earthquake that took place where he had a vacation.

Ubomi, Ungancama! has characters that advance the storyline, and it is significant that such characters are mentioned in this synopsis too. The story is comprised of Nontombi (a young girl) who is sixteen years old and his younger brother, Makhwenkwe who is thirteen years of age. The two children live with their grandmother, MaRhadebe who is the only breadwinner and provider in this household. Ordinarily, MaRhadebe survives with the government's social grant. Tshawe is a forty-year-old businessman who owns a supermarket while Bongile is a thirty-five-year-old male who works as a security officer at social development pay stations. On one specific evening, Makhwenkwe is seen complaining to his grandmother about hunger. However, MaRhadebe does not have the means to buy them sufficient food as the social grant is not enough to sustain the whole household for the whole month. Nontombi is sent to get food on credit (*ayokweleta*) at Tshawe's supermarket. However, Tshawe sees this as an opportunity to express his love and feelings to the young girl. Remember, Tshawe is forty-six years old, and Nontombi is sixteen years only. Tshawe promises Nontombi that if she agrees to be in a romantic relationship with him, she will have everything that she needs and her family will never suffer again. This is despite the fact that Tshawe is married to a woman that is old enough to be Nontombi's mother in African terms. The young girl falls for this decoy. As the story progresses, Nontombi meets Bongile. This was when she was going to collect her grandmother's social grant. Bongile uses the same tactics and opportunities that were used by Tshawe to sexually exploit the young girl. Eventually, she falls pregnant and does not know who impregnated her between Bongile and Tshawe. Both men deny having impregnated her and she is psychologically, emotionally and socially affected. She is left with a baby at age sixteen. She hardly socialises with her peers. The story ends with her grandmother finding out and giving her the required support.

Findings and Discussion

From an African feminist perspective, it is evident from the two dramas (being the data of this article) that men in South Africa are positioned in authoritative roles socially, economically and politically. This creates a male-orientated society that often leads to gendered violence. For instance, Tshawe, Bongani and Mdaluli are the sole providers and workmen in these stories. It exhibits that financially and economically they hold powerful positions in their societies while women (being the mentioned characters) are placed in less powerful roles that subject them to GBV. Through an African feminist lens, the mentioned characters exemplify the stark power dynamics within their societies, proving that men predominantly occupy influential positions in finance and the economy, whereas women are relegated to subordinate roles, rendering them vulnerable to GBV. It becomes even clearer that women are situated in subordinate and insignificant roles as in the case of Nontombi and MaMlanduli. It is also captivating to observe that women are mostly viewed as "powerless" no matter how much they attempt to make means. Thus, using an African feminist perspective, it is striking to observe that women are consistently perceived as "powerless" regardless of their efforts to empower themselves, highlighting the deeply ingrained gender disparities and societal prejudices that limit women's agency and marginalise their contributions. For example, MaRhadabe is the only provider in her household but that is still not enough and holds no economic power compared to men – this can be validated by her children's lack of appreciation. If one is realistic, MaRhadebe embodies qualities of brilliance and courage in that although she is unemployed, she is able to make means to support her family. In other words, she works double the proportion and range of men. However, in the two selected texts; women are depicted as less powerful.

It becomes fathomable, therefore, that emasculated economies are instrumental in advancing GBV in South Africa. For instance, Nontombi is compelled by her economic and financial challenges to give authorisation to men to sexually exploit her at the age of sixteen years. This is not just sexual exploitation but child rape which is denounced by the law in South Africa (Ngidi and Mayeza, 2023). Bearing that in mind, the author of the drama *Ubomi, Ungancama!* is not explicit about child rape, and does not present conditions that clearly underline how and why it is problematic for a forty-two-year-old man to have sex with a sixteen-year-old girl. While that is the case, it does not disown the veracity that this is molestation and/or sexual abuse. African feminist views underline that any attempt that seeks to devalue the stature of women should be conceptualised as an attempt that strives to transgress their rights. The employment of African feminist theory in South African literature further suggests that concealed meanings that isiZulu and isiXhosa literary authors failed to expose clearly, must be examined and linked with real-life conditions. That is the reason it was emphasised earlier that scholarly investigation is required in these two texts and other African literary productions.

