THE NARRATIVES OF WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA WHO USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO TALK ABOUT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

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ABSTRACT

There has been research conducted, both globally and in South Africa, on social media activism against gender-based violence (GBV). However, most research on the topic is based on participants in other parts of the world. Not much has been published on Black, African women. More specifically, not much is known about how women in South Africa experience using social media to talk about GBV. This research project draws on critical feminism and a narrative-discursive approach to explore the narratives of women in South Africa who use social media to talk about GBV. This is done by identifying the discourses women draw on to construct narratives, the subject positions utilised within these discourses, and how "trouble" and "repair" features in the narratives and positioning of women. Twelve interviews were conducted with women who volunteered and fit the inclusion criteria.

The analysis of data was presented in two parts. The first set of discourses (discourses of 'efficacy', 'convenience', and 'education') were focused on what the use of social media achieves irrespective of the topic being discussed. These discourses speak to the idea that social media is powerful and useful because of its reach, speed, immediacy, and ability to be used to educate and be educated. The second set of discourses (discourses of 'community and solidarity', 'validation', and 'vulnerability') were focused on what the use of social media does for the people participating. Women have found a community and solidarity, and their experiences and thoughts have been validated on social media. Overall, the women in this research project justified their use of social media for activism against GBV, and acknowledged the tension that exists because despite its potential, there are limitations.

Keywords: social media, gender-based violence, women, South Africa, discourse, narratives, subject positions, trouble, repair.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACRONYM	MEANING
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GBVF	Gender-Based Violence and Femicide
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
OGBV	Online Gender-Based Violence
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
VAW	Violence against Women
WHO	World Health Organisation

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1

INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

The statistics have spoken - gender-based violence (GBV)1 is a global concern (Hawkins, 2012). Women all over the world are being reminded constantly that they could be one in three women who will experience GBV at least once in their lifetime (ElSherief, Belding & Nguyen, 2017; Heidari & Moreno, 2016). More specifically, women in South Africa are residing in a country labelled the 'rape capital' of the world because of the high number of reported sexual assault cases (Gordon & Collins, 2013). Women in South Africa do not only face the uncertainty of being raped or physically hurt, but murdered as well, with 40 to 70 percent of women, who experience GBV, being murdered at the hands of their husbands or partners (Enaifoghe, 2019). Feminists and survivors have taken to the streets numerous times fighting against GBV, screaming "enough is enough – we are tired of this violence!". The story does not change, but the name does (Gouws, 2018, p. 3).

In the growing age of technology, social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have increasingly been used by women all over the world to help combat GBV (ElSherief et al., 2017). Hashtag campaigns such as #IBelieveSurvivors (ElSherief et al., 2017) aim to show women's daily experiences of being violated and the victim-blaming discourse that maintains it (Clark, 2016; Storer & Rodriguez, 2020). Women are using social media platforms to cry for help and stand together to fight the common enemy – the violation of both their human rights and bodily integrity (Enaifoghe, 2019). While GBV is experienced by both women and men, this study focuses on the experiences of women because they are primarily at the receiving end of GBV (Purohit, Banerjee, Hampton, Shalin, Bhandari & Sheth, 2015). This project aims to study the narratives of women in South Africa, who use social media to talk about GBV. This is important because it has been shown that despite the relief and support gained from talking about

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1 The term violence against women (VAW) means any act of GBV that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women. Throughout this project the term GBV (as opposed to VAW) is utilised. While technically VAW is more applicable, it was decided to use GBV as it is the term most well-known and frequently used in talk about the issue.

these issues, women also suffer on these platforms from being reminded constantly of the prevalence of GBV (ElSherief et al., 2017).

In the section which follows, GBV will be defined more specifically.

2. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

GBV exists in all societies and presents itself in many forms (Muma, 2015). In other words, "GBV knows no geographical or demographic bounds'' (Stabile, Purohit & Hattery, 2020, p. 123). Broadly, GBV is violence that is directed at an individual based on his or her biological sex OR gender identity. GBV is defined as any physical, sexual, or psychological injury or threats of such injury (ElSherief et al., 2017; Gouws, 2018; García-Moreno & Stöckl, 2009). These different forms of GBV are in many instances intertwined (McCloskey, 2016). Dafny and Beccaria (2020) define physical violence as any physical force used to hurt a person. Melanda, Santos, Salvagioni, Mesas, González, and Andrade (2018) provide a similar definition of physical violence as using force or power with the intention to injure, or cause pain, helplessness, and the possible death of another person. Physical violence includes, but is not limited to, being punched, choked, kicked, stabbed (Oladepo, Yusuf & Arulogun, 2011), slapped, assaulted (Raditloaneng, 2013), or shoved (Lyons et al., 2017). Furthermore, it leads to the inhumane treatment of individuals (Rubenstein & Stark, 2017). Sexual violence takes place when an individual is forced to have sexual intercourse with another individual (Lyons et al., 2017; Oladepo et al., 2011; Tura & Licoze, 2019). This can be done by physical coercion or by being penetrated with an object despite indicating unwillingness (Lyons et al., 2017). In addition, sexual violence includes any inappropriate and undesired sexual remarks towards a person based on their sexuality (Oladepo et al., 2011).

Psychological violence refers to being mentally, verbally, and emotionally abused, or neglected (Rubenstein & Stark, 2017). This kind of violence includes being embarrassed, offended, disrespected (Demelash, Nigatu & Gashaw, 2015), or bullied (Padyab & Ghazinour, 2015). Raditloaneng (2013) adds socio-economic abuse to the list, which is being deprived of social and financial support. Psychological violence can cause distress to the physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development of an individual (Padyab & Ghazinour, 2015). It further often

coincides with physical abuse (Okemini & Adekola, 2012) because it includes threatening another individual with physical abuse (Demelash et al., 2015; Padyab & Ghazinour, 2015).

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a form of GBV. IPV is simply defined as the violence that occurs between two people who are in an intimate relationship (Ali, Dhingra & Mc Garry, 2016). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) describes IPV as an incorporation of being stalked, psychological aggressiveness, physical violence, sexual violence, and strategies used by an intimate partner to have control over another individual (Ademiluka, 2018). Along with physical, psychological, and sexual violence, IPV is also understood as (in most cases) a male partner asserting control over the contraceptive and pregnancy decisions of a female partner (Dicola & Spaar, 2016). IPV is closely related to factors such as economic status, uncontrolled alcohol use, gender inequality, and traditional ideas of the role women should fulfil in public and in private (Wang, 2016).

3. THE KEY CATALYSTS TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

This section discusses the contributing factors (also known as the key catalysts) to GBV. These factors have been identified as underpinning the on-going problem of GBV. They are: rape culture, victim-blaming, and patriarchy.

3.1 RAPE CULTURE

The concept of rape culture is illustrated in the vignette below:

> The restaurant is closing. A young woman sits across the table from her date - a man in whom she has no romantic interest but who has been pleasant enough over dinner. He offers to drive her home. She says she would rather take the train. *"Oh, no,"* he protests. *"I can't let you do that. What if you get raped?"* She stares at him quizzically. In an attempt to justify his assessment of the danger, or, bizarrely, to flatter her, he clarifies, *"I mean, I would rape you"* (Fraser, 2015, p. 143).

The term rape culture emerged in the 1970s and refers to the validation and normalisation of VAW (Meier & Medjesky, 2018; Walsh, 2015). It is further defined as a complicated set of beliefs that encourage male sexual aggression which results in VAW (Inal, 2017). In 1980, Martha Burt introduced a model of rape culture. According to this model, traditional gender-

roles, adversarial sexual beliefs, and acceptance of violence constitute rape culture (Johnson & Johnson, 2017). This model was further expanded by Lonsway and Fitzgeral in 1995 to include sexism and hostility towards women, as precursors to rape culture (Orth, Van Wyk & Andipatin, 2020).

Traditional gender-roles are the presumed roles, responsibilities, and interests of men and women determined by cultural norms and beliefs (Johnson & Johnson, 2017). This gender-differentiation is based on the belief that 'men are men' and 'women are women', and each group is limited to a set of stereotypical behaviour which is informed by their biology (Fraser, 2015). More specifically to rape culture, men are perceived as "naturally" more sexual and women as largely asexual and "pure". Therefore, when men assert sexual power and control over women, women are expected to demonstrate sexual obedience (Inal, 2017; Johnson & Johnson, 2017).

These traditional gender-roles are justified by sexism (Hammond, Milojev, Huang & Sibley, 2018). Sexism is understood as the devaluation of women and refers to the discrimination against individuals based on their sex determined at birth (Johnson & Johnson, 2017). It maintains gender inequality in society (Hammond et al., 2018) because of the discrimination experienced by individuals who defy fixed gender-roles (Hammond et al., 2018; Johnson & Johnson, 2017). A fundamental element of sexism is the notion that men are superior to women. This contributes to the normalisation of rape because it encourages the sexual objectification of women (Johnson & Johnson, 2017; Walsh, 2015). Sexism is frequently separated into two interconnected, but distinctive constructs: hostile sexism (this includes beliefs about women as incompetent, unintelligent, overly emotional, and sexually manipulative) and benevolent sexism (which includes patronising but 'positive' beliefs about women, especially those who fulfill traditional gender roles) (Johnson & Johnson, 2017). Ambivalent sexism is the umbrella term for these two complementary parts of sexism (Fraser, 2015). In other words, sexist attitudes are ambivalent and include both hostile and benevolent feelings (Chisango, Mayekiso & Thomae, 2015; Thomae & Viki, 2013). According to Fraser (2015), understanding these two parts of ambivalent sexism contribute significantly to understanding rape culture.

