The Inherent Limitations of Gender-Based Violence to the Exclusion of LGBTIQ: A Guide for Social Workers

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Abstract: Drawing from the queer theory, this article strives to understand the scourge of gender-based violence against members of the homosexual community through a literature review. There is a gap in understanding this scourge against LGBTIQ. Additionally, there is a dearth of research on GBV within the social work fraternity despite the profession's mandate to protect vulnerable groups. A comprehensive understanding of this hate crime is critically important in the current times where incidents of violence based on one's gender are on the rise in South Africa. Social workers are in a privileged position to educate communities about these appalling crimes and to inform inclusive policies to curb this pandemic against members of the homosexual community.

Keywords: Gender, gender-based violence, LGBTIQ, social work, South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence against lesbians, gays, bisexuals, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ) persons has been conspicuous for many years (Lewis, Rowe & Wiper, 2018:520). As such they are more likely to experience marginalisation and discrimination due to stigma that generally degenerates into verbal and physical violence (Hanckl & Vivienne,2019:1262). Similarly, researchers report that that they are likely to suffer physical, sexual, and psychological abuse in their lifetime due to their non-conformity to established gender and sexuality norms (Blondeel, Vasconcelos, Gracia-Moreno, Stephenson, Temmerman & Toskin, 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2018: 19).

The article contends that there is an urgent need for a strong response to the violence and discrimination that homosexuals experience and encounter. There is a need to understand gender-based violence as a term and phenomenon that amplifies the lived experiences in genderised and hierarchical socio-political economies. Therefore, this article departs from the common heteronormative narrative of gender-based violence, where a victim and perpetrator are binarised into femininity and masculinity, respectively. The abovementioned gaps serve as a reminder of the need for continued investigation of GBV against LGBTIQ. This article aims to assess the prevalence and precarity of the affected persons through a literature review.

The article first presents a brief overview of gender-based violence because of gender in South Africa. This is followed by a brief outline of the theoretical framework which guided the study. The third component provides a methodological discussion, which is immediately followed by understanding and conceptualising gender-based violence. Subsequently, the article submits the prevalence of GBV against LGBTIQ as well as the attitude of religion towards homosexuality in Africa, respectively. Next, the acronym LGBTIQ is unpacked for a holistic understanding. Towards the end, the manifestation of GBV against LGBTIQ on the African continent is presented. The last segment on implications for social work practice and research proffers key recommendations, namely the central role of social work in addressing the gap between legislation and practice; the need for community education; and the need for empirical data to guide the professions. Finally, the article concludes.

Brief Overview of Gender-Based Violence in South Africa

Despite the rise of the scourge of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in South Africa (Abaver & Cishe, 2018), there seems to be limited data on understanding its perpetration against the homosexual community (Out LGBT Well-being, 2016; Myrttinen, 2018, Kiss, Quinlan-Davidson, Olle, Pasquero, Hogg, & Zimmerman, 2020). This limited understanding still exists in the social work profession, despite its ethical mandate to protect such vulnerable. Various scholars share similar sentiments on the paucity of research into this phenomenon. For instance, Butler (2010) reported that globally, social work literature on the topic of gay and lesbian identity development is sparse. Similarly, the observation was reported in Zimbabwe by Taruvinga & Mushayamunda, 2018).

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In South Africa, the injustices of apartheid and violence against non-heterosexual relationships share a complicated past. During apartheid, the government regulated non-heterosexual relationships by enforcing racial segregation through the Mortality Act of 1957. This act criminalised both interracial liaisons and homosexuality (Out LGBTIQ Well-being, 2016). However, since the democratic dispensation in 1994, South Africa has witnessed an increase in the recognition and representation of non-heterosexual relationships (Masri, 2018:75). South Africa's Constitution, which is considered the most progressive globally (Cold-Ravnkilde, 2019:212), guarantees legal protection of such relationships. Central to the Constitution is the Bill of Rights, which submits that the state is obliged to respect, protect, fulfill and promote the rights of all citizens. Section 9(3) mandates that nobody may be discriminated against based on their sex, gender, or sexual orientation, among others. Section 10 also guarantees that everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected. Sections 11 and 12 guarantees the right to security of a person, including the right to be free from all forms of violence in the private or public sphere, the right to security in and control over their body (Müller & Meer, 2018:12).

