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# **Masculinities and gender-based violence in South Africa**

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## Introduction

In this text I will discuss connections between masculinities and gender-based violence, with a focus on cases from South Africa. South Africa has proven to be one of the countries with the highest prevalence of gender-based violence in the world (Barker et al., 2010). Where men execute power over women through gender-based violence (Dartnall & Channon). Why are masculinities important, and is there a connection between the construction of masculinities and the prevalence of gender-based violence in South Africa? Gender-based violence can be defined as “harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender” (UNHCR). Gender-based violence is an umbrella term meant to cover all genders’ experience of targeted violence, but it has several subcategories with specific target-groups such as violence against women (VAW) and intimate partner violence (IPV) (Izumi, 2007, p. 14). Some debate that all violence is gendered and ruled by a “female victim/male villain ‘dichotomy’”. It is important to move away from this dichotomy to avoid stereotypical views of men and women and to acknowledge that both genders are potential victims of violence. At the same time, it is important not to ignore the fact that women and girls end up being the majority of the victims of gender-based violence and that men tend to be the perpetrators (Izumi, 2007, p. 15). The same can be said about cases in South Africa where statistics from population-based surveys indicate that between 25-40% of South African women have experienced intimate partner violence of some sort during their lifetime (Dartnall & Channon).

My claim is that men as well as women are victims of socially constructed ideas of masculinity and deconstructing these ideas and addressing masculinities can decrease the prevalence of gender-based violence. Deconstruction in this sense refers to “...the principle of taking apart taken-for-granted assumptions to explore the contradictions on which they are based...” (Cornwall, 1997, 10). To look beyond old ideas, assumptions, and judgements that genders are based upon and move away from the ones that contribute to negative outcomes, such as the connection between masculinity and violence. In theory, treat the construct of gender as a puzzle where pieces that no longer fit in the picture are removed. I argue that the overarching goal is to achieve gender equality, and addressing masculinities in a development context is an important step in achieving this goal.

## Methodology

This text is based on secondary data and literature reviews about topics of masculinities and gender-based violence in South Africa. I have used a gendered lens with a masculinities-focused angle as my conceptual framework. The factual content is from secondary sources by scholars within the field of gender and development, and masculinities, with inputs of case studies from South Africa to explore and discuss the topics. None of the data is retrieved from own research.

## Development, gender, and masculinities

In the early 1970s it was recognised that development initiatives affected men and women differently and aid programs started to acknowledge women's involvement in development (Tiessen et al., 2017). With the influence of modernization theory and second-wave feminism it became clear that women were left behind in previous and current development processes. The women in development (WID) approach emerged to include women and focused on increasing women's participation in the economy to boost economic growth. (Hopper, 2018, p. 94-95). The women and development (WAD) approach emerged in the late 1970s after WID was criticised for overlooking important components of female oppression, differences between women, and the oversimplification that "women would benefit by being 'slotted in' to existing (male-biased) development structures" (Chant & Gutmann, 2000, p. 7). WAD emphasized how the models of development had to transform as they sustained harmful gender roles that fostered global inequality and ignored global differences between women (Hopper, 2018, p. 95-96). What WID and WAD had in common is that they underplayed the importance of gender relations and had failed to succeed in improving women's social, political, and economic position. Changing the discourse from women and development (WAD) to gender and development (GAD), with a focus on confronting larger issues like capitalism, patriarchy, racism, and power relations between the genders and advocate for equal partnerships between men and women (Tiessen et al., 2017, p. 88). GAD also included women's relations to men and how these relations can be argued to be socially constructed (Cornwall, 2000).

Even though GAD projects redefined their focus to cover all genders and acknowledged that women and men have the same capabilities, their agenda still focused primarily on women. Usually by emphasizing women's position and advancement in development. This ended up

ignoring the arising issues experienced by boys and men in a growing global and neoliberal world as norms of masculinity and manly success were challenged by women (Tiessen et al., 2017, p. 88). For example, as norms of masculinity of how to be a man were confronted as women were slowly introduced to former male-dominated areas. Causing men to experience complications connected to their masculinity and identity as their role as breadwinners, financial providers, and head of households and institutions were challenged. Arguably, GAD put an overemphasis on women's empowerment in the pursuit of gender equality and development work, which ended up excluding men and ignoring their position as part of the solution (Wanner & Wadham, 2015).