A negative perception of women is attached to hostile sexism, and positive attitudes, feelings, and views towards women are associated with benevolent sexism (Johnson & Johnson, 2017; Thomae & Viki, 2013). Hostile sexism justifies the power men have over women (Hammond et

al., 2018) and includes the negative judgment of women who disobey traditional gender-roles (Chawla, Wong & Gabriel, 2019). Benevolent sexism symbolises women as needing protection, love, and support, and whose love is needed to complete a man (Fraser, 2015; Johnson & Johnson, 2017). Understanding this is crucial to making sense of how rape culture is seen in a society that simultaneously advocates for the protection of women (Fraser, 2015).

Adversarial sexual beliefs are culturally shared principles that men and women are adversaries because women are constantly after power and men are after sexual relationships (Emmers-Sommer, 2014; Johnson, Rocchino, Wolf, Gutekunst, Paulvin & Farrell, 2021). The overall idea is that women and men are determined to exploit one another (Johnson & Johnson, 2017; Johnson et al., 2021) in their sexual relationships (Bitton & Jaeger, 2020). Based on these beliefs, one motive for sexual violence is a woman agreeing to go on a date with a man (Johnson & Johnson, 2017) and the man expecting remuneration (in the form of sex) for paying for the date (Emmers-Sommer, 2014).

Hostility or aggressiveness toward women is based on the perception that women are untruthful and untrustworthy. Women are therefore perceived as deserving of violence (Johnson & Johnson, 2017). According to Bendixen and Kennair (2017), individuals who hold traditional beliefs or are hostile towards women are in support of stereotypes surrounding rape. There is a relationship between aggressiveness toward women and circumstantial factors, such as alcohol use, believed to enable sexual violence (McDermott, Kilmartin, McKelvey & Kridel, 2015).

Furthermore, the acceptance of violence is a strong predictor of rape culture (Crocker & Sibley, 2020). This is because of the acceptance of belittling language towards women (Cappiccie & Wyatt, 2021) and the false notion that violence may be desired in the form of rough sexual intercourse. These contribute significantly to a culture of violence (Johnson & Johnson, 2017). In addition, the acceptance of violence is related to the stereotypes that exist, determining roles specific to one's sex (Sebastian, Mariyam & Birawat, 2015). According to Sinko, Munro-Kramer, Conley and Saint Arnault (2021), there is a relationship between the acceptance of violence and women blaming themselves for their violence. This victim-blaming is discussed in the next sub-section.

3.2 VICTIM-BLAMING

The concept of rape victim-blaming is illustrated in the vignette below:

> Oh, you must be thinking *"What was she wearing?"*. It was winter season, so I was not wearing something short at all. *"Oh then, it must be nighttime, right?"* Oh no, not at all. It was 2.30 pm. *"Well, since you were not wearing anything short or were not roaming around at night, then you must have looked easy, right?"* I don't know. Is sitting in a corner reading a book 'looking easy'? (Kumari, 2020, para. 3).

Rape culture and victim-blaming are an intrinsically connected phenomenon. In other words, victim-blaming forms part of rape culture (Thacker, 2017). Several survivors of GBV experience victim-blaming (Survarna & Bhalla, 2020). "Victims are often blamed for their own misfortunes" and describe this experience as an "insult added to injury" (Harber, Podolski & Williams, 2015, p. 1). Victim-blaming is when the victim is accused of being complicit and having a part in their own victimisation (Survarna & Bhalla, 2020; Thacker, 2017). The phenomenon is clearly contradictory and unreasonable (Harber et al., 2015) because blame cannot be placed on the person who harmed the victim (Mansour et al., 2021).

Victim-blaming makes women more vulnerable to violence (Das, 2019) and contributes to feelings of poor self-esteem (Mansour et al., 2021), self-blame (Harber et al., 2015; Pinciotti & Orcutt, 2021), silencing of oneself, and limited trust in others. Furthermore, it contributes to psychological or mental health distress in the forms of anxiety, depression (Harber et al., 2015; Mansour et al., 2021), and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Harber et al., 2015; Mansour et al., 2021; Pinciotti & Orcutt, 2021).

Victims of rape are often blamed by friends, family, or the representatives of the justice system. While some studies indicate that women also often blame victims of violence, others indicate that there is no gender difference when it comes to the practice of victim-blaming, but most research indicate that men often blame victims of violence (Pinciotti & Orcutt, 2021). There are many reasons victims are blamed for the violence they experience or seen as provoking perpetrators (Harber et al., 2015) these include, but are not limited to: the way they dress; alcohol consumption (Gurman, Nichols & Greenberg, 2018; Thacker, 2017); walking alone; being in a

dangerous space; and, accepting invitations from strangers. This demonstrates the cultural justification of GBV (Gurman et al., 2018).

3.3 PATRIARCHY

GBV stems from a patriarchal structure – a structure that has encouraged control over the lives of women (Ademiluka, 2018; Okemini & Adekola, 2012). According to Hadi (2017) "GBV is a social mechanism to forcefully maintain and perpetuate the subordinate status of women compared with men" (p. 297). Hadi (2017) further explains that "GBV is an expression and a symptom of a patriarchal social system" (p. 298). Patriarchy is further embedded in the norms, values, and traditions of society (Ademiluka, 2018). Feminist understandings of GBV supports the notion that GBV stems from patriarchal social norms and structures (Fairbairn, 2020).

A further definition of GBV is relevant when discussing the gender norms, cultural norms, and social norms associated with GBV. McCloskey (2016) defines GBV as the physical or sexual violence of individuals based on their gender or gender norms and roles. Gender norms are defined as the socially constructed roles that society has assigned to boys and men or girls and women (Fleming & Agnew-Brune, 2015). Women and men are deemed opposites of one another; women are perceived as submissive and passive, whereas men are viewed as hostile and sexually charged. Men are further considered crucial decision makers in society (Hadi, 2017; Raditloaneng, 2013). The social norms and cultural values surrounding gender roles, promote unequal power dynamics or gender inequality between women and men (Heidari & Moreno, 2016; MacPherson, Richards, Namakhoma & Theobald, 2014). Gender norms limit the power women have and their ability to exercise authority regarding their health (Fleming & Agnew-Brune, 2015). The power men have in society based on their gender roles has given them the ability to coerce and govern (Raditloaneng, 2013). This contributes to more females compared to men experiencing GBV as a result of "cultural permissiveness that justifies men's physical aggression against women" (Oladepo et al., 2011, p. 84).

One of the ways gender inequalities has been maintained in society is through rape culture (Das, 2019; Orth et al., 2020). In South Africa, where GBV is prevalent (Gordon & Collins, 2013), rape culture is not only affected by gender-inequality and cultures of patriarchy, but by heteronormative hypermasculinities in society as well. Hypermasculinity encourages the idea

that being a man is built on violence, power, and sexuality. In addition, it has a significant impact on how men interact with, and their aggressiveness towards women to prove their masculinity (Bashonga & Khuzwayo, 2017). In a country like South Africa, with such high prevalence rates of GBV, women are particularly prone to experiencing forced sexual relationships, sexual abuse and assault, rape, and aggression (Chacham, Simão & Caetano, 2016).

In the sub-section above, the key contributing factors towards perpetuating GBV have been discussed. However, there has been a shift recently towards understanding the safety of women as a sexual and reproductive rights issue and GBV as a human rights violation. This will be outlined in the next section.

4. SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

GBV is a human rights violation but has not always been recognised as such (Braeken & Rondinelli, 2012). Human rights are fundamental to every person and of equal relevance to everyone, without discrimination (Hawkins, 2012; Kossen, 2011). Duramy (2019) uses a human rights-based approach to gender inequality, so that GBV is understood as a human rights violation. Additionally, Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) are increasingly being acknowledged as human rights (Heidari & Moreno, 2016). Violence forms a crucial obstruction to the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of women and girls (Chacham et al., 2016; Heidari & Moreno, 2016). This obstruction includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, and harmful traditional practices (Cottingham, Kismodi, Hilber, Lincetto, Stahlhofer & Gruskin, 2010; Sen, 2014).

Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) refers to everything incorporated in both sexual health and reproductive health (Orza et al., 2017). Furthermore, sexuality and reproduction are key to the well-being of women (Hawkins, 2012). According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2017) there is a relationship between sexual health and reproductive health. Sexual health is perceived as a state of complete physical, emotional, mental, and social welfare in connection with sexuality. It includes having enjoyable and non-harmful sexual experiences, safe from threats, discrimination, and violence (World Health Organisation, 2015). At the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994, sexual health was incorporated in the definition of reproductive health (Orza et al., 2017). Reproductive health was defined as a

state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being in all matters regarding the reproductive system, its functions, and its processes. This definition goes beyond health as simply the lack of disease or frailty (Chandra-Mouli, Svanemyr, Amin, Fogstad, Say, Girard & Temmerman, 2015; Glasier, Gülmezoglu, Schmid, Moreno & Van Look, 2006; Kossen, 2011).

International access to SRH services was included in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and has been carried forward in the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Lince-Deroche et al., 2016). The MDGs consisted of eight goals. Three goals were health related. The others included reducing child mortality, reducing maternal mortality, and increasing access to reproductive health care, as well as limiting the spread of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria (Buse & Hawkes, 2015). There was only one goal in the MDGs related to SRHR. This was the 5th goal that aimed to improve maternal health and reduce maternal mortality rates (Yamin & Boulanger, 2014). In 2015, the MDGs was replaced by the SDGs (Buse & Hawkes, 2015) until 2030 (Fang, Tang, Tan & Tolhurst, 2020). SRH has been included in the United Nations SDGs. Initially, SRHR were excluded from the MDGs. They were later included after women health activists advocated for the inclusion (Fang et al., 2020).

Along with international progress, there has also been national progress. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act (no. 32 of 2007) is an act of the Parliament of South Africa that reformed and codified the law relating to sex offences. It repealed various common law crimes (including rape and indecent assault) and replaced them with statutory crimes defined on a gender-neutral basis. In addition, it indicates that anyone who knows about the sexual offence committed against a child (anyone under the age of 18) and does not report it, is committing a crime (Joyner, 2016). Therefore, the act focuses particularly on the vulnerability of children to sexual violence (Perumal, 2013). This has not been the only development in South Africa. Recently, President Cyril Ramaphosa communicated his appreciation to the private sector for the allocated R128 million towards the Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) response fund (South African Government, 2021).