Despite the constitution's liberal provisions, the findings in the literature tell a different narrative as the scourge against LGBTIQ is persistent (Shefer, 2019:418). They still experience stigma, [1]hate crime, corrective rape, and other forms of violence (Reid, 2018, Judge, 2017). This article argues that violations against those who are involved in 'non-heterosexual relationships' have not received as much public attention as violence against women, although these sections of the population all form part of the vulnerable groups. For example, in SA, the understanding of gender-based violence is almost exclusively used to refer to violence against women to the exclusion of other vulnerable groups (Wirtz, Poteat, Malik & Glass, 2020:227). Most specifically, these researchers observe that many of the application forms and legal documents in South Africa exclude LGBTIQ as the gender specified on the forms focuses only on the sex of the applicant rather than gender. Completing these documents requires an individual to specify their

gender as either male or female. This systemically excludes queer and transgender people. Likewise, exclusion is also prevalent in the provision of shelter services. Most shelters that are used to accommodate victims of violence are designed to accommodate heterosexual individuals.

Theoretical Framework

This article is guided by the queer theory that "elucidates the deconstruction of defined categories and the hegemonic structures and ideologies that contribute to the perpetuation of the understanding of gender, sex and sexual identities as fixed and unchangeable" (Disch, 2009:113). The queer theory focuses on the notions of sex and sexuality by considering marginalised sexual identities that do not fit into hegemonic social discourses. Importantly, queer theory rejects the binaries between men and women (Pianto, 2016). It helps understand how norms surrounding gender and sexuality are constructed, normalised, and perpetuated in hierarchical societies, and how these can be challenged and disrupted (Ruhsam, 2017:2). Moreover, queer theory proffers a new understanding of gender identity and sexual orientation by rejecting the stereotypes in the habitus of man and woman relationships (Ruhsam, 2017:1).

The queer theory contends that gender identity cannot be reduced to binaries since it incorporates a wide range of subjectivities that are not necessarily identifiable with the term "man" or "woman" (Pianto, 2016). Since this article is interested in understanding the interstices of GBV against the LGBTIQ, the queer theory was deemed relevant and appropriate to reach this aim. Adopting queer theory as a framework for this literature review allows a nuanced understanding and construction of gender and violence beyond the vacuous binary of "man" and woman." In addition, queer theory enhances social workers' understanding of the critical questions: "how do people take up sexuality and gender, how do various categories come to mean what they do, and what institutional practices give meanings to LGBTIQ" (Todd & Coholic, 2015:288). More significantly, the queer theory was adopted because most social work theories and research focusing on gender issues have to date not interrogated the efficacy and affordances possible through queer theory (Garrett, 2013; Payne, 2014). In equal measure, significant archives of literature on LGBTIQ issues also fail to examine GBV through these lenses (Hicks & Jeyasingham, 2016).

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[1]The concept of 'hate crime' is often used to convey strong negative emotions regarding the specific identity of some people. It is generally established that were it not for the victim's identity, the crime would not have happened; in this instance the crime is inscribed onto the victims' gender and then circulated as compulsively corrective (Kondakov, 2019:5).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a pragmatic approach, particularly the Focused Mapping Review and Synthesis (FMRS) method. This method requires one to undertake a comprehensive literature review. A pragmatic approach allows the reviewers to gain a fuller understanding of a diverse range of issues (McCann, Lee, and Brown, 2016). The process began with an assessment of empirical literature. This article utilises a literature review sourced from academic literature, grey literature, organisational reports, and policy briefs to interrogate the menace of GBV that is directed at LGBTIQ. Both local and international sources were considered (Meer *et al*., 2017). All articles regardless of the methods used in conducting these studies were considered due to their relevance to this study. Given the expanse of literature in this area (academic literature, grey literature, organisational reports, and policy briefs) and the wealth of literature stored outside the usual academic databases, a conventional mapping review to cover the entire field was impractical and unfeasible. Instead, the authors developed a highly focused approach to literature reviewing. In ensuring that the method is correctly applied, the authors followed the below key steps of the FMRS as suggested by Bradbury-Jones, Breckenridge, Clark, Herber, Jones, and Taylor, 2019)