GAD has been criticized for lacking a focus on men and their identities, roles, and relations, since it mainly focusses on men in relation to women (Cornwall, 2000). In connection to this Cornwall (2000) present a category of "missing men". The group of men that are not regarded in GAD analysis since they fall out of the stereotype as male oppressors. She argues how the categories of gender are generalised and narrow and does not include important aspects in men`s and women's relations (Cornwall, 2000). Stating that the complications in the category of "gender" are not one-sided where only one gender experience disempowerment. Rather that all genders can experience problems of powerlessness, vulnerability, and disempowerment (Cornwall, 2000).

Evidently GAD lacked a sufficient understanding of the concept of gender, masculinities, gender relations, and their function and interconnectedness in development. It failed to see how men need to be considered parallel to women in development. As addressing masculinities plays a key role in achieving gender equality and major issues within gender relations. Men have great influence in society in terms of decision-making due to their powerful position in the patriarchy. Additionally, masculinities matter because men as well as women can be disadvantaged by social and economic structures (Cleaver, 2002, p. 2). When the construct of gender is taken away, and all that is left are human beings, men as well as women deserve the same consideration as emotional beings with the same emotional spectre that can experience feelings of powerlessness, defeat, and neglect. If not, men are generalized, and the process of development is lost. In terms of success in development work as Chant & Gutmann (2002) state: "...without men, gender interventions can only go so far" (Chant & Gutmann, 2002, p. 271). In other words, it is not possible to reach gender equality`s full potential when men are left out of the equation.

With the intention of working with gender through masculinities approaches it is crucial to understand the construction of gender and masculinities. Graaff and Heinecken define gender as "the socially-constructed role that a person is expected to perform in a specific context, and much of this role is learned through gender role socialisation – the concept that individuals receive social cues (positive or negative) on their expected gender roles, which shape how they present their gender" (Graff & Heinecken, 2017, p. 623). From this definition they introduce two ways of how people present their gender, first through people's personal choice, secondly through societies favouring of different identities (Graff & Heinecken, 2017). Tiessen et. al. (2017) explain gender as a concept that emphasizes the "socially constructed attitudes and practices associated with women and femininities, and men and masculinities" (Tiessen et.al. 2017, p. 88). With extra emphasis on the impact they have on each other in terms of influence and access to power through their gender relations and related hierarchies. In sum, gender can be described as a psychological and cultural term (El-Bushra, 2000).

Gender is continually constructed and is built on a hierarchical system consisting of multiple ways of performing a given gender. Where some performances are desired and valued greater than others (Wanner & Wadham, 2015). This hierarchal system of gender and differences in terms of socio-economic situation, race, and sexuality create intersectionality. Which is "the multidimensionality' of marginalized subjects' lived experiences" (Nash, 2008). This refers to individuals or groups who identifies themselves, or are identified by society, within more than one marginalized group in the society that they live in. Belonging to several marginalised groups can give people the feeling and experience of being oppressed in multiple areas of their life. For example, a black woman will most likely experience oppression in more areas in their society than a white woman in the same society. As in South Africa, where poor black women – being exposed to oppression based on race, gender and economic factors – top the statistics of those experiencing health inequity due to violence inflicted upon them (AHO, 2020).

Intersectionality can be connected to the gender hierarchy, where the level of intersectionality (in this case meant as number of marginalized groups an individual identifies within) increases towards the bottom of the hierarchy. The creation of the gender hierarchy, where societies favour certain gender expressions, makes little room for inclusiveness of other gender expressions. Which elevates the bar for people to move away

from the gender expression on the top of the hierarchy. This is something that is highly relevant in the case of masculinities and gender-based violence in South Africa as violence is connected to their desired masculinity.

The study of masculinities entails scholars' understanding of how male identity is developed through construction and further sustained. Because of this construction masculinities are not biologically given but rather changeable and fluid and therefore consisting of several performances (Dowd, 2010, p. 26). It is basically an umbrella term consisting of several ways of acting to be perceived as masculine and in many cases, a man. Masculinity is associated with power which has caused male to be viewed as the superior gender through time, but since masculinities are constructed, they are sorted in a hierarchy where certain masculine performances and attributes are desired more than others. On top in most societies is hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity can vary from place to place but have the similarity of being the most desired way of performing masculinity through the expectations of being the primary provider, having a high sex drive, and being physically and mentally strong (Graff & Heinecken, 2017). It also subordinates and controls other masculinities by withholding their legitimacy and presenting the cultural ideal of how "real men" should behave (Morrell et al., 2012). Hegemonic masculinity can also be described as the understanding of a gender order where dominance is ascribed to men as a group that women are considered to be subordinated to. Where men's biology is related to dominance and gives them benefits. At the same time, it points at structural gender imbalance where masculinity is the given priority in society.

