

Discourse analysis of Intimate partner violence (IPV) of young people from Soweto, Johannesburg

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South African study conducted in the Eastern Cape estimate that 31.8% of young men aged 15-26 years perpetrated sexual and physical violence against their intimate partner. A study conducted among 16-44 year women attending antenatal clinics in Soweto reported high incidents of IPV from adolescents at the age of 15 years old. These were both quantitative surveys providing the magnitude problem of IPV, an in-depth qualitative understanding of the phenomenon is needed to better understand the contextual and local drivers of IPV. Young people's perceptions and experiences of intimate partner violence in Black South African townships are under-researched. The study aim is to explore how young people (15-20 years) perceive and experience IPV from Soweto, Johannesburg. A qualitative and convenience sampling approach is used to conduct in-depth interviews with 20 males and females. The study reports how young people's perceptions and experiences of IPV are socially constructed and maintained through social discourses.

Key words: Discourse, Gender-based violence, Intimate partner violence, Soweto, Young people.

Methods

Research design

The researchers has chosen a qualitative approach because it aims towards understanding participants' ideas, opinions and beliefs in greater detail from the participant's point of view (Babbie & Mouton, 2004; Smith, 2008), The study aimed to explore how young people from Soweto perceive and experience IPV.

Study setting

This study was conducted in Soweto, an acronym for South Western Townships, in Gauteng province, South Africa. Gauteng province comprised of approximately 12.9 million people (City Population, 2014). It also comprised of 2,134,076 adolescents and young people aged between 15-24 years (Statistics South Africa, 2014). Soweto is a peri-urban township 20 kilometres south-west of Johannesburg, with an estimated population of approximately 4.4 million (City of Joburg, 2011) and comprised of 225,209 adolescents and young people between the ages of 16-24 years (Statistics South Africa, 2011). Soweto comprised of 40 townships classified by their socio-economic class status (see figure 2 below). Soweto as a study setting was chosen because of its political history of violent riots that took place on June 16, 1976 where students died protesting against apartheid and the use of Afrikaans, and Bantu education (Pohlandt-McCormick, 2000).

South African government's apartheid policy played a role in how Soweto communities are currently living. In the 1930s Soweto townships were created when the South African white government separated blacks from whites (Ramchander, 2007). Soweto's infrastructures were under-resourced from the beginning; it constituted poor housing (tiny match box houses), high unemployment, untarred roads, no streets lights and backyard shacks (Seeking, 2000). Since 1994, a democratic South African government implemented a policy that ensures that every citizen has access to water and sanitation (DWARF, 1994). In addition, a study conducted by Richter et al. (2009) in 2002-2003 among Soweto adolescents suggested that 92% reported access to electricity. At present some parts of Soweto townships are still classified by council houses, shacks and hostels (Gilbert & Soskolne, 2003). Even after the democratic elections in 1994, Soweto residents still reside in shacks and hostels; this is due to rising costs of ownership, low income and inability to apply for subsidised housing (Gunter, 2014).

Sample

A non-probability convenience sampling approach with participants aged 15-20 years was recruited for the study. The participants were recruited through snowballing using the youth organisation Mo-Afrikaithlokomele situated in Pimville as an entry point. Adolescents who attend this youth organization came from the general population and they accessed the organization for any assistance. Braun and Clarke (2013:55) pointed out that qualitative research tends to use smaller samples than quantitative research. Therefore, in this study interviews were conducted until saturation is reached. The organisations were approached in advance and an appointment was scheduled for study presentation. Potential participants were contacted for the interview schedule. After the permission has been granted by both the parents/legal guardian and the participants, the researcher scheduled an interview a day after consent to give young people a chance to go through the sheet again. If participants were eligible (male and female, aged 15-20 years and residing in Soweto) then an appointment was scheduled for an interview. The potential participants were either have experienced or witnessed IPV in the community, at home or school etc. Therefore the researchers included any participant who wanted to take part in the research study, not only focusing on participants who experienced IPV. The researchers also anticipated that during the interview some participants might talk about their experiences of IPV.

Data collection Procedure

The researchers used an unstructured guide to collect the data on perceptions and experiences of IPV among young people. A pilot study was conducted with one participant from Soweto. A participant was approached through a friend during recruitment process. The researcher called the potential participants and explained the study to her. The researcher went to participant's residential home for consenting from both the parent and potential participant. The interview was conducted at the same day of consenting. With this particular participant the interview was conducted inside the researcher's car because we couldn't get a private room for an interview. The researcher conducted three more interviews with other participants within Soweto. Participants were referred by a friend and the researcher called the participant and explain the study to them. The researcher made an appointment with the participants for consenting and interviews were conducted at the participants' respective home. Consenting for both participants was conducted in English. During the interviews participants mostly spoke in English and a mixture of their local language (IsiZulu and Sesotho). The researcher used an unstructured interview guide with open-ended questions to collect the data. The interviews for each participants took roughly 30-45minutes Interviews and audio-recorder was used during the interview.

Results

A South African study conducted in the Eastern Cape among 1,275 young men aged between 15-26 years among 70 rural villages, estimates that 31.8% of young men perpetrated physical violence against their intimate partner (Dunkle et al., 2006). In addition, a Stepping Stone study conducted with 1,360 males and females, reports of 21.3% rape, 8.6% IPV, and 16.2% non-IPV (Jewkes et al., 2006b). A study conducted in Cape Town among 596 adolescents' from grades 8 and 11, reports of 20% IPV (Fisher et al., 2007). This study revealed a high number of IPV, which raises a concern that more research on IPV awareness among young people is needed in South Africa.

A longitudinal study conducted in Cape Town schools among 2,360 grade 8 adolescents suggest 9.1% of girls and 23.5% of boys were victims of IPV at their first sexual encounter and 27.8% of boys and 17.8% of girls reported forced sex against their will at the second sexual encounter (Mathews et al., 2009). This research correlates with other research studies conducted among adolescents of the same age (Fisher, Myer, Merais, Lombard, & Reddy, 2007; Swart, Seedat, Stevens, & Ricardo, 2002). Russell et al., (2013) suggested that a total of 549 grade 8 male and female adolescents in Cape Town reported high IPV with 10% of boys forcing a partner to have sex and 39% of girls report that they had been a victim of physical IPV (Russell et al., 2013). A study conducted in Soweto with 506 adolescents aged between 16-18 years, suggested that 26% experienced violence (Dietrich et al., 2013).

IPV can lead to intimate partner femicide (Abrahams et al., 2012). A study conducted in 2009 among 14 years and older deceased South African females in 38 mortuaries reports that 57.1% of women were killed by their intimate partner (Abrahams et al., 2012). Young people in Soweto are affected by some social challenges such as violence, substance abuse including alcohol, and pregnancy (Dunkle et al., 2004). There is little knowledge on how young people from Soweto, between 15-20 years, perceive and experience IPV.