This is an emerging form of review associated with judgment and rigour as described. The authors conducted a mapping review, which allowed for contextualisation of in-depth systematic literature reviews within the broader literature and the identification of gaps. The mapping review focuses on targeted journals, specific journals, and defined periods. Within this context, the literature search was focused on "GBV against LGBTIQ" in South Africa. The focus of the search was on publications circulated and disseminated between 2009 and 2021. Calibration is one of the important steps was not ignored. Once the assigned reviewers (2nd and 3rd authors) had completed the abstraction from their selected sources, the overall lead reviewer (first author) appraised all articles against the inclusion criteria agreed with those for final inclusion. This played an important role as a way of ensuring reliability (Soares, and Yonekura, 2011). In addition, as a form of reliability check, more than 10% of papers in the reviews were double-checked (distributed across the team).

Understanding and Conceptualising Gender-Based Violence

As a point of departure, it is important to understand how violence could be considered "gender-based" or "gendered" by addressing the inherent limitations in such conceptualisations. Researchers and scholars often limit the definition of gender-based violence to violence against women (Jakobsen, 2014:537; Wirtz *et al*.,2020:227). This historical definition identifies women as the only target of violence, often perpetrated by men (Davids, 2020). For instance, the 1995 United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing defined gender-based violence as "any act 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" (Bloom, 2018). At the time, this definition represented international

Table 1: Key Steps of the FMRS

Focus							
Develop clear	Clear inclusion & exclusion criteria	Calibration	Decide timeframe	Identify journals	Scrutinise journal indices	Retrieve articles	Agree included articles

Mapping				
Create and populate templates for individual papers	Quantitative and/or qualitative analysis	Map across journals	Map to the review questions	Calibration

Synthesis	
Output production	Calibration

consensus on how to conceptualise the dynamics of gender-based violence. It was a definition that encompassed child sexual abuse, coercive sex, rape, stalking, and intimate partner violence (Russo & Pirlott, 2018). This limitation towards women is not without merit. Admittedly, anyone may experience violence due to their gender; certain groups are more heavily affected. According to one study on violence based on an individual's gender, "one in every three women in the world has been beaten, forced to have sex, or subjected to some other form of abuse" (Tsapalas, Parker, Ferrer, & Bernales, 2021:23).

Comprehensively, the term gender-based violence is used to cover all forms of violence meted out on a person based on their gender (Muluneh, Stultz, Francis & Agho, 2020; Dlamini, 2020:1; Finchilescu & Dugard, 2021:2750). These acts of violence include, but are not limited to, all forms of sexual and harassment, abuse, rape to inflict emotional, physical, mental, or sexual harm or suffering. From this definition, it is argued that gender is often used interchangeably or, in some instances, confused with sex. In reality, gender and sex are different terms. Whereas sex denotes a biological characteristic related to sex genes, gender is a socially constructed identity (Sinacore, Durrani, & Khayutin, 2021:1661). The term gender "includes the social norms, beliefs, practices, and structures that stipulate what is feminine, masculine, good parenting, queer, straight, proper behaviour…" (Thurston, Tam, Dawson, Jackson, & Kwok, 2016:696). Simply put: "People are born female or male but learn to be girls and boys who then grow into women and men" (Bradbury-Jones, Appleton, Clark & Paavilainen, 2019:470).

Given these contexts, targeted violence against the LGBTIQ populations, including stigma and discrimination, is inherently gender-based. This violence is often perpetrated based on the stigmatisation of gender non-conformity, gender expression or identity, and perceived sexual orientation (Wirtz *et al*., 2020:227). However, it is important to note that violence against LGBTIQ persons is much broader than physical assault or sexual abuse. It is also a human rights issue. The victims are often denied access to health care, housing, employment, and other basic human rights based on their sexual orientation or gender identity (Wirtz *et al*., 2020:227). The subsequent section discusses these points in some detail.