"The concept of hegemonic masculinity provides a way of explaining that though a number of masculinities coexist, a particular version of masculinity holds sway, bestowing power and privilege on men who espouse it and claim it as their own" (Morrell et al., 2012, p. 20). This demonstrates why men may find it hard to move away from certain types of masculinities as they would lose their powerful position in society and be targeted as vulnerable. Thus, get the feeling of being viewed as less of a 'man'.

On the other hand, moving away from the power demonstrations that hegemonic masculinity encourage is important as they urge violent behaviour (Graff & Heinecken, 2017). This violence can create hypermasculinity which is characterised by men's belief that dangerous situations are positive, violence is an acceptable way of demonstrating power, and that men are supposed to be dominant and hard in sexual encounters. Consequently,

increasing men`s chances of being violent towards women and other men. When violence is connected to power, men might implement violent behaviours to be perceived as masculine and to reach and uphold the standards of hegemonic masculinity in search for power (Graff & Heinecken, 2017).

A positive aspect of hegemonic masculinity is that it is a concept. Demonstrating that masculinity is constructed through time and surroundings and is not intrinsic and constant within men (Colpitts, 2019). This gives reason for why men should be active in the journey towards more equal gender relations since the negative, and oftentimes harmful, behaviour they portray is only a performance that is changeable (Colpitts, 2019).

### Masculinities in development

Masculinities are important in the work towards gender equality because men are a source of change through their roles in society and their power to change aspects that are important for equality between men and women (Wanner & Wadham, 2015). Due to how roles and relations are socially constructed men occupy most of the powerful and decision-making positions in society. Without their active role and contribution as half of the world`s population, gender equality will plateau without reaching its full potential, thus men must participate to achieve gender equality. Additionally, men can be described as the "gatekeepers for gender equality" in smaller scales because they control the resources women need to access to gain independence (Wanner & Wadham, 2015, p. 18).

Simultaneously it is important not to forget the work women have done through history to create a solid fundament for gender equality. Women have occupied the frontline and paved way for equal rights through the three waves of feminism and several other movements that have had major impacts on society. Women`s influence and power shall not be underestimated, but it must be acknowledged that without men`s cooperation and consideration their work can only come so far. Men need to engage themselves but also be included and considered in development since their power and influence can hold both positive and negative outcomes for themselves and those around them.

It is also important to consider men alone and their position as human beings, and not solely as perpetrators and obstacles for women`s development. Even though there has been a shift of focus from WID to GAD there is an apparent lack of focus on men's lives on the same level



as women`s (Cleaver, 2002, p. 1). Men are analysed in relation to women and how they must change for women to come forth and be empowered (Cleaver, 2002, p. 1). Picturing women as weak and in need of men`s help, and men as the problem and not the power structures and gender relations created by society over time. This approach only strengthens the gender divide and the picture of men as perpetrators by focusing on harmful stereotypes of masculinity which neglects men as emotional beings with normal human behaviour. It is true that in many cases men`s behaviour needs to change, but the change should benefit themselves as much as the people around them. By only focusing on helping women, the roles of women as victims and men as perpetrators are emphasized and overlooks men`s vulnerabilities and the fact that many men are victims as well. When men are excluded in GAD the notion of "men as perpetrators and women as victims" is strengthened and generalises both men and women. It rejects the fact that men and women are part of gender relations and overlooks the masculinities hierarchy (Wanner & Wadham, 2015). By ignoring that men are gendered beings at risk of being negatively affected by unequal power relations (Wanner & Wadham, 2015) gender specific vulnerabilities are disregarded.

Men are in greater risk of mental and bodily harm and disease because they are more likely to be exposed to dangerous, physical labour (Cleaver, 2002). Much due to the mentality that men should be physically and mentally strong and that their feelings and bodies endures hard conditions and treatments. This is clearly visible in the military and in the division of labour where many physically demanding positions such as firefighters, miners, and police officers are occupied by men. Especially in warfare, men are deprived of the autonomy of their own bodies because it is expected that they sacrifice themselves for their country or for a cause.

