


# Chapter 7

## The Application of Indigenous Knowledge Strategies in Managing and Addressing Gender-Based Violence in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa: A Literature Review

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Gender-based violence has proven to be problematic worldwide, however, in South Africa, it has proven to be uncontrollable. In as much as national and provincial laws are enforced against gender-based violence, it continues to exacerbate. This has awakened South Africa to go back to African methods of addressing gender-based violence. This study aimed to investigate indigenous knowledge strategies for managing and addressing gender-based violence amongst the local citizens in KwaZulu-Natal. Important to note is that the rate of gender-based violence cases is witnessed to be increasing in KwaZulu-Natal. The reviewed literature has proven that Indigenous knowledge is capable of managing and addressing gender-based violence. Again, the findings of the study have demonstrated that indigenous knowledge strategies could become a roadmap for addressing gender-based violence not only in KwaZulu-Natal but in Africa as a whole.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a widespread global issue that transcends borders, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds. It is recognised as a severe violation of human rights, impacting individuals regardless of gender. However, women and young girls remain the most affected, with statistics showing that one in three women worldwide has experienced physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives (Mudau, Matshidze & Nthane, 2024). This persistent crisis highlights the urgent need for effective intervention strategies to combat GBV and protect vulnerable populations. Although GBV is often framed as an issue predominantly affecting women, studies have revealed that men also suffer from abuse, particularly at the hands of their intimate partners (Mpani & Nsiband, 2015; Oosthuizen, Martin & de Villiers, 2024). Despite its existence, GBV against men remains underreported and inadequately addressed due to deeply entrenched societal norms surrounding masculinity. These norms often discourage men from coming forward with their experiences, fearing stigma, ridicule, or disbelief (Mngomezulu, Makhonza & Nzima 2019). Graaff (2021) argues that violence against men is frequently masked by traditional gender roles, making it difficult to distinguish from general acts of aggression. Furthermore, instances where men do not conform to patriarchal norms often result in them becoming targets of gendered violence.

The United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) (2019) defines GBV as any harmful act perpetrated against an individual's will, driven by socially constructed gender roles and power dynamics. This form of violence encompasses a broad spectrum of abuse, including physical, psychological, emotional, mental, and financial harm. GBV can occur in both private and public spaces, affecting victims in domestic settings, workplaces, educational institutions, and communities at large. The consequences of GBV are devastating, often leading to long-term psychological trauma, economic instability, and even loss of life (Oosthuizen, Martin & de Villiers, 2024). In South Africa, and particularly in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, GBV remains a pressing issue. The prevalence of physical and sexual violence in this region continues to rise despite existing legal frameworks aimed at curbing the crisis. Studies indicate that in Africa, approximately 45.6% of women have experienced GBV at least once in their lifetime, a figure that surpasses the global average of 35% (Mudau et al., 2024; Oosthuizen, Martin & de Villiers, 2024). The high incidence of GBV in the region underscores the need for comprehensive, culturally relevant solutions that address both the root causes and consequences of gender-based violence.

Understanding the scope and impact of GBV is crucial for developing effective policies and interventions. Efforts to combat GBV have put in place strategies such as educational programs, legal reforms, community-driven initiatives, and increased support for survivors. Currently, there is a growing recognition of the role that Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) can play in addressing GBV by incorporating traditional values and community-based approaches. By acknowledging and integrating indigenous strategies alongside contemporary legal and policy frameworks, South Africa can work towards a more inclusive and effective response to gender-based violence (Oosthuizen, Martin & de Villiers, 2024). It is widely acknowledged that domestic violence remains a pervasive issue in Southern Africa, particularly in the Kingdom of Eswatini, where gender-based and sexual abuse are deeply entrenched within a patriarchal societal structure (Human Rights Watch, 2024). In this cultural context, local customs and traditional laws often hold greater authority than regional and international legal frameworks, making it difficult to implement and enforce policies aimed at addressing gender-based violence effectively (Oosthuizen, Martin & de Villiers, 2024). The deeply rooted belief systems that sustain gender inequalities contribute

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