The Prevalence of GBV against LGBTIQ

Incidents of violence based on sexual orientation seems to be on the rise globally. For instance, between 2018 and 2019, there were 14,491 reported hate crimes (this is a 25% increase) and 2,333 hate crimes based on "transgender identity" (this registers a 37% increase from 2018) in England and Wales (Quinn, 2019). A study conducted in Jamaica found that out of 316 LGBT people, 24 % of these respondents had been threatened with sexual violence in the previous five years based on their real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression, while 32 percent had been threatened with physical violence (McFee & Galbraith, 2016). Most anti-LGBT hate crime involves public order offences (such as threatening and abusive behaviour in public spaces that is likely to cause harassment, alarm, and distress). The second-largest type of hate crimes are also known as homophobic and transphobic (Gitari & Walters, 2020). Homophobia is an unreasonable fear of hatred or dislikes towards lesbian, gay, or bisexual people, while transphobic also refers to the unreasonable fear, hatred, or dislike towards transgendered people (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2013).

However, estimating the number of LGBTIQ persons in Africa is a difficult task to achieve as many members of this population are not open about their sexual orientation because of fear of reprisals and persecution. People who engage in same-sex relationships or non-gender conforming practices are criminalised as well as considered taboo in most African countries (Mudavanhu 2010). Globally, Africa has some of the worst laws on same-sex relationships (Carroll & Itaborahy 2015). Taking Zimbabwe as an example, homosexuality is openly condemned by senior politicians and religious leaders, and people with such sexual orientation often suffer repressive violence and even state-sponsored aggression (Mabvurira, Motsi, Masuka & Chigondo 2012; Smith, 2018).

Out of the 54 states of the African Union, only 22 of them have legalised homosexuality, (Rakhetsi, 2021). Sadly, most people in African communities are deeply homophobic and unbending in their perceptions of gender diversities (Southern Africa Litigation Centre, 2016). These include Tanzania, where penalties as harsh as life imprisonment are employed. In Nigeria, Egypt, and Sudan, same-sex marriages are prohibited. According to Blondeel *et al*. (2018:28), in countries like Sudan, Somalia, and Nigeria, same-sex relationships are punishable by death. Nigeria has enacted legislation that makes it illegal for heterosexual family members and friends to support each other. According to the Human Rights Watch Report (2015:19), the Central African Republic has not exclusively outlawed

homosexual relationships, but certain laws still apply differently to homosexual and heterosexual individuals.

The Attitude of Religion Towards Homosexuality in Africa

The African continent is also prone to religious persuasions in which both Christianity and Islam denominations take uncompromising stances on homosexuality (Downie 2014). Most church leaders perceive the homosexual community as people who are possessed by evil and therefore in need of deliverance. These religious constellations argue that there are no examples of homosexual marriages in the Bible or the Quran as homosexuality is unnatural and inconsistent with what God-Allah had intended for humans (Yarhouse, 2010:17). On 23 January 2017, *News24* published an article about a visiting pastor who made remarks that same-sex relationships are disgusting, sinful, averring that not even animals practice it. Reportedly, it was these comments that led the South African celebrity choreographer Somizi Mhlongo to walk out during the sermon (Dayile, 2017:1). In another instance, on 22 July 2016, *News24* also reported that Mpho Tutu, daughter of renowned activist Archbishop Desmond Tutu, said the Roman Catholic Church had instructed a bishop to revoke her license, which granted her the authority to preside at Communion, officiate at weddings, baptisms, and funerals in South Africa. This was after she married a woman (Dayile, 2017:3).

In most instances, people center their arguments on the Old Testament passages such as Leviticus and the biblical account of Sodom and Gomorrah. Leviticus 18:22 states that "you must not have sexual intercourse with a man as you would with a woman, it is a detestable practice." Leviticus 20:13 further asserts that "if a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death." The New Testament also speaks against homosexuality. 1 Corinthians 6:9.10 Standard English Version reads, "do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality" (Nkosi & Masson, 2017:74).

In the South African context, Vincent and Howell (2014) find that homophobia in the era of human rights discourse has been framed significantly by notions that homosexuality is 'ungodly'. For the majority of South Africans, the church is a highly significant space for community and social engagement; it is where attitudes

and ethics are formed. For instance, Mavhandu-Mudzusi and Sandy (2015) demonstrate how such religious attitudes and ethics are the basis of stigma and discrimination against LGBT students in one rural South African university. Heterosexual peers and staff viewed LGBT students as "sinners, satanic or demon-possessed," and discrimination ranged from denial of services (including financial support and education material) to religious strategies against LGBT students (prayers and exorcism rituals), to threats of and actual violence. Given the pervasiveness of such beliefs, human rights discourses must act to envision LGBTI rights as consistent with religious beliefs and ethics (Meer, Lunau, Oberth, Daskilewicz, & Müller, 2017).