Many men become doubtful to supporting the work towards gender equality when power structures are simply moved from men to women as a method of female-empowerment. Additionally, many men have a hard time adjusting to new structures as more women are introduced to former male dominated areas (Cleaver, 2002, p. 3). With a tendency to exclude men`s experiences in the work to empower women, the role of feeling oppressed (in a large scale) is switched and can create "men`s rights" or "us too" perspectives in favour of empowering men (Wanner & Wadham, 2015, p. 24). These perspectives are problematic as they would arise from trying to address gender inequality, but instead end up creating

another problem. Furthermore, they can end up drawing attention away from female empowerment and create a loop of switching the focus between men and women.

To have a chance at helping women, one must understand the relationship between men and women and how they interact (Wanner & Wadham, 2015). Therefore, it is crucial to focus on men as well as women so that women do not become victims of a double burden in labour (Colpitts, 2019). In many attempts to empower women in a development context, women have been given the opportunity to get a paid job in addition to their usual household routine. Without considering the obligations they already have, often as farmers and caretakers for their family, they are left with yet another burden and role to fill. Their income is increased, but without considering the relationship the women have to their fathers or male spouses, those money might be taken away from them and controlled by their male family members. All of which could be prevented or at least challenged if the men were included in the work to empower the women, and the given society's traditional gender roles were confronted. To understand masculinities becomes vital in the work to recognise the gender relation between men and women, and to avoid the perpetrator/victim generalisation.

Ultimately, men can experience positive outcomes by being included in work to achieve gender equality. By focusing on masculinities and including men in development "not only can men contribute significantly to achieve gender equality, but also they themselves can benefit substantially from gender equality since they also suffer from socially constructed dominant ideas of masculinities and gender stereotypes" (Wanner & Wadham, 2015, p. 18). If the dominant ideas of masculinity are deconstructed it might lower the expectations of how men should act to be perceived masculine. Broadening the concept of masculinity and moving away from harmful traits such as violence. This is extremely important in the case of South Africa as most of the victims that are killed by men, are other men (Morrel et al., 2012).

### Gender equality and gender equity

Wanner and Wadham's (2015) elaborate on the topic of gender equality and equity. They state how change towards gender equality depends on how we look at the construction of equality and gender (Wanner & Wadham, 2015). The work towards gender equality should

not be achieved at the expense of certain genders. That is why gender equity as much as gender equality must be considered.

Gender equality is when men, women, boys, and girls enjoy equal opportunities, rights, and treatment in all aspects of life, while gender equity is when all genders are treated fair according to their respective interests and needs (ILO, 2000). The difference between gender equality and gender equity is that in gender equality all genders needs are *treated* equally, while in gender equity all genders needs are *weighed* equally important, and treated thereafter (Wanner & Wadham, 2015).

Equity is about giving all the same opportunities while considering individuals/groups differences that make it either easier or harder to realize given opportunity. Whether this entails providing some with less or more resources than others so that they can have the same standpoint. "Equity draw our attention to the diversity of, or difference in, men`s and women`s social and cultural experience" (Wanner & Wadham, 2015, p. 26). The equity approach looks at the different backgrounds to where gender relations were made and achieves gender equality by considering the gendered differences between women and men (Wanner & Wadham, 2015). Providing the same opportunities to all, while considering biological differences among genders which is crucial to address problems that are gender specific. For example, the expectations men face in South Africa of being the financial provider in the household. Gender equity should be in tandem with equality (Wanner & Wadham, 2015). Then both women and men are considered in terms of their intrinsic value as human beings while their gender-specific needs are met.

Women have long been victims of oppression and the work to empower women is extremely important, but this cannot be done without considering men and their position in relation to women and the relations between men themselves. Therefore, there is a need to work with men to understand masculinities and its relation to gender equality and equity (Wanner & Wadham, 2015). Involving men in gender equality work can help stop negative outcomes of superior constructions of manhood and secure that male leaders are advocates for change (Wanner & Wadham, 2015). Implementing an equity approach to development creates a platform for considering gender-specific vulnerabilities which targets both women and men`s experiences of powerlessness and challenges the destructive gender hierarchy.