With that in mind, the fact that Nontombi, from the isiXhosa drama, fell pregnant at age sixteen is enough to underline the verity that she did not use protection such as a condom. In logic, this may lead to the contraction of sexually transmitted infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), Bacteria Vaginosis (VB), Herpes and many others. Notably, her pregnancy further exacerbates poverty in her family as none of the two men are accepting that they impregnated her. Her unborn baby will be her grandmother's responsibility as she has to go back to school according to the story. This proves the point that was made earlier during the review of existing literature that GBV may increase the rates of poverty. This is particularly the case for women and young girls of the lower class such as the ones in the isiXhosa literary texts. Additionally, teenage pregnancy appears to be a problematic issue within an African feminist framework as it perpetuates gender inequality, restricts girls' educational and economic opportunities, and often results from a lack of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health rights and resources. It is also evident that men in the story are opportunists owing to the fact that their considerable amount of economic power braces them to gain control and access to women and young girls' bodies. For instance, Mdaluli is a man and not just a man, but the only person that earns an income in the family. He is so powerful so much that his wife, despite violently beating her, is still willing to drop charges levelled against him. In addition, his power transcends to his own daughters such that they are viewed as problematic for reporting his violent behaviour in the household. This is ratified by the fact that their mother (MaMlanduli) chooses to protect the GBV instigator in the house and compromises the psycho-social well-being of her daughters hence they end up homeless – they were chased out by their father. It was indicated earlier in this scholarly discourse that some GBV cases remain unreported due to the known reason that if the man is arrested or kept in police custody, there will be no one to support the family. This is one problem that continues to engulf South Africa's reality.

From the two dramas, it is evident that men are often given second chances in society because they are men. From an African feminist perspective, it is profoundly problematic that violent men are given second chances in society as it advances a culture of impunity, normalises GBV, and undermines efforts to create a safe and just society for women. Presumably, this may verify the reason South Africa continues to grapple with acutely addressing this conundrum. This highlights gender inequalities, toxicities and discrepancies that are romanticised. For example, Tshawe is not reported to the police for being a forty-two-year-old man that sexually violated a sixteen-year-old girl. It demonstrates that he is given a second chance to continue to exercise and unleash his powers over women and young girls. Mdaluli is given a second chance to join the community despite the fact that he is not fully rehabilitated in prison or fully punished by the legal system. This is the reason he views it reasonable to continue to threaten, using the gun, his own daughters - this is GBV. Bongani is given a second chance in society despite the known fact that he used his position as a security officer to gain access to the young girl - Nontombi. He is not legally held accountable. These examples are enough to signal that men in South Africa continue to enjoy dominance and the privileges that were achieved by colonialism and apartheid against Black South African women.

The findings of this article, and according to the African feminist critique, highlight that women in South Africa suffer duplex oppression. First, they are oppressed for being women. Second, they are oppressed for being women of the subjacent class. I must further argue that GBV in the country is a pandemic, that, if not properly addressed will continue to ravage and wreck many families and communities. The future of this country lies in the hands of many women and young girls. However, if the realities of GBV continue, it demonstrates that the very same democracy that was fought for is compromised and subsequently sabotaged. The article cannot over-emphasise the fact that existing GBV cases should be used as a lesson to craft reasonable solutions. More importantly, GBV perpetrators like Bongani, Mdaluli and Tshawe must be used in real-life conditions to send a strong message – a message that is governed by the legal systems of the country. While the holistic discussions of this article problematise the issue of GBV, it is prudent that recommendations are presented. Therefore, the next section will provide possible solutions that can address the problematised phenomenon hereunder, and finally, draw concluding remarks.

Conclusion

The new South African constitution guarantees the impartiality and fair treatment of all persons. This is embedded in the fact that South Africa is a democratic state that values all its citizens. Non-racism and non-sexism are also enshrined in South Africa's laws and regulations thereupon seeing women's rights as basic human rights. These rights include the right or freedom to participate in the decision-making process. Bearing this in mind, the article recommends that women be involved in the systemic fight against GBV. For instance, it makes sense that when a woman visits police stations, they are assisted by another female police officer that understands the sensitivities of this crime – GBV. More importantly, female police officers must be trained to deal with GBV cases and provide professional assistance to the victims. In other words, the South African government should prioritise the budget for the training of female officers in respect of this crime. African literature, especially South African modern literature should be produced to address social ills like GBV. This denotes that, while isiXhosa and isiZulu authors produce materials like novels, dramas, poetry and so on, these literary works should be created so much that GBV is problematised and possible solutions to it are infused. This will contribute to the attempts that are being made to raise awareness regarding GBV. This article also mentioned earlier that young girls are affected by GBV. Therefore, there is a need for social workers to be deployed to South African schools in a bid to provide psycho-social support to affected victims. In doing this, a multi-collaborative approach between the Department of Education (DBE) and the Department of Social Development (DSD) would be needed. Here, teachers need to make collaborative efforts in establishing when and where GBV-related crimes have occurred. In the end, support and advice could be initiated. The two drama works have been less investigated. With that in mind, it is in the interest of this article that further investigation be undertaken so as to open a floor for further discussions.

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