Unpacking the Acronym for a Holistic Understanding

Although it has become common to tie together LGBTIQ as an acronym, which in many instances suggests sameness, it should be acknowledged that these groups are distinct (Muller, 2014:2). It should also not be treated as a homogenous constellation of identities and persuasions (Gerber, Raj, Wilkinson & Langlois, 2021:5). Johnston (2016:670) contends that there may be a tendency to generalise the experiences of the 'LGBTIQ' community without giving specific attention to gendered differences. Members of this community are often described as one group because of the common experiences of stigma, discrimination, and differential treatment they experience in various contextual settings which unifies them as one group, but each group has a unique set of needs (Muller, 2014:2; Muller, 2017:2). Consequently, the authors have highlighted first their unique experiences of human rights violations based on their gender before summarising the common experiences on the African continent.

Arguably, the lesbians and gays, who are represented by the alphabetic '**L**' and '**G**', respectively have received considerable attention over time as compared to other members (Johnston, 2016:670). Nonetheless, gays and lesbians still experience prejudicial views, discrimination, harassment, and even assault, despite increased scholarly attention and media exposure (Jenkins, Lambert, & Baker, 2009:589). While it is generally acceptable to use the term "gay" to refer to all persons in same-sex relationships, it is also used to refer exclusively to homosexual men. However, it is also acceptable to label lesbians about women in same-sex relationships. Lesbian, particularly in Black communities, are labeled as deviant, due to their perceived gender and sexual

non-conformity (Stephens & Boonzaier,2020:327). On the other hand, gay men are frequently on the receiving end of negative attitudes and derogatory words such as *bitchy, sissy*, or *queen* to describe them (Borgeson & Valeri,2015:49).

In the acronym, the alphabet '**B**' represents the bisexual community. Since people often identify themselves as either heterosexual or homosexual, bisexual people are often unwelcomed in both heterosexual and homosexual communities, essentially making bisexual people feel rejected and excluded (Gerber, Raj, Wilkinson & Langlois, 2021:5). Consequently, experiences of the bisexual population sometimes entail violent assaults committed by current or ex-partners as well as stalking and sexual harassment (De Keseredy, Hall-Sanchez, Nolan & Swart, 2017:171). Bisexual women, in particular, are also at risk of experiencing these harms despite exposing their sexual orientation at the start of a heterosexual relationship. Other studies have verified that violence against bisexual women due to their sexual orientation intensifies the high rates of rape among bisexual women (Walters & Lippy, 2016:45; Messiger, 2017:1*)*.

The term 'transgender' represented by the alphabet '**T**' in the acronym is often used to refer to diverse groups of people whose gender is different from the sex they are assigned at birth (Wirtz *et al.,* 2020:230). Additionally, Johnston (2016:670) explains that the word 'trans' in the concept 'transgender' is "shorthand for numerous gender minorities, for example, transsexual, transvestite, cross-dresser, genderqueer, nonbinary, gender fluid, agender, non-gendered, third gender, trans woman, trans man, drag king and drag queen, to name a few." The study by Brown and Bakshi in Brighton, United Kingdom (cited by Johnston, 2016:671) established that the transgender is the most marginalised of the homosexual population. They are often victims of hate speech and harassment, including 'misgendering' (Gerber *et al*., 2021:5). For instance, when transgender people are arrested, they are often imprisoned with inmates who are similar to their current gender identity. As a result, they often experience humiliation and violence from other inmates (Wirtz *et al.,* 2020:234).

The Intersex people, who are represented by the alphabet '**I,**' are arguably the least understood, largely because people are born with physical sex characteristics that do not fit medical and social norms for 'female' or 'male' body types (Johnston, 2016:670; Gerber *et al*., 2021:5). Unfortunately, intersex people

are the subjects of uninformed and non-consensual surgery on intersex babies and children to 'normalise' their genitalia, such that they fit within conventional medical gender norms (Gerber *et al*., 2021:5). Last, it is important to define the last alphabet of the acronym. '**Q**' stands for Queer. In its initial conception, queer meant something 'odd,' 'different' or 'strange.' However, queer was later employed to cultivate a radical identity politics that challenged the idea of a unified 'gay' identity and subject. During this time queer was therefore also treated as an identity, advocated by some queer political groups as an inclusive term to encompass the spectrum of non-heteronormative experiences (Rumens, de Souza & Brewis, 2019:596).