## Gender based violence in South Africa

South Africa is one of the countries in the world with the highest rate of gender-based violence, much due to its colonial history and apartheid past, which I will come back to later in the text. In the context of using South Africa as a case study, gender-based violence is often referred to as violence perpetrated by a man towards women or other men. "While rape and intimate partner violence are in most cases perpetrated by men against women, this is not exclusively the case, and laws and policies addressing gender-based violence are gender neutral" (Barker, et al., 2010, p. 20). Even though South Africa's Criminal Law Amendment changed the definition of rape in 2007 to include both genders as victims in non-consensual penetration (Barker, et al., 2010) it does not include other forms of abuse that should be recognised as rape on the same level as involuntary penetration. Still portraying men as the main perpetrators.

South Africa is labelled "the rape capital of the world" (Colpitts, 2019, p. 426) and has the highest rate of intimate partner murder in the world where a woman is killed every eight hours. Despite South Africa's efforts to move towards a more gender equal society, the rate of violence against South African women continues to be high (Colpitts, 2019). Urban informal settlements are especially vulnerable to high levels of violence, intimate partner violence (IPV), and HIV prevalence. Much embedded in gender inequality and patriarchal constructions of gender (Gibbs et al., 2018). These facts must be confronted and dealt with to improve women's safety and decrease the prevalence of gender-based violence and other cases of abuse. A way to tackle this is by confronting the construction of gender and men's perception and expectations to masculinity in the South African society.

Gender-based violence can be analysed and handled through a masculinities perspective because violence has long been linked to traditional views on masculinity and poverty (Cleaver, 2002, p. 12). It can be discussed whether violence is a biological component in men where it can be described as a natural phenomenon (Cleaver, 2002, p. 17), or if it is a social construct developed over time. Cleaver (2002) mention that the socialization of boys, cultural discourses, economic instability, and experiences of fear and weakness all contribute to form social and domestic violent behaviour. And that young men are at risk of being exposed to violence by other men, in the roles as observers and as victims (Cleaver, 2002, p. 17). Leaning towards violence being transferred through socialization, without disclaiming

that violence can root from a biological ground. Where violence once was a vital component in men`s reaction system rooting from the fight or flight response when exposed to danger. Hopper (2018) mentions how specific areas such as domestic violence and the spread of HIV/AIDS are more effectively addressed when men and boys are involved (Hopper, 2018, p. 103). Men are part of the root causes for gender-based violence and to reach gender equality the whole equation (meaning women and men) must be engaged (Colpitts, 2019).

There are several actors and organisations working with gender-based violence in South Africa, and some focus on working with boys and men. For example, the grassroot South African NGO: Sonke Gender Justice Network, which was founded in 2006. Their mission is to “strengthen the capacity of governments, civil society and citizens to advance gender justice and womxn`s rights, prevent gender-based violence and reduce the spread of HIV and the impact of AIDS, and in this way contribute to social justice and the elimination of poverty” (Sonke). Graff and Heinecken (2017) presents a case study of a masculinities-focused intervention programme where the focus has been to work with men and masculinities to prevent gender-based violence in South Africa. Through a masculinities-focused, gender-transformative intervention called "One Man Can" they look at how men perceive their masculinity and violence by challenging their views on gender and gender roles with the goal of working with men to prevent violence (Graff & Heinecken, 2017). The paper focus on societal roles and their followed expectations and demands on how to act in a society and how these expectations lead to violence (Graff & Heinecken, 2017).

Through a qualitative study conducted by Colpitts (2019), an integrated ecological model, which put emphasis on structural and social dimensions, was used to explore means to engage men in avoiding gender-based violence in South Africa. Simultaneously, moving away from the notion that gender-based violence is a “women`s issue”. Further to reflect upon the need to address the systems and structures that "encourage" gender-based violence in South Africa (Colpitts, 2019). Presenting hereby different views to why it is important to include men and boys in work to prevent gender-based violence: to benefit and empower women, or to benefit boys and men themselves (Colpitts, 2019). To work with men and boys is important to reduce their chances of becoming perpetrators and to avoid the generalisation that all men are perpetrators. "The common assumption that men are the universal aggressors in armed conflict and women the universal victims and peacemakers is

a gross oversimplification that both reinforces ideas about violence being 'natural' to men and fails to explain women's roles in conflict" (Cleaver, 2002, p. 17). Giving reason to why it is important to work with men's and boy's personal experiences with violence and masculinity to decrease/eradicate the frequency of violence (Colpitts, 2019).

