COMMUNICATING MASCULINITY:
ATTITUDES OF ADOLESCENT MALES IN RURAL
SOUTH AFRICA TO RAPE AND GENDER RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Rape is a national crisis in South Africa. The high prevalence of rape is evidenced by reports that a woman is raped every four minutes. Various studies have explored attitudes of adolescents to rape; however, they tend to focus on urban, township and college youth with the attitudes of rural boys almost neglected. Drawing on the socialisation theory, it is assumed that the way a boy is socialised through communicative practices at home, school, among the peer group, and in society at large impacts on his attitudes to gender and rape. Through focus group interviews with adolescent boys in Duthuni village in the Limpopo province of South Africa, this study confirms that cultural communicative practices about gender, such as interpersonal communication in family, shape the socialisation of these boys, which influence the acceptance of gender roles displayed in the social construction of masculinity and femininity. This consequently influences their perceptions of rape, and the social efforts to combat rape.

Keywords: attitudes, masculinity, femininity, perceptions, rape, rural adolescents, South Africa, interpersonal communication, communication

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INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of rape in South Africa indicates that it is a national crisis. Various data reveal the frequent and often violent incidences of rape. According to Nicholson and Jones (2013), a woman is raped every four minutes in South Africa and 144 women report rape to the police every day, which means that six cases of rape are reported every hour, meaning that there could be up to 3600 rapes in South Africa every day. In addition to this, Jewkes *et al*. (2009) report that one in four South African men admitted to raping a woman.

The violent nature of rape in South Africa continues to be reported in the media and this creates public outcry. In this regard, Smith (2012) reports on a 17-year old girl who was violently gang-raped, mutilated and left to die. In yet another case, a 17-year-old girl from Soweto, who is mentally challenged, was gang-raped by young men who videotaped the incident and offered her R2 to keep her from reporting the attack. These are only two of many similar reported cases. It also appears that in the school context South African girls are likely to be sexually assaulted by one or more of their male classmates. Many girls have been subjected to sexual violence at schools - in bathrooms and empty classrooms as reported by the Human Rights Watch (2001). Moreover, some adolescents' attitudes regarding violence against girls have been found to perpetuate such violence. These attitudes include the belief that a boy can rape his girlfriend if she makes him wait too long to have sex with her, or that it is impossible to rape a girl in a relationship with a boy where the boy and the girl have previously had sex (Kann 2008).

On the foundation of the socialisation theory, it is assumed that the way in which a boy is socialised at home, school, among the peer group and in society at large presents the masculine role as dominant and controlling. This impacts on his attitudes to rape and the domination and objectification of women, which lead to a culture of rape in South Africa (Vogelman 1990). Attitudes have been of central concern in relation to violence against women. According to Flood and Pease (2009), attitudes toward men's violence against women shape the perpetration of violence against women. Attitudes are also the target of violence-prevention campaigns. As a result, studying attitudes is important in order to understand violence against women and its prevention.

The South African government through the Department of Basic Education, and in partnership with Lead SA (a private initiative by independent broadcasting and newspaper houses), began a major initiative called the Stop Rape Campaign. The main purpose of this campaign is to communicate critical issues around rape and gender-based violence by raising awareness and educating South Africa's learners about the scourge of sexual violence. The campaign was initiated on 22 February 2013 when the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, issued a directive to all provincial education departments to call upon all schools across the country

to hold a special assembly on 1 March 2013 during which learners would be addressed about rape and sexual crimes. President Jacob Zuma officially launched the Stop Rape Campaign on 28 February 2013. Many schools across the country supported the campaign and learners were educated on women and children's rights, rape, sexual violence, and awareness about their rights and responsibilities. One of the aims of this study is to explore the attitudes and reaction of rural male learners towards this anti-rape campaign.

Many studies have examined the attitudes of youth towards rape in higher academic institutions, and in urban and township locations. For example, Magwaza (2007) examined the attitudes and perceptions of students at the University of Zululand toward rape victims, and Kann (2008) explored adolescent township boys' attitudes and perceptions about gender and sexual relationships. There are, however, limited studies of the attitudes and perception of high school learners, especially rural adolescent learners, toward rape.