In the preceding section the official international and national legislative responses to GBV have been briefly summarised. This project aims to focus on how women use social media to talk about GBV. An introduction to the use of social media in this regard is therefore covered in the section which follows.

5. SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The world of technology is developing at a very rapid rate (Levine, 2011). Social media is an interactive platform that enables users to create, share, and discuss information (Asur & Huberman, 2010; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011). It consists of a group of websites and applications aimed at building and strengthening online communities (Di Gangi & Wasko, 2016). The initial purpose of social media was for users to access and share content. Over the years, it has been used as a tool to create visibility regarding global social issues (Duramy, 2019). The use of social media in modern society has become normalised. These platforms have allowed social media users to obtain information and articulate their standpoint on several issues (Zaleski, Gundersen, Baes, Estupinian & Vergara, 2016). Social media has increasingly been used as a means for social change and a useful tool to spread resistance to injustice (Kangere, Kemitare & Michau, 2017).

There are various social media sites users can choose from (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Kietzmann et al., 2011) which differ in terms of their range and functionality (Kietzmann, et al., 2011). These sites include Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (Asur & Huberman, 2010; Hanson, 2014). Facebook was established in 2004 and is the most favoured networking site (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Duong, 2020). The number of people who use Facebook is more than the number of people in the world's biggest country (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). Facebook allows users to communicate with friends, family, and colleagues. Users can share texts, videos, and links with others; users can also follow people or pages (Duong, 2020). Although Facebook remains commonly used, it remains commonly used among young adults. Teenagers tend to use Instagram (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). Instagram is a platform where social media users share photographs (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). Lastly, Twitter is described as a "microblogging site" where social media users interact instantaneously (Alhabash & Ma, 2017, p. 2). On Twitter, one post is limited to 280 characters (Duong, 2020), an increase from its original 140 characters (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Di Gangi & Wasko, 2016). Thoughts, pictures, and short videos are shared on Twitter in the form of tweets and retweets (Duong, 2020).

The shift to social media activism or digital activism has had positive outcomes for activism against GBV in South Africa (Maluleke & Moyer, 2020). The shift to online activism is sometimes referred to as Hashtag activism. Hashtag activism refers to a post on social media

under a common word, phrase or sentence following the hashtag (#) symbol. These posts often address social or political issues (Yang, 2016). For example, social media has an important role in how GBV and university policies in South Africa are examined (Bashonga & Khuzwayo, 2017), and how the rate of GBV and sexual violence on university campuses is publicised. Women at higher institutions have used the hashtag, #NakedProtest, to make statements and attempt to claim back their bodies from violence (Maluleke & Moyer, 2020), patriarchy, and over-sexualisation. The protests that emerged were instrumental to discussions that took place on social media regarding GBV or "violence inflicted on the female body" (Bashonga & Khuzwayo, 2017, p. 38).

In the section which follows a brief overview of some of the most popular hashtags used to talk about GBV and their context or origin will be summarised.

6. HASHTAGS USED TO TALK ABOUT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The purpose of this section is to provide context to the phrases or hashtags used throughout this research project.

Women have used phrases such as 'this is mine' and 'still not asking for it' to emphasise the importance of their autonomy and the need for agency over their own bodies (Bashonga & Khuzwayo, 2017).

#IBelieveSurvivors – In recognition of the fact that survivors are often not believed when they report violence, the Centre for Research and Education on Violence against Women and Children initiated this hashtag to stand in solidarity with women who have broken their silence by speaking out about their violence (Akoja & Anjorin, 2020).

#MeToo – Alyssa Milano started this hashtag in 2017 to encourage her Twitter followers to share personal experiences of GBV. The purpose of the hashtag was to reveal the prevalence of GBV (Duramy, 2019) and has engaged a large audience in discussions about GBV (Fairbairn, 2020).

#LifeInLeggings – Ronelle King was the founder of this movement. The movement started in the Caribbean and was used to encourage women to share experiences of sexual violence. This

movement shows the potential for Caribbean social change and activism around gender policy by using social media platforms (Sanatan, 2017).

#IAmNotAfraidToSayIt – This campaign started in Ukraine, and continued in Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, United States, Germany, and Israel in 2016, in response to GBV, especially sexual violence. This campaign builds on a growing body of knowledge about the meaning and impact of social media campaigns against sexual violence globally, particularly in Ukraine (Martsenyuk & Phillips, 2020).

#RUReferenceList – Rhodes University students in South Africa started this hashtag to anonymously name perpetrators on a Facebook page associated with the students of the university (Gouws, 2018; Maluleke & Moyer, 2020). The Facebook page was called "Rhodes Confessions".

#AmINext – This hashtag started in South Africa after the rape and murder of Uyinene Mrwetyana in 2019. Women used this hashtag on social media to share their fear and anger about the violence in the country (Luwaya & Omar, 2020).

#WhyIStayed – This hashtag campaign served to confront the prevalence of victim-blaming in public discourse and was based on the idea that asking women why they choose to stay in an abusive relationship is a form of victim-blaming (Storer & Rodriguez, 2020).

#EndRapeCulture – In April 2016, students across South African universities initiated this campaign to show their anger against and create awareness towards university policies that maintain a rape culture (Orth et al., 2020).

#HeForShe – The purpose of this campaign was to promote gender equality by encouraging men to stand in solidarity with women (Harvey, 2020; Utami, 2019). It highlighted the need for both men and women to acknowledge the importance of gender equality. #HeForShe used Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to ask other users to show their support for the campaign (Harvey, 2020).

#RapeAtAzania – This movement emerged when a Black women activist was sexually violated by a fellow activist in one of the Azania occupations (Matandela, 2017).

#NakedProtest – The naked protest was a way for women to challenge societal norms by protesting in the nude. In this way they wanted to demonstrate how women are often told to dress and behave to avoid being victims of GBV (Maluleke & Moyer, 2020; Orth et al., 2020).

7. RATIONALE FOR THIS STUDY

Over the past few years, social media has become a platform to address GBV. This has been done on both a global scale and in South Africa. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of women in South Africa who use social media to engage in discussions about GBV. This will be done by focusing on the narratives of research participants as they share stories of using a public platform to talk about GBV. A further purpose of the study is to go beyond the actual social media posts, by exploring women's accounts of using the platform to engage in discussions about such a sensitive topic. Conducting research surrounding both GBV and social media in this era is crucial. Social media activism is a new phenomenon. This means that there is an opportunity to develop research on the topic, especially in the African context (Wasuna, 2018).

One of the main benefits of this study is that women will be able to openly talk about their experiences of using social media to talk about GBV, without the fear of being judged. This may give participants an opportunity to process their experiences. Furthermore, participants will, for the most part, be people invested in dealing with GBV and some will be activists. Participating in a study that potentially furthers the aims of tackling GBV may therefore additionally be of personal benefit.

8. OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

The following chapter (Chapter 2) is a review of the existing research literature about social media activism against GBV. The chapter starts with a discussion on global reach and speed – the two most important advantages of social media activism, and the reasons social media is used to talk about GBV. This is followed by a section on the utility of social media for activism against GBV. Social media is used to share personal experiences of GBV, as an alternative reporting space, to raise awareness, to address rape culture and victim-blaming, to establish community and solidarity through collective action, and to create social change. The common goal in all of this, which is women breaking their silence, is also discussed. This is followed by

literature on the positive and negative responses to using a global platform to talk about what is considered a sensitive topic.

The third chapter (Chapter 3) discusses the theoretical framework that informed this research process. The chapter starts with a discussion on social constructionism, the overarching paradigm of this research. This is followed by a discussion on critical feminism, and includes a discussion on the shift from first-wave feminism to fourth-wave feminism. I then discuss narrative psychology and discursive psychology. These provide a strong premise on which the theoretical framework is based. The key analytical concepts are then outlined, these are: narratives; discursive resources (interpretive repertoires and canonical narratives); discourses, positioning, and trouble and repair. The section that follows discusses a narrative-discursive approach, and the three general focal points of a narrative-discursive approach.

The fourth chapter (Chapter 4) discusses the methodology. In this chapter, I explicate the research design, study aims and research questions, sampling methods, data collection methods, data analysis processes, and the ethical considerations of this research project. This is followed by a discussion on the rigour and trustworthiness of the method. In this chapter, I also reflect on the research process and the relationships in the research process (the relationships between the researcher and supervisor, researcher and co-researcher, and researcher and research participants). The co-researcher is a registered counselling psychologist who was present during the data collection stage of this research project. Her role was to contain any potential distress among the research participants. The co-researcher had an important role because of the sensitivity of this research topic. In this study, the term co-researcher does not mean that there was a second researcher or interviewer involved in the project. This was an independently conducted dissertation.

The research questions which form the crux of this project are:

a. How do women in South Africa, who use social media to talk about GBV, narrate their experiences of using these platforms?

b. What discursive resources are seen in participants' talk about their experiences of using social media to talk about GBV?

c. What subject positions do women in South Africa take on in their narratives of using social media to talk about GBV?

d. How does "trouble" and "repair" feature in women's talk about their experiences of using social media to talk about GBV?

The fifth chapter (Chapter 5) is the first of two chapters that analyse the data. The set of discourses, narratives, and subject positions in this chapter speak to the idea that social media is a powerful and useful platform. More specifically, these discourses (an 'efficacy' discourse, 'a 'convenience' discourse, and an 'education' discourse) are "outward" looking because it focuses on the rationale of those who use social media as a means of activism and explores the utility that it has for them.