"Gender-based violence is a reflection of deep structural problems in a society that often cannot be addressed with one strategy or one type of intervention only" (Gouws, 2016). Illustrating how gender-based violence in South Africa roots in structural errors that require interventions involving both men and women. Moreover, to have a change at addressing gender-based violence through interventions engaging boys and men one must understand the local context of violence (Gouws, 2016).

### Reasons for gender-based violence in South Africa

Gender-based violence is a worldwide problem and needs to be addressed at a global scale. However, every situation is unique and needs to be addressed accordingly to avoid generalised solutions that can neglect cultures. Nonetheless, there are certain structures that encourages violent behaviours that can be seen as common denominators between countries. For example, patriarchal societies are by their nature gender unequal and tends to subordinate women and justify violence towards women. Giving women little to no power over their relationships to men and increases the chances for gender-based violence and sexual violence (Graff & Heinecken, 2017). The state has a dominant role in generating conflict, violence, and conditions that foster anti-social and twisted expressions of masculinity (Cleaver, 2002, p. 16). This is because the state holds a lot of power and influence and is responsible for governing and protecting its citizens.

In many contexts rape and violence against women is used as a method for social control and is justified as a stress release from men experiencing violence from other men (Colpitts, 2019). Connecting how some men justify their experienced violence by acting violently towards women. They feel the need to demonstrate power in a situation they are more likely to uphold the dominant position, due to biological facts of most men being stronger than most women. It is crucial not to generalise men under the idea that every man feel powerful in their masculinity. Several scholars have stated that many men feel powerless, especially in between men (Colpitts, 2019). On the other hand, due to norms created by

hegemonic masculinity, men have the tendency to feel power over women which can lead to gender-based violence.

### Apartheid

South Africa's present socio-political landscape is highly affected by its colonial and apartheid past (Morell et al., 2012). Apartheid was a race-discriminating ideology established by the South African national party in 1948 to continue the white dominion that had been established during the colonial times. It was rooted in the belief that white people were the race chosen by God and that they should develop separate from other races. (Tjønneland, 2020). Creating a massive power imbalance based on ethnicity and the colour on peoples' skin. The hierarchy during Apartheid justified violence towards those standing up to the policies created by the government. The South African defence force and the South African police ranked higher than the population, allowing violence to the point that it became normalised (Graff & Heinecken, 2017). When violence is used by people in high-ranking positions in society as a power demonstration towards the public, it becomes an acceptable way of sustaining control and can easily be transferred to private homes and relations in society.

Colpitts (2019) as well as Graaff & Heinecken (2017) connect the history of apartheid and colonialism to the extreme rates of gender-based violence in South Africa (Colpitts, 2019). Stating how the violence in this period contributed to form gender relations and expected roles and behaviours in men (Colpitts, 2019). Colonialism also brought with it patriarchal gender relations that became implemented in the indigenous communities and strengthened the already existing male dominated structures (Colpitts, 2019). Nevertheless, the normalisation of violence in the South African society can not only be a result of Apartheid as it implies that only men of colour are violent, due to them being victims in this situation, and therefore struggling to prove their masculinity (Graff & Heinecken, 2017). The case of Paralympic athlete Oscar Pistorius is an example of gender-based violence towards women and white-male privilege. In 2013 Pistorius was accused of killing his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp, after firing 4 shots at her through a closed bathroom door (Tjørhom, 2015). After a long trial and many appeals, Pistorius was found guilty of the murder and faced a 13-year long jail sentence in 2017 (Burke, 2023). The case caused controversy and became a front for women's rights activism due to its prolonged trial and questionable sentencing. Pistorius was first released for unintentional murder, then sentenced to 6 years

in jail because he had shown remorse and pleaded to the deceased's family and to God (Chitapi, 2016). The case was seen as a throwback to apartheid and reflected how women are victims in a patriarchal society and white men are privileged and can go free from murder by presenting a public apology.

South Africa had already a male dominated society where women were subordinated to men, but the apartheid regime made it even worse for women of colour (Gouws, 2016). People of colour were targeted in society and black, native women were regulated and ruled under a masculine category as "dependants of men" and not "citizens in their own right" (Gouws, 2016, p. 403). Which demonstrates their vulnerability as victims of intersectionality and "easy" targets of oppression. The case of Pistorius is an example that also demonstrates the effect of intersectionality. Since it was a rather famous, white woman that was killed, the case got publicity and raged the public. The outcome might have been different had he killed a woman of colour as their experiences from an intersectional perspective play out differently.