Focusing on young rural men is relevant considering the social challenges that confront many rural dwellers. For instance, there are challenges related to poverty, limited access to social and economic utilities, and limited and weak presence of security agencies such as the police which may lead to many unreported cases of rape. There is also the assumption that cultural beliefs about gender roles are prevalent in traditional rural settings that describe most villages. It then becomes relevant to examine how all these may shape the perceptions and attitudes of young rural men to rape and gender relations. It is also important to examine how communicative practices, such as communication with family members, interaction with the peer group, media messages, and cultural practices contribute to the socialisation process of rural young men. Specifically, it is relevant to examine how the socialisation process shapes young rural males' attitudes to rape and gender relations.

In order to achieve this, the following research questions guided this study: what are rural adolescent males' perception of and attitudes to rape? What is the role of communicative practices of socialisation in shaping these attitudes to rape and gender relations? What is the role of the societal and cultural construction of gender in the rural adolescent males' perception of rape and gender relations? What are the rural adolescent males' attitudes to the government's Stop Rape Campaign? The overall objective of this study is to provide an understanding of the attitudes of rural adolescent boys, a less studied population, to gender relations, rape and the efforts to combat sexual violence.

LITERATURE

Attitudes and perceptions toward rape

There are many studies globally that have examined attitudes of youth to rape. A few of these studies will be briefly discussed below.

Ben-David and Schneider (2005) examined the connection between rape perceptions, gender role attitudes, and victim-perpetrator acquaintance among students in Israel. Significant negative correlations were found between gender-role attitudes and measures of rape perceptions in this study. Women tend to have more egalitarian attitudes than men with regard to gender roles. Women also were less likely to minimise the severity of rape situations and the appropriate punishment for rapists.

Kamal, Shaikh and Shaikh (2010) examined the attitudes and perceptions of rape among university students in Islamabad, Pakistan. They found that attitudes and beliefs blaming the female victims of rape were more common among males. Male students were more likely to believe that a strong character might shield women from the advances of a rapist. The male participants were of the opinion that only young, pretty women were raped, and that women's tacit willingness to participate in sex is present in rape. About 25 percent of the students also believe that a raped woman is not worthy of becoming another man's wife, and one third of the students believe there can be no rape in marital context. Largely, attitudes and beliefs blaming the female victim of rape were more common among males.

In the United States, Nagel *et al*. (2005) compared perceptions of victims of rape across a wide range of ages, educational backgrounds, religions and income levels, while focusing on gender and racial differences. Results indicate that victims of rape are generally viewed more sympathetically by females than by males and by whites than by African Americans. The study also indicates that age, sex, education and income are significant predictors of attitudes toward victims. Younger participants and those who are more educated in this study tend to have more favorable attitudes toward victims of rape than older participants and those who are less educated.

In South Africa, Kann (2008) explored adolescent township boys' attitudes and perceptions toward sexual relationships. In particular, the study focused on what the construct of "rape" is perceived to be. Eleven adolescent boys aged between 16 and 19 and attending one high school in Alexandra township participated in the study. It was found that the majority of the participants have adopted some rape-supportive beliefs and ideas, and heavily displayed some gender role stereotypes and hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity describes how boys are socialised into gender roles that see masculinity in terms of aggression, power, bravery and heterosexuality. It implies that being a "real man" means

having multiple girlfriends, being the breadwinner, and having the power to make females submissive to men.

Other studies have supported the argument that the cultural display of hegemonic masculinity tends to lead to violence against women. For instance, Flood and Pease (2009) argue that men with more traditional, rigid and misogynistic gender-role attitudes are more likely to practice marital violence. For these reasons they argue that attitudes shaped by a cultural perception of gender roles, which operates on individual, organisational, communal and societal levels, should be the target of violence-prevention campaigns.

Magwaza (2007) examined the attitudes of 150 University of Zululand students, aged 18 to 25, toward rape victims. The female participants formed 54.7 percent of the sample, with 45.3 percent male. In this study more males than females displayed negative attitudes toward rape victims. For example, more males disagreed that a raped woman is usually an innocent victim. Younger participants were more sensitive towards rape victims. The overall results from this study indicate a positive attitude towards rape victims. This means that the participants generally perceive women as innocent victims of sexual violence and acknowledge that women are emotionally and physically affected by sexual violence.