The Manifestation of GBV against LGBTIQ on the African Continent

There are various contexts within which the homosexual community experience violence on the African continent. A study conducted by Logie (2013:17) on stigma towards LGBTIQ in Swaziland and Lesotho found that parents from Lesotho expect sons to inherit the family wealth as part of cultural expectations. They expect *lobola* (dowry) in the form of cows when their daughters get married. When they see their children identifying themselves as homosexuals, it often has a devastating epiphany on their futures. Furthermore, women have to dress in a way that is culturally acceptable when going to tribal offices to seek services. For instance, women must not show their shoulders; they must cover their heads and wear long skirts or dresses. The transgender women are comfortable wearing trousers instead of dresses and unfortunately, they do not receive any help from the chief's offices when dressed in the preferred manner; instead, they get shamed. In many rural areas, if it is known that somebody is in a homosexual relationship, they are taken to the chief and made to pay punitive fines. In Swaziland, societal discrimination against the homosexual community is prevalent as they are routinely victimised, and their opinions are dismissed and excluded at community meetings (DiDiRi Collective, 2013).

There also seems to be a collaborative consensus of zero tolerance amongst religious and traditional leaders in the Sub-Saharan region (McEwen, 2018). Hence, coming out as LGBTIQ is one of the most difficult undertakings in identity politics. Research demonstrates that individuals who decide to come out as LGBTIQ report experiences of guilt, confusion, anger, fear, and vulnerability (Ali & Barden, 2015;

Deloatch- Williams, 2020). In most instances, many parents and significant others exhibit negative reactions to the disclosure of their children regarding their sexuality (Moskwitz, Stein & Lightfoot, 2013).

In South Africa, where the authors reside, violence against LGBTIQ seems to be persistent (Shefer, 2019:419), particularly along racial lines. According to Spira, Chad, and Schneeweis (2015), Black lesbians, gays, and transgendered persons are more vulnerable to hate crimes, particularly in rural areas and townships (Spira *et al.,* 2015). On average, there are 10 reported cases of corrective rape weekly, one transgendered person is murdered per month (US Department State Human Rights Report on South Africa, 2010). Corrective rape perpetuates patriarchy through gender power dynamics. Some men who admit to performing corrective rape shamelessly say that if they wanted to finish lesbians and gays, they would rape them. They believe that a man must go back to his manhood (Devji, 2016). Downie (2014) also postulates that lesbians are particularly vulnerable to corrective rape and the police often treat the victims with indifference. In a worrying set of findings, a study conducted by the South African Human Rights Commission (2008) found that schools are among the most dangerous places for gays and lesbian youth. This hostile environment is further exacerbated by educators who hold conservative views about gender and sexuality (Sinacore e al., 2021:1669). However, all children have a right to education as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Gerber *et al*., 2021:7).

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

The social work profession is founded on core values related to service, social justice, and respect for dignity and worth. From the ecosystems perspective, social work addresses the interaction between the person and the environment. This profession has a legacy of serving marginalised populations (Dube, 2017:47) such as lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender, intersex, and queer. It further seeks to enhance and restore the psychosocial functioning of people. Therefore, social workers need to change the oppressive and prescriptive social conditions affecting the lives of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender people (Mabvurira, *et al.,* 2012:222). Given the centrality of the role of social work in helping the marginalised populations, it is important to review gender-based violence based on gender to enhance cultural competency on the significant challenges facing the homosexual community (Foss, 2017:3).

The literature review shows that GBV against LGBTIQ is a prevalent yet complex phenomenon. Discourses in the African continent perpetuate heteronormative views (Reygan & Lynette, 2014) and homophobia towards the LGBTIQ. Furthermore, the review illustrates that there is no national data documenting violence against members of the homosexual community in South Africa. Similarly, there seems to be a dearth in the literature on this subject, especially in social work (Butler 2010) GBV has shattering effects on the lives of LGBTIQ resulting in poor physical, emotional, social, and psychological well-being. Therefore, prioritising and documenting hate crimes against the homosexual community is essential for developing appropriate and meaningful social work interventions and support systems that are responsive to their needs. Taruvinga and Mushayamunda (2018) contend that investigating violence based on one's gender helps both professionals and the homosexual community in handling their challenges. In this regard, social work practice is relevant to advance this mandate and offer appropriate and more relevant intervention.