#### Poverty and the South African military

There are several contributors to South Africa's high levels of gender-based violence other than apartheid. Poverty and the South African military have both played a significant role in shaping and affecting people's perception on gender. Income inequality and high unemployment rates in South Africa are contributors to violent behaviour, independent on race, as it makes it harder to fulfil masculine expectations and features as breadwinners and economically strong. In Zinyemba & Hlongwana's (2022) study on "men's conceptualization of gender-based violence directed to women in Alexandra Township, Johannesburg, South Africa" men expressed frustration through physical abuse when their spouses asked for basic needs that the men were incapable of providing. Resorting to violence as an 'important' part of their masculine identity is hard to uphold. Violence was also a resort in situations where the men came in arguments with the women. Using physical power to either get their will or demonstrate dissatisfaction (Zinyemba & Hlongwana, 2022).

Both Graff and Heineken (2017) and Gibbs et al. (2018) mention the same pattern of young South African men emphasizing their hegemonic masculinity when it is hard to uphold the role as providers in situations suffering from economic marginalization. In order to feel masculine they reach for achievable domains of power which often include control over



women (Gibbs et al., 2018). The link between gender-based violence targeted at women and poverty is clear as women who are financially dependent on their husband or father is more vulnerable to gender-based violence than women who are financially independent (Zinyemba & Hlongwana, 2022).

Due to South Africa's long standing patriarchal structure, as for many other countries, the military consists mostly of men. During instable and violent times, such as Apartheid, the military became vital and when it primarily consisted of men it became a symbol of masculinity. Thus, affecting how men perform their masculinity (Graff & Heinecken, 2017). Mainstream militarised masculinities normalise violence in the pursuit to achieve manhood, leading to hypermasculinities which is a steppingstone towards gender-based violence (Graff & Heinecken, 2017).

Graff and Heinecken (2017) point out that violence cannot be directly tied to either race or poverty, since it is a global problem regardless of economic status or level of development. They rather suggest that versions of masculinity in a South African context "...demand violence from men as a primary part of their display as of masculinity..." (Graff & Heinecken, 2017, p. 626), given how it is rooted and altered in such violent times.

#### Hegemonic masculinity

South Africa is highly affected by hegemonic masculinity norms and Gibbs et al. (2018) link South African men's violence towards women and the spread of HIV to "manifestations of a hegemonic masculinity" (Gibbs et al., 2018, p. 502). As described before, hegemonic masculinity roots from the belief that men are ascribed dominance over women and that masculinity is associated with mental and physical strength. Power can be demonstrated through physical acts and therefore violence can seem like a good alternative.

Children grow up with violence in near family relations, which contributes to normalise the need for violent behaviour to act masculine (Graff & Heinecken, 2017). They are constantly fed with the idea that violence is a vital component for them to achieve the desired way of displaying masculinity: hegemonic masculinity (Graff & Heinecken, 2017). In Graff & Heinecken's study they found that while some of the participants saw the link between hegemonic masculinity and violence, others linked gender-based violence to women's behaviour and choice in clothes (Graff & Heinecken, 2017). Switching the responsibility over to women, ignoring the responsibility they have for their own actions.

Some participants in Colpitts (2019) study mentioned how challenging hegemonic masculine norms is helpful in terms of targeting the attributes that make boys and men act harmful for themselves and their surrounding environment (Colpitts, 2019). It is proven that interventions that address hegemonic masculinity when engaging boys and men are the most effective, showing promise to why hegemonic masculinity should be addressed to prevent gender-based violence (Colpitts, 2019).

## Conclusion and discussion

The movement from WID and WAD to GAD turned out to be inefficient in confronting all aspects of gender relations and equality. GAD lacked a focus on men and their relation to women, leaving men out of development interventions and programs. Resulting in the emergence of the study of masculinities. Masculinities are the study of how male identity is constructed and further sustained by society. It can be discussed whether some masculine attributes are biologically given or if all attributes are socially constructed.