Socialisation, society and gender role expectations

A study of socialisation provides a way to understand attitudes and perceptions in society. Engaging the socialisation theory assists in understanding how young males have been socialised to construct their own meanings, perceptions and attitudes toward sexual relationships, and more specifically, rape (Kann 2008). Socialisation can be defined as a process through which people are acculturated to attitudes and ways of behaving that allow them to participate in society (Harway & O'Neil 1999). The theory of socialisation provides a premise that effectively explains the influence social factors have on attitudes and behaviour.

Vogelman (1990) argues that children require the moral codes, social skills and sex role behaviours necessary for proper functioning in society and these skills are acquired through socialisation processes. The socialisation theory suggests that social institutions help mould experiences, attitudes and behaviours, and these in turn may contribute to situations and attitudes in society, including the incidence of rape. A key element of this theory is the belief that behaviour is the result of social rather than biological factors. Flood and Pease (2009) argue that attitudes toward violence against women are formed through social processes at multiple levels of the social order. However, a critique of the socialisation approach is that it is limited because it does not take internal factors into account. It is argued that the individual and his 'free will' are often ignored and the individual is seen as having no control over his own attitudes, decisions and behaviour (Koss & Harvey 1991).

Scholars such as Thorne (1993) have argued that gender role socialisation has an impact on expectations of behaviour and attitude around gender relations. According to Thorne (1993), gender role expectations are seen to influence a person's identity from birth, and are ingrained in our personality, which influences how we see ourselves. Socialisation often begins in the home with direct communication with parents and family members, and through communicative and cultural practices in the home. Witt (1997) states that a child's earliest exposure to gender-role expectations comes from their parents and adds that from the time children are babies, parents treat boys and girls differently; girls are expected to be sweet and sensitive and boys are expected to be strong and brave.

Frosh *et al.* (2003) argue that masculinities are not purely naturally occurring; instead, they are constructed in social interactions and achieved through the use of the cultural resources available to particular boys and men. Gender is constructed or learned from certain conditions, experiences and contingencies that a culture systematically and differentially pairs with being female and male, and is a major social category used by most societies as a basis for socialisation and the assumption of social status (Lott & Maluso 1993). Children learn at a very early age what it means to be a boy or a girl in our society. Through countless activities, opportunities and various forms of communication and guidance children experience the process of gender role socialisation. Gender roles are non-physiological components of sex that are regarded culturally as appropriate to males and females (Martin, Wood & Little 1990). As children develop, the gender stereotypes they are exposed to in their home context and socialised with are reinforced by other elements in their environment and are thus perpetuated throughout childhood and into adolescence (Martin *et al*. 1990).

According to Kann (2008), South Africa is traditionally a male dominated patriarchal society. Men are expected to hold power while women are expected to passively stand back and are frequently exploited. Research on masculinity in South Africa shows that men who do not drink, smoke or hang out with other men are referred to in insulting and demeaning terms (Walker 2005).

This socialisation approach to gender stereotypes suggests that gender can be a reliable predictor of social behaviour only under certain conditions, especially where the situation provides strong expectations of gender-related behaviour. Social and gender expectations that adolescent boys be confident and knowledgeable when it comes to sex limit their expression of doubts and uncertainties. As a result they often accept incorrect sexual information without question or learn about sexuality by chance (Koss & Harvey 1990); Kann (2008) also suggests that rape is more prevalent in such societies. The understanding that the way in which people are socialised influence their attitudes and behaviour assists in engaging

the attitudes and perceptions of the rural adolescent males in this study to rape, gender relations and the Stop Rape Campaign.

METHODOLOGY

This study is designed as in-depth qualitative research that relies on the accounts and opinions of adolescent high schools boys. This qualitative design leads to an interpretive research paradigm. Interpretive paradigm addresses the research agenda from the view that there are many realities and multiple truths that are derived from people's perspectives in an environment. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), the interpretive paradigm allows for deep understanding of human action, motives and feelings. This leads to a methodological approach that allows for evidence for claims about social issues and actions to be recorded and expressed using verbal and narrative means, which provides the opportunity for the voices, concerns and practices of research participants to be heard (Lindlof & Taylor 2002; Weaver & Olson 2006). Drawing from this approach, two focus group sessions were conducted with 16 boys aged between 16 and 18 who attend a secondary school at Duthuni, a village near Thohoyandou about 200 kilometres from Polokwane in the Limpopo province of South Africa.