The sixth chapter (Chapter 6) is the second data analysis chapter. The set of discourses, narratives, and subject positions in this chapter is centered on the notion that social media is a supportive space. Social media is a supportive space because women have found a community and solidarity on social media, and their experiences and thoughts have been validated. These discourses (a 'community and solidarity' discourse, a 'validating' discourse, and a 'vulnerable' discourse) are "inward" looking because it focuses on the experiential use of social media by showing what it does for the people participating in the discussions.

In the final chapter (Chapter 7) I provide a summary of the research findings and the over-arching argument about what emerged from the data about the experiences of women in South Africa who use social media to talk about GBV. I then discuss the limitations of the research study, and recommendations for future research.

2

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media - a global phenomenon (Duong, 2020) - is prevalent, powerful, and an effective means of communication (Knight-McCord, Cleary, Grant, Herron, Lacey, Livingstone & Emanuel, 2016). Social media activism or digital activism has become a powerful tool and crucial channel for challenging gender-based violence (GBV) in the world (Alingasa & Ofreneo, 2021; Wasuna, 2018). There has been research conducted, both globally and in South Africa, on social media activism against GBV. However, not much is known about how women in South Africa experience using social media platforms to talk about GBV. While a significant number of studies conducted analysed the actual social media posts, very few have used interviews to explore social media activism and GBV. In addition, most of the literature that exists on the topic is based on participants in other parts of the world. Therefore, not a lot has been published on Black, African women (Wasuna, 2018). To the best of my knowledge, a significant amount of research conducted in relation to the research topic utilised a qualitative research method (Bashi, Martelotte, Modungwa & Olmos, 2018; Bashonga & Khuzwayo, 2017; Gouws, 2018; Lokot, 2018; Maluleke & Moyer, 2020; Salter, 2013; Sanatan, 2017). More specifically, some studies have explored how individuals use social media activism to respond to rape culture (Keller, Mendes & Ringrose, 2018; Sills, Pickens, Beach, Jones, Calder-Dawe, Benton-Greig & Gracey, 2016).

The first section is a discussion on global reach and speed – the primary advantages of digital activism. The second section reviews literature on the utility of social media for activism against GBV. This section consists of six sub-sections, these are; sharing personal experiences of GBV; using social media as an alternative reporting space; consciousness-raising; addressing rape culture and victim-blaming; establishing community and solidarity through collective action; and, creating social change. The third section is a discussion about digital activism as a tool for breaking silence. This is a common goal that women across the globe aim to achieve when they engage in conversations about GBV on such a large and international scale. The fourth section

reviews literature on the different responses to social media activism against GBV. These include positive and negative responses regarding the utilisation of a global platform to engage in what is considered a sensitive topic.

2. GLOBAL REACH AND SPEED

It is fitting to start this chapter with literature on the global reach and speed of communicating on this medium. These are the two most important advantages of social media activism, and the primary reasons social media is used to initiate discussions about injustices faced by women (Hoffman, 2021) such as GBV. Social media's reach is no surprise because its utilisation in contemporary society is normalised. Some sociologists have gone to the extent of referring to its use as the digitalisation of life (Zaleski et al., 2016). Social media's reach has enabled people who are geographically separated to construct a collective identity (Harris, Dragiewicz & Woodlock, 2020; Hashemi, 2020). The reality is that social media deserves the credit for engaging people in GBV-related conversations on such a large scale (Drake, 2018).

Recent statistics on social media usage demonstrates its reach and indicates how different social media sites, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, have increasingly been used all over the world. In 2018, there were 2.78 billion social media users globally; in 2019, the number increased to 2.95 billion; and it is roughly estimated that in 2023 there will be 3.43 billion social media users worldwide (Duong, 2020). While engaging with this specific literature, I commended social media for its reach as well.

A social media movement that illustrated its global reach and global strength is #MeToo. Social media users all over the world interacted with this hashtag (Ghadery, 2019). Sanatan (2017) conducted an interview with Ronelle King, the founder of #LifeInLeggings. During this interview, Ronelle King commended the power and potential of social media to bring different kinds of people from different parts of the world together (Sanatan, 2017). ElSherief et al. (2017) elaborated that these different kinds of people include those who are famous and those who are not. According to ElSherief et al. (2017), celebrities have an important part in motivating people to fight GBV. This is because in the eyes of many people, they are considered role-models.

Dadas (2017) argues that some social media users might see the same post several times if they are following both the creator of the post and the person sharing the post. It also means that the

post can reach several other social media users who do not follow the creator of the original post. This speaks directly to Hosterman, Johnson, Stouffer and Herring's (2018) finding that women all over the world have used social media platforms to engage in conversations about GBV with a larger audience. This finding is further mirrored in a study conducted on women in Bangladesh who indicated that talking about GBV-related experiences on social media enables them to interact with a larger group, compared to what the physical protests would have allowed (Das, 2019).

The use of social media sites has further leaned towards turning local movements into global movements. Local movements are primarily physical or offline protests, and global movements are primarily digital or online protests (Shah, 2013). Ronelle King describes the relationship between online and offline activism as interdependent. This is because if online and offline activism take place concurrently, GBV awareness can be raised on an even bigger scale. Most importantly, social media is within reach for people who are unable to join the conversation offline (Sanatan, 2017). Interestingly, Ratnasari, Sumartias and Romli (2021) highlight the transition from online to offline activism as one of the biggest challenges of social media activism against GBV.

Social media has introduced speed and communication that traditional, offline activism lacks (Makwembere & Tambo, 2017). Information on social media is communicated instantly (Kumar, 2010; Wasuna, 2018) allowing people all over the world to participate in GBV-related conversations in real time (Kumar, 2010). The speed at which information is relayed on social media makes the platform unique (Fairbairn, 2020). This is because some people can engage in GBV-related conversations in a fair manner with limited bias because they are able to interact with the original social media post immediately (Sanatan, 2017). Furthermore, according to Scott (2014), it is easy to communicate, share information, educate ignorant people, and raise awareness on social media. This speaks directly to the convenience of digital activism against GBV. Asur and Huberman (2010) agree that social media is relatively easy to use.

Global reach and speed are beneficial to the overall purpose of addressing GBV, especially considering that GBV is a global concern (ElSherief et al., 2017). There are several anti-GBV campaigns across the globe that started as early as the 1970s in the United States, where clear links were made between GBV, and other kinds of injustices faced by women. While some

campaigns were organised for the sole purpose of addressing GBV, others were organised to address several other injustices that included GBV (Stabile et al., 2020). It is clear that action has been taken by women to address GBV and to create a platform where conversations can take place without any fear of stigma or discrimination (Lokot, 2018). The literature that follows illustrates the utility of social media for activism against GBV and the collective goals of women and activists.

3. THE UTILITY OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Social media has been used as a tool for activism against GBV. While some women have capitalised on social media platforms to share personal experiences of GBV (Wasuna, 2018), others have used digital platforms as an alternative space to report cases of GBV (Gurman et al., 2018) and name their perpetrators (O'Neill, 2018) after being failed by the justice system (Gjika & Marganski, 2020). Social media has also been used to raise awareness about serious social issues (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2015; Linder, Myers, Riggle & Lacy, 2016), address rape culture and victim-blaming (Lokot, 2018), establish a community and solidarity through collective action (Duong, 2020), and create social change (Storer & Rodriguez, 2020).

3.1 SHARING PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Social media platforms have been used to encourage users to disclose their GBV-related stories (Loiseau & Nowacka, 2015; O'Neill, 2018). It is thought that this expression results in a shift of their cognitive and emotional orientation towards their experience. This means that instead of expressing their emotions internally and negatively, they express their emotions externally to create a supportive response, especially from people who have similar experiences (ElSherief et al., 2017). Along with this shift towards their experience, women have shared their experiences of GBV on social media as a form of emotional release (Bashonga & Khuzwayo, 2017). Platforms such as Facebook and Twitter give victims a virtual space where they can recall their experiences and seek emotional help (O'Neill, 2018; Survarna & Bhalla, 2020). This has not been an easy task for many women. Others have, therefore, complimented the bravery of women who choose to share their experiences, hoping that they too will become brave enough to share theirs (Bashonga & Khuzwayo, 2017; Gleeson & Turner, 2019).

Social media activism has an important part in understanding victims of GBV and finding ways to assist them during their healing process (Hosterman et al., 2018). Social media has become a space where storytelling can take place (O'Neill, 2018). Therefore, the platform is often the first space where victims disclose their experiences of GBV (Bashonga & Khuzwayo, 2017; Gjika & Marganski, 2020). This first experience is a significant determining factor regarding whether or not victims will continue to seek professional help or report the incident to an authority (O'Neill, 2018).

Many people have used platforms such as Twitter to share their experiences publicly and with friends (Betton, Borschmann, Docherty, Coleman, Brown & Henderson, 2015; Di Gangi & Wasko, 2016). This goes together with the motivation behind social media hashtags, such as #IBelieveSurvivors, which is to create a platform where experiences can be shared in a safe space (Betton et al., 2015; Denecke et al., 2015). According to ElSherief et al. (2017), Twitter is a platform that provides a unique lens into GBV, both in terms of victims sharing their experiences, and the normalisation of GBV-related conversations. More specifically, the online testimonial culture motivates others to speak about their experiences of sexual violence (Rentschler, 2014). Women are optimistic that sharing their experiences on digital platforms will bring about positive change, and an end to GBV (ElSherief et al., 2017)

Similar studies have been conducted in different parts of the world regarding the use of social media to share experiences of GBV. These studies have illustrated that different parts of the world use social media to talk about GBV in various ways. An example of this are the studies conducted in India and Ukraine (Gurman et al., 2018; Lokot, 2018). Only 1.3 percent of tweets shared about GBV in India included personal experiences. Instead, the platform was primarily used to talk about famous GBV occurrences such as the fatal gang rape of a woman in Delhi (Gurman et al., 2018). In Ukraine, on the other hand, a feminist activist and journalist started #IAmNotAfraidToSayIt in 2016 to share her personal experiences of GBV. She had a significant role in encouraging both women and men to use the hashtag to share their personal experiences as well (Lokot, 2018).