Masculinities matter because men can be a source of change and all genders must be considered in development work. When actively avoiding men, they are pictured as the villain that is unwilling to cooperate, reinforcing the perpetrator role. At the same time, it is important not to ignore the fact that most perpetrators are men. But recognise that the role as perpetrator is often automatically associated with men which makes it easy to generalise all men as perpetrators. Men as well as women can be disadvantaged in economic and social structures, feel powerless and be victims of violence and abuse. Additionally, both men and women can benefit positively when masculinities and men are regarded in development. Evidently, men should not be excluded in the work towards gender equality. At the same time, it is important not to forget the gender specific vulnerabilities men and women experience. There is no doubt that women's position in development is extremely important, and that women-focused interventions and programs are needed, but when they overlook men and their relation to women their intentions disappear and creates new challenges. Women and men deserve equal attention and consideration in development and an equity approach can create the sufficient platform where gender specific and general vulnerabilities and strengths can be considered.

The gender hierarchy, with hegemonic masculinity on top, makes it challenging for men to move away from dominant ideas of masculinity. The requirements to achieve hegemonic

masculinity are rooted in old, traditional patterns of gender roles and identity. Historically speaking, the attributes of being mentally and physically strong, and have a high sex drive were positive and essential for survival. Today their functionality is rather overemphasised and have reached a point to where they are harmful and excessive rather than helpful and essential. In principle, making the characteristics associated to hegemonic masculinity irrelevant in the pursuit of being a man. The gender hierarchy needs to be challenged and expanded to make room and acceptance for “alternative” ways of performing masculinity.

Apartheid, hegemonic masculinity, the military, and poverty have played major roles in normalising violent behaviours among men in South Africa. South Africa has been highly affected by conflict and disturbance, much due to colonialism and apartheid, making the government resort to violence as a form of control. Normalising violence in the South African society to a point where it is not sanctioned anymore. Additionally, shaping people’s perception of masculinity and their expectations towards men. Hegemonic masculinity trumps other forms of masculinity, placing those who do not reach the criteriums of hegemonic masculinity lower in the hierarchy and targets of abuse. Masculinities can be linked to gender-based violence because features that are seen as necessary to uphold a masculine image encourages violent behaviour. Violence is then afflicted upon others when the men are unable to uphold features of masculinity. Because power is easily demonstrated through violence as it deprives others their autonomy and forces them in a subordinated position. Therefore, it is important to address masculinities to reduce gender-based violence and break the cycle of violence being connected to masculinity.

As seen in the case studies presented in the text the use of masculinities-focused, gender transformative interventions have developed the stance to reduce gender-based violence and encouraged some men to pursue new gender norms in their surroundings. Yet, many interventions struggle to change the norms and expectations regarding masculinities. Even though the results in Colpitts (2019) and Graff and Heinecken`s (2017) study turned out to be positive towards decreasing the level of gender-based violence, Graff and Heinecken`s results turned out to be behavioural changes in a given time, rather than shifts in attitude (Colpitts, 2019; Graff & Heinecken, 2017). Not yet reaching the goal of implementing different ways in performing masculinities and move towards a stable gender equal society.

To prevent gender-based violence one must look at the psychology behind it and examine the reasons for men (and women) to act violently. Focus on helping men rather than punishing them. Especially in the South African context where the violent behaviour men portray can be rooted in unfortunate situations such as historical turbulence and poverty. Since masculinities are malleable and fluid it is possible to perceive and treat it like a trend. To advocate “positive” and “healthy” masculinities that salute openness and vulnerability and sanction aggressiveness and over-emphasized strength (in the sense of not showing weakness). With the purpose of broadening people’s perception on masculinities making room for expressing emotions and behaviours that are normally disregarded, but that are natural to any human being.

In sum, there is a clear connection between the construction of masculinities and the prevalence of gender-based violence in South Africa. Men as well as women are victims of socially constructed ideas of masculinity as men are expected to uphold a certain standard of gender expression to avoid being victimised by other men and society. When there are no clear trade-offs of moving away from hegemonic masculinity and violent behaviours, it is harder to adopt new masculinities that can result in positive outcomes for men and women. Therefore, deconstructing dominant ideas of masculinity can be helpful as it targets the root of the problem.

## Limitations

As this is a bachelor thesis done in a single semester, I did not have the opportunity to base any of the data on own research. Causing the data and argumentation to be biased towards the authors I have cited. By writing from a specific angle within gender it is easy to become biased and overlook other genders position in the matter. Using a masculinities framework can have made me biased towards men. Additionally, I have never been to South Africa myself which gives me no prior knowledge or experience from the country other than inputs from secondary sources. I am also a white girl from 21st century Norway which places me in a privileged position, with little to no experience or impression of intersectionality and direct oppression. Which in turn can have affected my position in the text and my understanding of the topics and cases studies.

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