The sampling of the participants for this study was done by posting invitations to participate at the school gate with the approval of the school authorities, directly from the principal. The learners who responded to the invitation by either calling or sending a "please-call-me" (a text message requesting the receiver to call the sender) were sent a notifying message with the information about where and when to meet with the researcher. Every volunteer received a consent form with information about the study. This form states the objective of the study, the expected roles of participants, and information on how their privacy will be protected and their confidentiality maintained. Participants were assured of their anonymity in that their real names will not appear in the report of the research. To achieve this anonymity, participants were given aliases to use in addressing each other during the discussions. Before they could participate in the study, the volunteers were asked to sign the consent form; for participants under the age of 18, parental consent was sought and granted, and parents co-signed the consent forms.

A female moderator conducted the first focus group session with eight adolescent male participants. Questions about rape, the Stop Rape Campaign, and about masculinity and femininity were asked. The session lasted about 60 minutes and was tape-recorded for analysis. The rationale for using a female moderator was to examine if the participants would provide comments that may be influenced by the presence of a female, either by under-disclosing their opinions with sensitivity to gender issues or otherwise, and for the female moderator to be on the lookout for any gender role stereotypes at play during the session. Based on the

assumption that people of the same gender may disclose more information when interacting together than when interacting with someone of a different gender, a male moderator conducted the second focus group with another group of eight boys. The discussion was based on the same questions and the session lasted for 60 minutes.

Data from the discussions were transcribed and studied for analysis. Using thematic analysis, the transcribed data were studied for keywords, phrases, patterns and themes, and the data was categorised into four broad themes. The themes are *perceptions of rape, societal role on attitudes, construction of masculinity,* and *perceptions of the Stop Rape Campaign.* In the following presentation of the findings, these four themes provide thematic categories under which the findings of the study are presented and discussed. Direct quotations from the participants are presented to provide evidence of their opinions and attitudes regarding these four themes, which encapsulate the research questions identified for the study.

FINDINGS

Theme 1: Perceptions of rape

Findings reveal the participants' perceptions of what rape is and what the different types of rape are. Findings from the focus group discussions indicate that the adolescent boys generally consider rape as violent, forced sexual harassment where the rapist uses power to gratify his/her sexual needs without the victim's consent. All the participants agreed that rape happens to all people, young and old, female and male. One of the participants specifically addressed the occurrences of HIV/Aids and rape and cited the violent instances of baby rape, where babies and toddlers are raped due to superstitious beliefs that if an HIV positive man sleeps with a virgin he will be cured. To this participant, this unfounded culturally held belief among certain people in society is contributing to the spread of HIV and the callous incidences of baby rape in South Africa.

While there was a general consensus that rape happens to both males and females, there was a slight debate and disagreement about male rape. Although most of the participants acknowledged that male rape can occur, the majority opinion was that it only happens in certain situations. One such situation, as a participant put it, is that "in prisons males are raped by other inmates. We hear such cases very often, even from the former inmates who have experienced this". Only one participant in focus group 2 had a different opinion, noting that male rape does not exist in real life. He noted, "I have never heard of a male who was raped, it only happens in the movies".

In contrast to this, another participant pointed out:

> Men are raped but they don't come out and say it because they don't want to be perceived as weak. The rapes in prison are man-to-man rape; I do believe that a man can be raped by a woman, sometimes men consent to initiate sexual intercourse [unwillingly]. For an example, if a man is tired from work and when he gets home he does not want to entertain his woman and she forces herself on him.

This comment generated a discussion about marital rape, with the majority of the boys reluctantly agreeing that rape can occur among married couples. A participant's comment sums up this debate:

> You know, I agree with you because many a times we hear of married couples rape, and you wonder what causes that. Can you really rape the person you call your wife/husband? But it is true because like we agreed rape is when there is no consent, if your wife/husband says I am tired that should be it.