3.2 SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN ALTERNATIVE REPORTING SPACE

While some women have used social media for the sole purpose of sharing their experiences of GBV, others have used it as an alternative platform to report their cases and name their perpetrators. One of the reasons for this is because globally, the justice system has failed to address GBV and has failed to take victims of GBV seriously (Gjika & Marganski, 2020). Many victims have had negative experiences during the police investigation and trial (Bashonga & Khuzwayo, 2017; O'Neill, 2018). Therefore, women and survivors of GBV are too scared to share their stories offline "because of fear, stigma, and mistrust in the justice system" and have used hashtags such as #MeToo to share their stories on social media (Bashi et al., 2018, p. 442).

Maluleke and Moyer (2020) conducted a study in South Africa where women indicated that social media platforms provided them with a better opportunity to seek justice. Similarly, women in India have also used social media to talk about how the law has failed them (Gurman et al., 2018). In addition to this, Salter (2013) conducted a case study on Savannah Dietrich, a 17-year-old girl who was violated by two 16-year-old boys in Kentucky. According to Dietrich, the prosecutor told her to get over the assault and see a psychologist. This is not an isolated case since women in South Africa and India have also shared their anger about inadequate help from the justice system. Das (2019) studied the narratives of ten Bangladeshi women and activists who used #MeToo to talk about experiences of GBV. These women indicated that instead of the law protecting them, the law operates to protect the perpetrators.

Social media has been used to fight the tendency of perpetrators of violence being protected by the justice system. The *Daily Vox* published an article about how women, who have used social media to talk about their GBV or react against their violence, are perceived as disruptive whereas perpetrators, on the other hand, are being protected (Maluleke & Moyer, 2020). More specifically, social media has been used to discuss how in several diverse spaces, legislation and policy has been used to protect perpetrators and not victims. While GBV against university students has been highlighted as an emergency faced by universities (Brown, Williams & Kane, 2018), female students at higher institutions in South Africa have asserted that university policies have failed them as well (Bashonga & Khuzwayo, 2017). In 2016, students at Rhodes University started #RUReferenceList to address these ineffective policies (Gouws, 2018).

The studies mentioned, which include literature in both a South African and global context, speak to the justice system failing women, survivors, and victims of GBV (Bashi et al., 2018; Bashonga & Khuzwayo, 2017; Brown et al., 2015; Das, 2019; Gjika & Marganski, 2020; Gouws, 2018; Gurman et al., 2018; Maluleke & Moyer, 2020; O'Neill, 2018; Salter, 2013). Morshedi (2020) encountered an interesting discrepancy when conducting a study on the impact of the social media movement following the rape and murder of Uyinene Mrwetyana on sexual violence and GBV policies in South Africa. The murder of Uyinene Mrwetyana sparked a digital revolution, where women shared #AmINext on Twitter (Morshedi, 2020).

According to Morshedi (2020), the research participants in the study were unaware of the measures taken by the government to obtain long-lasting change in South Africa. These actions included the GBV and Femicide National Strategic Plan which is comprehensive but largely goes unimplemented. Similarly, Makwembere and Tambo (2017) conducted a study in Zimbabwe where women used social media to demand transparency and responsibility from the government. However, Wasuna (2018) notes that even though there is a Domestic Violence Act (1998) and several policies for protecting the bodily freedom of women in places of employment and education in South Africa, this has not stopped or lowered the rate of violence in the country, proving that laws and policies alone are not a solution.

Further research conducted suggests that victims of GBV may use the platform for revenge. This vengeance culture is also seen by naming and shaming the perpetrators (O'Neill, 2018). For women this is not a culture of vengeance but taking the law into their own hands after being failed by those who are expected to protect them – this is a form of "vigilante justice" (Hosterman et al., 2018). However, as much as this seems like a useful approach, there are disadvantages associated with it. Salter (2013) raises the point that naming alleged perpetrators is considered a violation of their privacy and their right to innocence until proven guilty. However, women's lack of trust in the justice system and anger when reporting cases of violence has given them the confidence to use social media to make claims of GBV that are not legally authorised. Women such as Savannah Dietrich, consciously decided to expose the names of her perpetrators after being failed by the justice system (Salter, 2013).

3.3 CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING

Social media has provided victims or survivors of GBV with a space to talk about their personal experiences, and their endurance and resilience. The platform has also allowed women to express important comments on the different structures that maintain gender injustice. In addition, feminist online campaigns such as #MeToo, #WhyIStayed, and #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou have an important part in raising awareness about GBV (Storer & Rodriguez, 2020).

The development of social media has transformed how it is used (Wasuna, 2018) and how it can contribute to addressing the inequalities experienced by marginalised groups (Makwembere & Tambo; Wasuna, 2018). In the 1990s, the internet was mainly a "digitised library for academic and scholarship reference" (Wasuna, 2018, p. 268). With the development of technology and social media, the internet became a more interactive space where knowledge is created, gained (Wasuna, 2018), shared, and discussed (Asur & Huberman, 2010; Brown et al., 2015; Kietzmann et al., 2011). Social media has changed the way in which individuals learn and what they learn (Naccarelli & Miller, 2020). In addition, women have used social media to share knowledge and information about their rights (Loiseau & Nowacka, 2015).

Stornaiuolo and Thomas (2017) agree that social media is an information center that allows the sharing and receiving of information. More specifically, in Zimbabwe, social media has been recognised as a powerful tool to share and receive knowledge about gender issues. This speaks directly to the increased attention researchers have placed on the power of social media (Makwembere & Tambo, 2017). The creating, gaining, sharing, and discussing of information on social media has contributed significantly to women challenging dominant discourses. For example, in the West, the hashtag campaign #WhyIStayed called into question dominant discourses of domestic violence (Clark, 2016). Similarly, Storer and Rodriguez (2020) conducted a study to demonstrate how social media campaigns form an important part in social movement building. In their study on the impact of the campaign, #WhyIStayed, the results showed that more public awareness was created by challenging accepted norms and this encouraged more people to join the cause (Storer & Rodriguez, 2020).

Awareness or consciousness-raising forms an important part of social media activism. This is because public awareness attracts public disapproval and necessitates public action to solve a

problem (Wasuna, 2018). According to Ronelle King, digital activism is primarily used to bring awareness to the problems that affect people in society, and can potentially contribute to an improvement in society (Sanatan, 2017). By analysing the online participation of college students, Storer & Rodriguez (2020) found that online campaigns can both create awareness and grow individual understanding of social problems.

Anti-GBV campaigns are considered social movements that create more awareness and provide platforms for a diverse group of people to participate in the conversation (ElSherief et al.,2017). In an interview with Ronelle King, she shared experiences of raising awareness about GBV in the Caribbean. The interview focused on her incentive to create awareness about sexual violence through feminist consciousness, the acceptance she received from other Caribbean women and men, and her judgement of social media as a tool for organising. Ronelle King received a significant amount of support from men (Sanatan, 2017). This support speaks to current anti-harassment strategies that seek support and participation from young men in awareness-raising campaigns (Skalli, 2014).

Alhabash and Ma (2017) conducted a study on what motivates college students to use social media to talk about GBV. The participants indicated being motivated to use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat – the four main social media platforms – to share information. Along with this, the highest motivations were entertainment and convenience (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). Yielding similar results, D'Ambrosi, Papakristo and Polci (2018) conducted a study that explored the role of social media in awareness-raising and its involvement in the fight against GBV. It was found that in contemporary times, digital devices and platforms are a new tool for teaching, raising awareness, and participation (D'Ambrosi et al., 2018). Duong (2020) agrees that social media has become an important means for people to share information and knowledge.

3.4 ADDRESSING RAPE CULTURE AND VICTIM-BLAMING

Rape culture is maintained when perpetrators are exempt from punishment, and society allows them to detach themselves from victims of rape and sexual violence (Orth et al., 2020). In addition, rape culture is seen in the normalisation of the offence. Women are constantly told to take precautions to ensure their own safety instead of men being told not to rape. Social media is often used to share comments with the intention of educating men although studies have shown that women are also complicit in normalising rape culture (Bashonga & Khuzwayo, 2017). This is problematic since victim-blaming is one of the primary reasons victims choose not to share their experiences of GBV (Stubbs-Richardson, Rader & Cosby, 2018).

Women in Ukraine have used social media to stop rape culture and victim-blaming, by naming and shaming their perpetrators (Lokot, 2018). Similarly, Stubbs-Richardson et al. (2018) conducted a study to explore how rape culture and victim-blaming are represented in social media around discussions of sexual violence. One of the themes that emerged is based on the notion that bad things happen to bad people, that women are either virgins or prostitutes, and that women are sexually violated because of their behaviour or dress code. For example, conversations on Twitter centered on the belief that women ask to be raped and implied that some women deserve to be raped (Stubbs-Richardson et al., 2018).

The #RUReferenceList and #EndRapeCulture protests are examples of social media protests that started with the aim of addressing rape culture and victim-blaming. Orth et al. (2020) conducted a study that explored the rape culture discourse that surfaced from social media debates with regards to these South African protests. #EndRapeCulture was further successful in terms of raising awareness about challenging society's beliefs and norms. Further success was demonstrated in the use of social media to spread the campaign to universities all over the country. This was a significant step in South Africa as commentators argued that the government did not have the political will to adequately deal with GBV (Gouws, 2018). Social media platforms have increasingly been used to dispute rape culture and hold perpetrators of sexual violence accountable for their behavior (Rentschler, 2014).