Inclusivity and Diversity Programs

Although LGBTIQ can be a valuable umbrella term, it can also mislead anti-GBV activists and practitioners to ignore the unique human rights challenges confronting different groups that constitute the acronym. Urgent and well-tailored initiatives are needed to address complex human rights issues that the broader membership of the homosexuality community experience. As agents of social change and advocacy, social workers should empower communities and lawmakers through training and localized GBV programs related to the diversity that exists within the homosexual community. It is therefore important to reduce the discrimination against, and isolation of bisexual people. As such a bisexual awareness and legal reform program should substitute the commonly held assumption that an individual is either straight or gay and replace it with a more inclusive understanding of the diversity of sexuality.

The Central Role of Social Work in Addressing the Gap between Legislation and Practice

As this article demonstrates, there is a gap between legislation and practice in addressing challenges confronting the homosexual community. Therefore, social workers are better placed to bridge this gap by advocating for policies that are responsive to the needs of this marginalised community. Moreover, they can

also help in strengthening and enhancing the multi-sectoral service delivery network at the micro, macro, and mezzo level. Social workers could also play a significant role in raising awareness in various communities through formal and informal education. Dlamini (2020:6) advises that civil society has a major role to play in building strong advocacy and awareness about the scourge of GBV. As such, advocacy work should include bringing all stakeholders together, sensitising and engaging the private sector on ways to identify and respond to GBV, addressing gender inequality; partnership with media and faith-based leaders for challenging gender stereotypes and toxic masculinity. There is also a dire need to engage with the law.

The Need for Community Education

A need to reach rural areas and townships leaders are also required to help reduce the stigma against the homosexual community. Within this context, social workers can educate communities about gender and sexuality, human rights, and social justice. There is also a need to include gender issues in schools across the country to reduce gender stereotypes that associate GBV with femininity and masculinity and the stereotypes that perpetuate violence against LGBTIQ. Educational awareness campaigns that target the broader society should be conducted, either through face-to-face interactions or media platforms such as radio, social media, television, billboards, newspapers, and pamphlets written in all official languages. Dlamini (2020:6) advises that the messaging should be inclusive in terms of language and accessible in terms of media channels used to ensure reaching all vulnerable groups. In addition, these campaigns must be continuous, age-appropriate, and user-friendly to people living with disabilities.

The Need for Empirical Data to Guide the Professions

In the penultimate, investigating gender-based violence requires a theoretically informed understanding of gender. Acknowledging that members of the LGBTIQ community are also victims of gender-based violence rather than violence against women could engender what these researchers perceive as a "[2] gender transformative" GBV prevention programme.

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[2]Gender transformative approaches refers to programs that explicitly focus at least in part on a critical examination of gender-related norms and expectations (Casey, Carlson, Bulls, & Yager, 2018:231) and seeks to alter gender norms and foster increased gender equity (Fry, Skinner & Wheeler, 2017:640).

Therefore, broader research on all members of the homosexual community as victims of gender-based is encouraged.

CONCLUSION

To the literature, LGBTIQ experience vicarious challenges due to the ideological and physical institutionalisation of GBV which has a devastating impact on their holistic well-being. Despite the legal frameworks that safeguard basic human rights and anti-discriminatory practices, violence against the homosexual community is prevalent in South Africa. This violence ranges from being denied access to health care, housing, employment, and other basic human rights based on their sexual orientation and gender identities. Although this scourge of violence is widely researched, the dominant narrative and understanding of the phenomenon focus on male-on-female violence. Using queer theory in this article offers a framework to view GBV against LGBTIQ as a violation of human rights and to expand the understanding embedded in the common binary. Social workers could bridge the gap between policy and practice. Additionally, they could advocate for policies that recognise, appreciate, and respond to the needs of LGBTIQ. Moreover, social workers could help in strengthening and enhancing the multi-sectoral service delivery network at the micro, macro, and mezzo level.

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