Generally, rural adolescent males perceive rape as a sexual act with no consent, with the offender using her/his power or strength over the victim; these boys also are of the opinion that rape happens to all people of all genders and ages.

Theme 2: Societal role on attitudes and socialisation

The adolescent boys generally draw on their experiences in the society they live in to explain their perceptions of rape and issues related to rape. This provides a glimpse into the socialisation process in the social environment the boys live in that eventually shapes their everyday experiences. Their opinions are largely influenced by these experiences; for example, in defining rape they relate it to their "society". As the participant who does not believe in male rape put it, "in the society I live, I have never heard of a man who was raped that's why I think male rape is not happening here".

From their argument one could conclude that these young men's attitudes and perceptions are built on what they observe from the society at large. When discussing definitions of masculinity versus femininity the boys generally believe that a man or woman is defined in conjunction with the expectations of the society. A participant from focus group 1 explained that a man assumes a powerful role in society because growing up in the village boys observe that their fathers go to work, while mothers stay at home. This invariably allocates power and authority to men as the breadwinners. The idea of power and authority derived from structural configurations in society is reiterated by most of the boys, even in the absence of men being breadwinners. One argues:

> Yes, we are what our society tells us to be, as men we still have the power to be leaders in the society, a man is still the head of the family even if he is not employed. The reason I am saying this is because family is known by the male's name, even if he does not work.

One aspect derived from the societal role in the socialisation process is the conceptualisation of maleness, masculinity and power. This conceptualisation informs gender role expectations and it defines the way these boys are socialised. This socialisation largely starts at home; mostly from the way parents communicate gender expectations to their children. A participant draws on his experience to elucidate this point:

> You know, one day I came back from school crying because I had fought with my female classmate, my mother told me I was a fool. When my father came back from work she told him, and he told me that I was not a man because men don't cry and they don't fight with women, they beat women.

Another adds:

> Several times I would hear my mother telling my uncle's wife that 'munna ndi ndou hali muri munwe fhedzi', this means that men can have multiple partners and women are expected to respect that.

A participant from focus group 2 (facilitated by a male) says that:

> As African men we believe that things such as rape and abuse happen to women and children. That's why we have the highest rate of women and children abuse and rape. We as men are raised to believe that a man cannot be overpowered by a woman in any way.

However, a participant in focus group 1, with a female facilitator, notes that one aspect of the society is that we live in a democratic society where all people are equal and should be treated as such. In general the societal role in socialisation influences the attitudes and perceptions about gender relations and rape.

Theme 3: Constructions of masculinity

The societal role on attitudes and perceptions of the adolescent boys to gender and gender roles is notably displayed in their social construction of masculinity. Three sub-themes were identified under this theme and they were extracted directly from the comments offered by the participants. These sub-themes are *men are leaders, being the breadwinner,* and *men should be respected and honoured.*

Men are leaders

There is a general opinion about maleness that besides being respected and honoured, men are considered leaders in every culture, especially in the African culture. A participant supports this by noting that in the African culture most leaders are men, "they rule the world, the president of the country and chiefs in rural villages are males". Drawing from a religious text, the Bible, another participant supports this, "from creation in Genesis it is said that Adam was created first and God took a rib from him to create for him a helper, so women are here to support and not to lead us". In a similar argument another participant notes, "whether you are traditional [practicing African traditional beliefs] or a Christian, women need men to make it through life, they need our manpower and they need to be loved". A participant sums up this socially constructed idea of male superiority and authority by saying:

> In my opinion men should be the leaders in politics, churches and in all the organisations including the family, because they have power and are strong to face any threat and challenges.

On the other hand their perceptions and attitude to femaleness is weakness and being emotional. A participant states, "Women are weak and emotional, they get shaken easily and they cry instead of dealing with the situation. Sometimes they are too sweet."

Being the breadwinner

Another theme in the boys' idea of masculinity in relation to femininity is that a real man is in charge and takes care of his family by providing support financially. However, some of the boys felt that it was acceptable for women to work; though the general agreement was that men should earn more than women. It appears that there is a concern that if a woman earns more money than a man, then the man would feel inferior and the woman might lose respect for "her man". The issues of respect and authority and men deserving of these are generally repeated by most of the participants. Men, they argue, are deserving of these because they are breadwinners.