Naledi Chirwa, a female activist in South Africa, indicated that women all over the world and in South Africa have engaged in discussions about the culture of rape for a very long time

(Maluleke & Moyer, 2020). In other words, discussions about the culture of rape are not limited to South Africa. Das (2019) conducted a study on Bangladeshi women who have used social media to talk about rape culture. Social media has provided them with a new platform to have this conversation because physical protests alone were not making a significant difference. This goes back to global reach as an important advantage of social media activism. However, despite the conversation moving to a new platform, the culture of rape continues in society (Maluleke & Moyer, 2020). It is thought that responding to sexual violence in particular ways will disrupt the culture of rape. Rentschler (2014) refers to the term "response-ability" which symbolises the potential to respond to sexual violence as a group. The use of social media by women provides a shared forum to respond to cultures of harassment and sexual violence (Rentschler, 2014).

The acknowledgement of rape culture in public responsiveness can be assigned to the development of digital feminism and activism, which uses social media to develop counter publics (Orth et al., 2020). Women and girls have used social media to talk back to this culture and create networked counter publics to achieve justice. These online counter publics cannot be regarded as substitutes for justice, since it only forms a part of achieving justice (Gjika & Marganski, 2020). However, this counter-argument makes it possible for women or survivors to be heard and supported within online counter publics, in ways that they are not by the criminal justice system (Powell, 2015).

3.5 COLLECTIVE ACTION

This is a digital era; therefore, it is no surprise that collective action has shifted to digital platforms (Alingasa & Ofreneo, 2021). Social media provide like-minded people (Gurman et al., 2018) a space where collective action can take place (Roberts & Marchais, 2018). Collective action is seen when marginalised people share their experiences of injustice and oppression to create common goals. Furthermore, collective action is not restricted to certain parts of the world – it aims to obtain gender equality and women's rights in both developed and developing countries (Sweetman, 2013). The younger generation have also highlighted this in the human rights aspect of their digital activism because it allows them to engage women and men from different parts of the world in a collective effort (Skalli, 2014). Bashi et al. (2018) agree that collective action is taken by feminist movements across the globe to protect the rights of marginalised people and advocate for change. For example, women all over the world share their

GBV-related thoughts and experiences on social media to create common goals that will aid the fight against GBV.

Gleeson and Turner (2019) assert that when women use social media to share experiences such as personal experiences of GBV (Betton et al., 2015), negative experiences with the justice system (Bashi et al., 2018), or experiences of victim-blaming (Lokot, 2018) "their performance is subsumed with performativity" because "the language they use to express themselves and share their experiences is both performative and a performance" (p. 60). For example, by saying #MeToo, a person is actively using an online space to engage in political discourse, joining a community of activists or victims, and identifying as a feminist. They are therefore, performers who use social media to share narratives of their experiences. Comments by other social media users provide the performer with an indication of how their performance was received (Gleeson & Turner, 2019).

Collective action has succeeded in its aim to create solidarity (Eslen-Ziya, 2013). Women sharing their testimonies (Flores, Gómez, Roa & Whitson, 2020; O'Neill, 2018) is a demonstration of how they transform from being reactive to being proactive. The more they speak about social problems such as GBV and express how they feel, the more their response changes to creating a chain of solidarity (Flores et al., 2020). Women in Bangladesh (Das, 2019), Ukraine (Lokot, 2018), and all over the world (Bashi et al., 2018) have used social media to stand in solidarity with one another (Bashi et al., 2018; Das, 2019; Lokot, 2018).

According to Datiri (2020), feminist solidarity is critical in the fight against gender discrimination. Henry-White (2015) used a transnational feminist theory to examine the #HeForShe campaign as a global solidarity movement for gender equality. The aim of the study was to explore whether the campaign achieved transnational feminism (Henry-White, 2015). Transnational feminism focuses on the different experiences of women all over the world by looking at several interacting factors that influence gendered relationships. This speaks to the main attributes of transnational feminism which are promoting transnational solidarity and collaboration between feminists who are from different parts of the world. It emphasises intersectionality, interdisciplinarity, social activism and justice, and collaboration (Zerbe Enns, Díaz & Bryant-Davis, 2020). Solidarity acknowledges that people come from several social positions, therefore, theories of intersectionality can be used as a tool for creating solidarity

(Henry-White, 2015). Activists in the study by Clark-Parsons (2019) also utilised an intersectional analysis of the #MeToo campaign illustrating that rape culture goes with other forms of oppression such as race, class, and sexuality.

Furthermore, while most solidarity movements have focused on the role of women (Bojin, 2013; Henry-White, 2015; Stabile et al., 2021), #HeForShe focuses on the role men have in creating solidarity (Henry-White, 2015) and promoting gender equality (Stabile et al., 2020). Research conducted by Karuna, Purohit, Stabile and Hattery (2016) and Hosterman et al. (2018) yielded similar results. Women often take collective action against GBV because they are primarily on the receiving end of the violence (Hosterman et al., 2018). This is, however, according to Karuna et al. (2016) a clear indication that more men should be encouraged to engage in conversations about GBV.

Further research conducted by Loiseau and Nowacka (2015) indicate that more women compared to men use social media. This provides a possible explanation to why more women compared to men are involved in collective action and solidarity movements on social media (Bojin, 2013). A similar study focused on how the initiation of men's pro-feminist activism requires genuine and significant alliance-building with networks working towards the rights of women (Bojin, 2013). Bojin (2013) conducted interviews with five men active in pro-feminist movements based in Brazil, Canada, the United States, Pakistan, and South Africa. The aim of these interviews was to explore men's pro-feminism organising, and to see what solidarity looks like in practice. It was found that feminist approaches should be central to pro-feminist organising when men support the cause of gender equality (Bojin, 2013).

Social media users have not only used words to show solidarity and support (Bashi et al., 2018; Das, 2019; Duramy, 2019; Hashemi, 2020; Lokot, 2018), but pictures and videos that carry symbolic meaning along with their hashtags (Hashemi, 2020; Ogan & Bas, 2020). These tools have a part in hashtag feminism being recognised as a popular kind of feminist activism (Mendes, Ringrose & Keller, 2018). This has made showing solidarity and support easier. Similar to this, the way in which #MeToo is structured makes it easier for conversations to take place because it allows survivors or women to stand in solidarity with other survivors or women without having to go into much detail about their traumatic experiences (Clark-Parsons, 2019).

Along with this, #MeToo has successfully offered a platform where victims of violence, globally, are provided with support on social media (Hosterman et al., 2018). In a study conducted by Clark-Parsons (2019), one of the social media activists expressed their feeling of collective solidarity because reading the stories shared with the hashtag demonstrated that survivors are everywhere and that they are standing together. In addition, the #WhyIStayed conversation was based on increasing support and solidarity with those who share GBV experiences. Words such as 'you are not alone' have a crucial part in the campaign as it validates the shared experiences of women and recognises the courage it took to share these experiences (Storer & Rodriguez, 2020).

In addition, online interaction has thrived in its aim to create community (Wasuna, 2018). Women have established a community on social media, or what they term, a 'sisterhood'. Sisterhood is a relationship between women who have the same or similar goal to uplift, liberate, and empower other women (Datiri, 2020). The notion of a community of women is present in the wikigender online discussion – a discussion aimed at encouraging gender equality. One of the key areas that this discussion highlighted about social media enabling women's political activism is the use of social media as an instrument to tackle violence against women (Loiseau & Nowacka, 2015). More specifically, in a study conducted in Bangladesh, women indicated that they choose to share experiences of GBV on social media because it links them to a community of women who have similar experiences (Das, 2019). Collective action thus contributes to solidarity, community, and support, and by standing together social change is encouraged (Datiri, 2020).

3.6 CREATING SOCIAL CHANGE

Hashtags are primarily used to inspire social change (Dadas, 2017). According to Makwembere and Tambo (2017), not much is known about whether social media activism really influences social change, and the potential of social media activism to bring political change has been a topic of interest for researchers. However, according to Sanatan (2017), #LifeInLeggings is an example of a hashtag that illustrated how social media activism can influence social change and bring about a revolution without revolutionaries (in the typical sense). For many, utilising social media has become revolutionary in itself (Faris, 2010, as cited in Makwembere & Tambo, 2017).

Dey (2020) used textual analysis to analyse Twitter discourse. It was found that the digital discursive space not only allowed women at higher institutions to act against GBV, but those outside of the institution as well. In addition, Stornaiuolo and Thomas (2017) conducted a study that indicated that the younger generation have often made use of interactive platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to participate in advocacy and social activism in order to encourage social change.

University students who are often exposed to feminist content on their social media pages, and interact on social media believe that they have the power to contribute to change. It was found that female university students have applied their knowledge to try to influence both women and men to think differently about GBV (Flores et al., 2020). One of the university students in the study by Flores et al. (2020) indicated that until she had used social media in this way, she did not know that she could change the way people thought and challenge their preconceived ideas of social problems such as GBV. It was, therefore, found that communication tools such as social media can be used in an effective manner to contribute to change (Flores et al., 2020). However, it is important to consider that social media alone is not enough to bring about social change (Kangere et al., 2017; Mendes et al., 2018). According to Dey (2020) social media should not be seen as a platform that is going to create physical change, but rather a platform that will maintain the conversation about GBV.

#MeToo is an example of a social media movement that received two critiques regarding its potential to contribute to social change (Clark-Parsons, 2019). On the one hand, the movement was critiqued for destroying the lives and reputation of alleged perpetrators. On the other hand, it was believed that the campaign was incapable of destroying a system of oppression. According to Clark-Parsons (2019), both these critiques raised the concern of whether hashtags can create social change that is sustainable. Based on interviews conducted in Bangladesh, not all women feel that sharing their experiences would encourage lasting change. Some believed that perpetrators would not change their behavior because of what they saw on social media (Das, 2019). In addition, Duramy (2019) also provided a critique of the #MeToo movement by asking whether it has the ability to bring about relief of the difficulty faced by victims, including their experiences, and their engagement in the conversation, and whether it can give rise to lasting and sustainable change.

4. WOMEN BREAKING THEIR SILENCE

The literature reviewed up to this point discussed the utility of social media to: share personal experiences of GBV; report experiences of GBV after being failed by the justice system; raise awareness; address victim-blaming and rape culture; establish community and solidarity through collective action; and create social change. Regardless of what social media is used for in terms of conversations about GBV, for women who have experienced GBV, breaking their silence is possibly their first aim. Social media has successfully been a mediator of social psychological factors such as injustice or anger (Dey, 2020). The platform has given marginalised groups of people a voice and a space to create solidarity, encourage change, and to express personal feelings (Lunga, 2020; O'Neill, 2018). Social media has been used as a platform to empower women to voice or communicate their injustices (Datiri, 2020; Lunga, 2020). According to Gouws (2018), women have done everything in their power to be heard. The more women activists support the use of social media, the more the voices of women infiltrate public spaces and are intensified (Makwembere & Tambo, 2017).

Mpofu (2016) conducted research on digital activism in Zimbabwe. A fundamental part of this research was based on the argument that the important role of digital conversations in giving a voice to the voiceless should be noticed (Mpofu, 2016). Where women's voices have been restricted, the internet has given them a voice to "explore contemporary feminism and articulate their own perspectives" (Keller, 2012, p. 430). Linabary, Corple and Cooky (2020) explored how #WhyIStayed created a platform for feminist activism in response to victim-blaming regarding domestic violence. The women in the study shared how #WhyIStayed provided them with a space to voice their experiences that have often been silenced (Linabary et al., 2020).

The potential of social media activism to give a voice to a traditionally silenced group demonstrates its utility for feminist activism (Linabary et al., 2020). The voices of women have been silenced for so long that these large numbers of narratives have an important part in raising awareness about the pervasiveness of GBV (Gjika & Marganski, 2020). Based on the narratives shared on social media, discussions about GBV started in resistance to the culture of silence. This is done through the normalisation of women and victims openly sharing lived experiences, which in turn normalises their experiences (Lokot, 2018). Hashtags such as #MeToo has helped survivors break their silence (Clark-Parsons, 2019).

It is encouraged that social media is used in a constructive manner (Lunga, 2020). Lokot (2018) conducted a study where one of the women who used #IAmNotAfraidToSayIt to share her story indicated that she was afraid, but went ahead anyway because she wanted to claim back her power from the perpetrator (Lokot, 2018). Along with getting back their power, social media activism in Zimbabwe has played a significant part in allowing citizens to claim back their political space (Dey, 2020).

5. RESPONSES TO SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

While some victims of violence have received the anticipated support from other social media users (Salter, 2013), others have not (Hosterman et al., 2018). The anticipated support or positive responses include emotional validation, and the unanticipated support or negative responses include being blamed as the victim or not believed by others (Orchowski, Unitied & Gidyez, 2013; Hosterman et al., 2018). The victim of #RapeAtAzania is an example of a woman who received a significant amount of support on social media (Maluleke & Moyer, 2020). According to Hosterman et al. (2018), positive responses on social media have a significant impact on the victims' recovery process. This support is evident when other victims or social media users provide words of encouragement to those who share their experiences of GBV (Hosterman et al., 2018).

Globally, hashtags have enabled women to talk about the severity of GBV and to remind society that violence against women is an ongoing problem (Bashi et al., 2018). Young activists have positively used social media to shift and shape public discourses (Maluleke & Moyer, 2020). Research participants in a study conducted by Mendes et al. (2018) acknowledged that there were extremely positive aspects of using social media to share feminist views with a large audience. These aspects include connecting with others and communicating with others on a global scale.

Despite all the positive aspects of using social media to share experiences of GBV (Bashi et al., 2018), social media is not always a safe and supportive space (Hosterman et al., 2018). For example, women who chose to use public spaces to talk about their experiences have been further victimised for sharing their stories. Despite creating solidarity, sharing stories on these

platforms have allowed aggressive people to act "against progressive voices" (Bashi et al., 2018, p. 442). Gouws (2018) conducted research that indicated that using social media platforms does not always work and can further harm victims, survivors, and women. This is because it can initiate further harassment and humiliation of survivors, as well as reveal the identities of survivors creating the potential for re-traumatisation.

This provides an indication of how social media users use several factors to decide whether or not they will support someone speaking about their experiences of GBV (Salter, 2013). Women in Barbados, who have shared their experiences online, using hashtags such as #LifeInLeggings, have received a lot of backlash from men who wanted to discredit movements started by women (Sanatan, 2017). The backlash that victims of GBV experience when they share their experiences online has been significant (Survarna & Bhalla, 2020).

This has been experienced in South Africa too. In 2016, *The Citizen* newspaper published an article about people viewing the naked protests against GBV as shameful. However, while most Twitter users defended women who participated in the naked protests (Maluleke & Moyer, 2020), some comments engaged in victim-blaming. An example of this was a social media user commenting that women who expose their naked bodies during the protest, create more rapists. Overall, however, these kinds of comments were challenged by other users and foregrounded as essential in raising awareness, and reminding others that the victim is not the problem (Orth et al., 2020).

In addition to this, online gender-based violence (OGBV), which is mostly emotional or psychological abuse in the form of bullying or harassment, has been a significant challenge. The International Center for Research on Women defines OGBV as "technology-facilitated GBV" or "technology-facilitated sexual violence" (Ratnasari et al., 2021, p. 98). OGBV emerged with the growth of information technology, the global reach the internet has, and the immense use of social media (Ratnasari et al., 2021). Participating in online activism can be physically and emotionally tiring; physically because of creating the social media posts and emotionally because of dealing with online abuse (Losh, 2014)

Additionally, using the internet to talk about issues such as GBV has its disadvantages because of false information, misinformation, privacy (Dey, 2020), hate speech, and its ability to destroy

the reputation of others, or to oppress others (Lunga, 2020). Ogan and Bas (2020) further indicated that using social media to express opinions has its advantages, but a significant disadvantage is that it is not safe due to factors such as government surveillance.

Furthermore, social media activism against GBV has been criticised because only highlighting an issue remains ineffective (Dadas, 2017). Dadas (2017) describes this by saying "another week, another hashtag, and with it, a question about what is actually being accomplished" (p. 17). Digital activism against GBV is further criticised for oversimplifying the injustices described. This is based on the notion that complicated politics, histories, and economies that have contributed to injustices such as GBV cannot be reduced to a hashtag (Dadas, 2017). Social media activism has also been criticised for not giving prominence to the experiences of marginalised women who do not have access to technology and, therefore, are unable to share their stories (Makwembere & Tambo, 2017).

6. CONCLUSION

Social media activism or digital activism has become a powerful tool used to challenge GBV in the world (Alingasa & Ofreneo, 2021; Wasuna, 2018). The chapter started with literature on global reach and speed. Global reach and speed are the two most important advantages of digital activism and are the main reasons the platform is used to talk about injustices such as GBV (Hoffman, 2021). Social media's reach allows people who are geographically separated to construct a collective identity (Harris et al., 2020; Hashemi, 2020). Women have used social media to share personal experiences of GBV (Bashonga & Khuzwayo, 2017; Gjika & Marganski, 2020).

Women have further used the platform to share negative experiences they have had with the justice system when reporting cases of violence. This is seen in a study conducted by Bashi et al. (2018). Victims of GBV have taken the law into their own hands by using digital platforms to identify and expose the perpetrators of violence (Maluleke & Moyer, 2020). Social media has also been used to raise awareness (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2015). Further conversations that have taken place on social media are conversations about rape culture and the victim-blaming discourse that maintains it (Gurman et al., 2018). Social media platforms have provided women who engage in discussions about GBV with a platform to receive and provide others with

solidarity and support through collective action (Henry-White, 2015), as well as contribute to social change (Sanatan, 2017).

When engaging in conversations about GBV, women have received both supportive and adverse responses (Orth et al., 2020; Salter, 2013) which have had both positive and negative impacts on the activists (Das, 2019; Mendes et al., 2018).

Taking the research described above into account, the purpose of this research project is to go beyond the conversations that take place on social media, by exploring the experiences of women in South Africa who use social media to engage in discussions about GBV. The next chapter discusses the theoretical framework and concepts that informed this research study and allowed for the illumination of the findings.

<center>**3**</center>

<center>**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**</center>

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1. INTRODUCTION

This research project will investigate the commonalities and the differences in the experiences of women in South Africa who use social media to talk about gender-based violence (GBV). This chapter forms an important part of the overall research project as it is the methodological basis from which knowledge on the topic will be constructed (Osanloo & Grant, 2016). A narrative-discursive approach will be employed by showing how the discourses drawn upon in talk about using social media to discuss GBV, firstly construct narratives; secondly create subject positions; and thirdly feature "trouble" and "repair". The chapter begins by providing a discussion on social constructionism, the overarching paradigm of this research, based on the three assumptions developed by Burr (1995). The section that follows is a discussion on the overarching grand theory (Adams & Buetow, 2014), namely critical feminisms, and includes a discussion on the shift from first-wave feminism to fourth-wave feminism. The sections which follow are discussions about the utility of narrative psychology and discursive psychology, respectively. Having a thorough understanding of narrative psychology and discursive psychology will form a strong premise on which the theoretical framework is based. The key analytical concepts are then discussed, these are: narratives, discursive resources (interpretive repertoires and canonical narratives), discourses, positioning, and trouble and repair. This is followed by a discussion on Taylor and Littleton's (2006) narrative-discursive approach, and the three focal points of the narrative-discursive approach. I chose to discuss the key analytical concepts before discussing the narrative-discursive approach because understanding these concepts provide a better understanding of the approach.

2. SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

Qualitative research methods collect linguistic and textual data and are less likely to decontextualise the experiences and narratives of research participants (Burr & Dick, 2017; Emerson & Frosh, 2004). Based on these understandings, social constructionism is the appropriate overarching theory to explore the experiences of women in South Africa who use social media to talk about GBV and understand the experiences from their points of view.