Men should be respected and honoured

The boys also generally believe that, even if the man is not the breadwinner, he is still deserving of being "respected and honoured" by women. A participant cites an instance to buttress this point:

> The man next door is uneducated and unemployed but when you look at him and his wife you see a normal couple, they look happy and you can see he still has the respect he deserves as the man of the house; men are bound to be respected, even the Bible says so.

Another participant concurs, "The Bible even commands that women should submit to their husbands".

The participants' construction of masculinity is influenced by different systems of socialisation with the family being the most influential institution. The belief systems, including religious beliefs, play a major role in these perceptions, which eventually shape gender role expectations. Men are to be respected by women, and if women are to be loved, it is by men. Undoubtedly, these attitudes and beliefs influence their perceptions of gender relations and rape. Since religion and cultural beliefs dictate that women are to submit to their men, this is also translated to mean sexual submission, and men who report their abuse by women are considered "women"; "they lose their respect as men, and are seen as weak". A participant argues,

> Men who report being raped are considered women, even if you could just be submissive to a girl as a boy, they'll tell you that 'Ni musadzi' [you are a woman]. Which is why you would hear men saying 'the police will laugh at you if you report being abused by a woman'. To us as men, rape is a woman thing.

Theme 4: Perceptions of the Stop Rape Campaign

This group of adolescents strongly agree that considering the rate of sexual violence at schools, the government ought to initiate a campaign, educate learners and encourage them to fight the scourge of rape. Although some of the participants seem not to relate to the campaign, they acknowledge it is a good initiative and relevant. For the few participants who are sceptical about the campaign, their scepticism is geared toward the government itself, they see the campaign as "just one of the government's stunts to get our attention; they just want to paint an image that they care". Two participants, one from each group, argued that the campaign is more relevant to females, and less to males, because girls are more at risk of being raped than men. But generally the boys consider the campaign a very important initiative; one participant elucidates this well:

> Looking at what is happening in our country; the Stop Rape Campaign is a good initiative, because as learners we are now in the know of what to do when faced with such a crisis … You know, for me the campaign is generally relevant because the case of Anene Booysen was not just a new story in our society, we have had two similar cases in the past two years; in 2011 a grade 9 learner was raped and killed, and also in the following year, 2012, a grade 7 learner was raped and her body was striped [sic].

The fact that the case of Anene Booysen, a 17-year-old girl who was gang-raped, disemboweled and left to die, was not considered a unique case but one of the numerous violent rape cases talks to the acknowledgment of the rampant incidence of violent rape in South Africa. The boys acknowledge that with the rate of rape in schools, a campaign that informs learners of what to do to avoid rape, and in the unfortunate situation that it happens, what to do afterwards, and how to approach and use the criminal justice system is necessary. The boys also note that the campaign does not only educate about rape, but it is also a form of warning to a potential rapist, because the campaign emphasises the penalty of imprisonment for perpetrators of rape. As one participant puts it, "The knowledge from the campaign restricts me from raping a female schoolmate knowing that they are well informed to put me in jail". The two groups of boys in general show positive attitudes towards the campaign noting that even if it does not eradicate the crime of rape, the Stop Rape Campaign will help reduce not only the rate of rape of school children both inside and outside schools, but also reduce the spread of disease among the young generation and help solve other psychological problems that come with rape. One participant sums this up,

> I personally think that this campaign is a good initiative because rape on its own comes with a lot of problems such as committing suicide, transmission of diseases, and psychological problems. In trying to fight against rape we also fight against the spread of HIV/Aids and prevent rape-related suicidal deaths.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

There were no pattern of differences in the reaction and interaction of the participants with the female facilitator and the male facilitator. The boys in focus group 1 acknowledged that it was interesting to engage in such a discussion with a female. From the results it is clear that participants are well informed of what rape is and are also familiar with the different types of rape. In this sense, these findings contradict findings discussed in some early studies (cf. Muehlenhard & Felts 1998; Muehlenhard & Hollabaugh 1988) which indicate the ignorance of when a situation is rape, or that a woman means "yes" when she says "no". The participants in this study understand rape and sexual consent. They acknowledge that sex without consent is rape.

From gender role socialisation there is the acknowledgement that masculinity is not purely naturally occurring; instead, it is constructed in social interactions and communicative practices and achieved through the use of the cultural resources available to particular boys and men (Frosh *et al*. 2003). This is evident in the findings of this study because the adolescent males' arguments about masculinity

and femininity are heavily based on what is expected in the society - the family and other social institutions, as well as the belief systems. Communication with family plays an influencing role in gender identity, and the belief systems have a strong influence on their gender role construction. The Christian religious assertions, exemplified through texts from the Bible, are used by the boys in the construction of masculinity and interpretation of gender roles. They draw on this religious text and traditional cultural beliefs to argue that females are to submit to men, men are the head and the leaders, men should protect women since women are considered weak and emotional. The danger with such construction of masculinity is that it creates a sense of entitlement and power, which may play out in gender relations regarding sex.

This study confirms the arguments that the socialisation of boys and the construction of masculinity and femininity play a huge role in the incidence of violence against women. The role of the family becomes important in this aspect, and often this socialisation is generational. This is exemplified by the participant in the study stating that his father berated him for fighting or arguing with a woman, stating instead that "men don't cry and they don't fight with women, they beat women". From this, the argument can be made that violence against women is cultivated through socialisation, often starting from home and family.

There are clear indications that boys' perceptions and attitudes are influenced by the society in which they live - that is, boys' perceptions and attitudes represent their socialised roles in the society. Therefore, this study concurs with other studies (cf. Black & McCloskey 2013) that show that rape attitudes and perceptions are affected by gender roles, the way in which boys are socialised, and the societal construction of masculinity and femininity. Interestingly, the media as a huge cultural institution is glaringly absent from the boys' analyses of gender role construction. Undoubtedly, the media plays a huge role in the construction of gender roles and representation of male and female, but there was no mention of the influence of the media for this group of rural boys. Their traditional beliefs, family communicative practices and religious beliefs play the most roles in their socialisation.

There were signs of alternative and open-minded voices of masculinity evolving from a few of the participants. These opposed versions of masculinity indicate the potential for change in the gendered system. In a couple of instances participants challenged hegemonic masculinity dismissing some gender roles while demonstrating support for more reasonable relationships between men and women. As Kann (2008) notes, this suggests that alternative forms of masculinity were operating alongside dominant forms, and as such, it is possible, through socialisation, to "learn" and "unlearn" gender myths and sexist ideas.

Although there is some disagreement on the relevance of the Stop Rape Campaign in this study as a few participants still believe that rape education is meant for females because they are the ones at greater risk of being raped, the majority of the participants show positive attitudes toward the campaign. They note that the campaign will help reduce the rate of rape in schools and hope the rate of reported rape will increase, and the rapists will face the criminal justice system. Conclusions can be drawn that most of these adolescents have positive attitudes toward the Stop Rape Campaign as a social effort to combat the high incidence of rape in South Africa.

It is recommended that the Department of Basic Education improves on the campaign by including such educational messages about rape in the content of academic subjects, such as Life Orientation. The campaign should not be a once-off event; learners should be constantly reminded or educated about rape. Societal construction of masculinity and societal gender role expectations should be considered major themes relating to attitudes and perceptions of rape.

Since the study indicates that socialisation of boys shape many of their attitudes and perceptions, socialisation institutions, such as schools, the family and religious institutions, can be useful in addressing issues of rape and the construction of gender roles because these adolescents are heavily influenced by these institutions.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study confirm that adolescent rural boys, like other groups of young men, are influenced by socialisation process in their society. Their attitudes and perceptions of rape, violence against women, and construction of gender roles are influenced by their socialisation in society. However, unlike urban and township boys, these rural adolescents do not rely heavily on the media, but rather their daily socialisation at home, and their belief systems (traditional and biblical dictates) influence their attitudes and perceptions. These socialising elements of boys influence their construction of masculinity and femininity, which plays a huge role in gender relationships and incidences of violence against women.

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