Social constructionism highlights the importance of daily interaction between people, and how language is used to construct the reality of people's experience (Andrews, 2012). Our understanding and perception of the world, and the objects and events within it, is a result of how the world is represented or created through language (Galbin, 2014). Language is defined as a "system of vocal signs" and understanding language is crucial to understanding the reality of daily life (Berger & Luckman, 1996, p. 51). It is through language that concepts are constructed, thoughts and feelings are shared (Andrews, 2012; Walker, 2015), and experiences are spoken about (Emerson & Frosh, 2004).

According to social constructionists, both meaning and knowledge are socially constructed (Andrews, 2012; Walker, 2015). Social constructionism further aims to understand lived experiences from the standpoint of those who have lived it (Walker, 2015). However, as argued by Gergen (2004) "social constructionism cannot be reduced to a fixed set of principles, but is more properly considered a continuously unfolding conversation about the nature of knowledge and our understanding of the world" (p. 2). Burr (1995) articulated three central assumptions of social constructionism. The first assumption is that knowledge is not a reflection of what is out there in the world (Burr, 1995). This is mirrored in Andrews' (2012) and Galbin's (2014) understanding that reality is socially defined. Andrews (2012) expands on this that reality refers to the subjective experience of daily life, and not the objective reality of the natural world. Our version of the world is not dictated or fixed on any correct way by what there is (Gergen, 2004). Therefore, what is known about the world, including our understanding of human beings, is a result of human thought, rather than based in a noticeable external reality (Burr, 2015). In this study, the women who used social media to talk about GBV drew on available discourses to construct many varied versions of reality.

The second assumption of social constructionism introduced by Burr (1995) is that knowledge is specific to cultural and historical contexts. Social constructionism views individuals as incorporated into cultural, political, and historical developments, in particular times and places, therefore, repositioning psychological processes as not individualised but rather something that needs to be understood socially and cross-culturally (Galbin, 2014). This means that women in South Africa who use digital platforms to engage in discussions about GBV, with the country's history and particular experiences of GBV, will do so specifically and differently to women from other parts of the world doing the same thing.

Smith (2016) expands on the above understanding of social constructionism by providing an understanding of narrative constructionism. Narrative constructionism is a socio-cultural-oriented approach to conducting narrative analysis that considers human beings as meaning-makers who use narratives to interpret, direct, and communicate life, and to configure and constitute their experiences and their sense of who they are. These narratives are passed down from people's cultural and social worlds (Smith, 2016) and maintained by social processes. Social constructionism deliberates about the extent to which people are simultaneously individuals and part of a collective. Despite having separate bodies, thoughts, and emotions, these are not necessarily positioned solely within individuals. Instead, these thoughts and emotions exist between individuals who construct them socially as part of shared collective objectives, values, and experiences (Galbin, 2014).

The third assumption of social constructionism is that knowledge and social action are interrelated (Burr, 1995). Language goes beyond connecting people as people are constructed through language (Galbin, 2014). Emphasis is therefore not placed on the person, but on the social interaction where language is created, maintained, and abandoned (Galbin 2014). This means that when women in South Africa share their narratives of using social media to talk about GBV, the focus is not on whether these narratives are "true", but rather on how these narratives are constructed and what women are hoping to achieve in using those narratives. Galbin (2014) further argues that realities are created through language. There is not one reality behind the language being spoken. The meaning can change depending on who says it, how it is said, when it is said and in what context it is said.

3. CRITICAL FEMINISMS

Critical feminist theories (there are many) emerge from a combination of two categories of theories, namely, feminist theories and critical theories. Notably, not all feminist theories are critical, and not all critical theories are feminist. In the section which follows feminism and critical theory will be outlined. It is important to note that feminism is not a homogenous category. It is more accurate to talk about a singular feminism since it exists in many forms. It has also developed from a specific history. Very briefly, first-wave feminism and second-wave feminism focused on the fight for women's rights and for women to have a voice, but in different ways. While first-wave feminism highlighted the role women have as mothers and carers, second-wave feminism shifted its focus by highlighting women as equal to men (Franceschet, 2004). Second-wave feminism was also about the fight against gender stereotypes, emphasising that feminism was important to both women and men. In addition, the expression 'the personal is political' was created by second-wave feminists to emphasise the influence of discrimination on the private lives of women (Munro, 2013). Third-wave feminism emerged in the late 1980s and reflected postmodern ideas (Phillips, 2014) and has been affected by academic inquiry of queer theory (a theory which puts forward that gender and sexuality are fluid; therefore, cannot be categorised under binary perceptions of 'male' and 'female') (Munro, 2013).

According to Munro (2013), the internet has contributed to the shift from third-wave feminism to fourth-wave feminism, creating a platform and culture where discrimination is challenged. In addition, fourth-wave feminism is based on the use of social media platforms such as Twitter, and on the belief that social media has a significant reach and provides a space for solidarity and activism (Zimmerman, 2017). Social media is described as the origin of fourth-wave feminism because it has created spaces for feminist debates and confrontation (Phillips, 2014). Zimmerman (2017) also argues that fourth-wave feminism is characterised by an intersectional feminist framework.

Broadly speaking, all feminist theories are based on troubling two concepts, namely "gender" and "patriarchy". With regards to gender, they specify the difference between "gender" and "sex". While "sex" refers to whether a personal is biologically or genetically male or female, "gender" refers to the social understanding society has attached to the "sex" of an individual. In other words, human beings are born with male or female genitalia (and thus assigned a "sex" at

birth). However, it is through socialisation that babies become masculine or feminine (this is their "gender"). "Patriarchy" is a system that foregrounds and emphasises the experiences and perspectives of men and disregards the experiences and perspectives of women (Wood, 2008). All feminist theories are inspired by a collective goal, that is to challenge male supremacism and create knowledge about women (Snyder, 1995). Feminist theories have an important part in challenging anti-feminist and misogynistic knowledge (Ackerly & True, 2010). In addition, feminist theories acknowledge specificity of context, that is that women and men do not experience reality in the same way, and that all women do not experience injustice in the same way because of additional injustices such as race and class (Snyder, 1995).

Critical theories, on the other hand, strive to recognise prevalent structures and practices that create and validate inequality and oppression. These kinds of theories are interested in social change. Critical theorists want to acknowledge how marginalised groups can become empowered and are interested in how common principles that further contribute to their oppression can be changed (Wood, 2008).

Therefore, critical feminist theorists are mainly interested in understanding how women can become empowered, and how they have altered the controlling practices and beliefs of patriarchy and misogyny that place a restriction on their lives (Wood, 2008).

There are four underlying assumptions of critical feminist theory. Firstly, in a patriarchal society, women are inferior to men because they are not involved in defining society and how it works. Secondly, because women are in an inferior position, some experiences, or understandings specific to women are not portrayed in a way that gives thought to women's interpretation of those experiences. For example, men do not experience birth; therefore, their understanding of birth is limited and often not an accurate portrayal of women's experiences. Thirdly, women's experiences, understanding, and interests deserve respect, which is a requirement to women's involvement in interpersonal, social, and political lives. Lastly, by giving women a voice, the experiences and understanding of women are both appreciated and included (Wood, 2008).

Critical feminist theories focus on the power relations in society that place men in a superior position. According to critical feminist theorists, the experiences, perspectives, and knowledge of women have been undervalued and the voices of women have been overpowered. Critical

feminist theories thus aim to raise awareness about the experiences, perspectives, and knowledge of women that have previously been less appreciated and valued compared to those of men (Wood, 2008). Therefore, many feminist researchers pursue research that is valuable to women (Ackerly & True, 2010). Research on the experiences of using social media to talk about GBV is useful to women because women all over the world have shared common narratives and experiences of GBV on social media (Bashonga & Khuzwayo, 2017; Das, 2019; Maluleke & Moyer, 2020; Sanatan, 2017), using the platform to create a sense of community among those fighting against GBV (Rentschler, 2014) and to stand in solidarity with one another without being fearful (Hawkins, 2012; Rentschler, 2014).

Critical feminisms constitute an appropriate theory for understanding the rationale for undertaking this research. Thus, while critical feminism is the grand transdisciplinary theoretical foundation suitable to this project, in the section which follows the narrative and discursive psychological theories utilised as suitable tools for the collection and analysis of the data will be elucidated.

4. NARRATIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Sarbin (1986) introduced the term narrative psychology, when they forwarded the narrative principle. According to this principle "human beings think, perceive, imagine, and make moral choices according to narrative structures" (p. 8). From this perspective, human behaviour is best explained through stories. In addition, Sarbin (1986) argued that "the narrative is a way of organising episodes, actions, and accounts of actions; it is an achievement that brings together mundane facts and fantastic creations; time and place are incorporated." (p. 9).

Narrative psychology differs from mainstream psychology in that it has played a significant role in understanding people in social and cultural contexts (Smith, 2016). Crossley (2000) suggests that the narrative psychological approach consists of a useful tool which allows the recapturing of how experiences are constructed in "cultural forms of language and sense-making" (Crossley, 2000, p. 533). Despite people being variably positioned within different cultural and social contexts, they have an active role in taking up new positions. They are, however, limited by these social and cultural contexts as well as their own biographies at the same time (Cuevas-Garcia, 2005). When people tell stories about their lives, it displays their meaning making. Meaning is

created through social discourse. Narrative research, therefore, depends on discourse analysis (Taylor, 2006; Taylor & Littleton, 2006; Wertz, 2011), discursive psychology (Taylor 2006; Taylor and Littleton, 2006) and social constructionism (Taylor, 2006).

Although there are continued debates about what narrative research is, a set of four features of narrative psychology are identified in Kirkman's (1999) research. Furthermore, these features are harmonious with some constructions of feminist researchers. The first feature is the acknowledgement of the individual person. According to Kirkman (1999), the lives and stories of individuals, and understanding these, form a crucial part in research. As the researcher, I was fixed on the personal narratives of women who use social media to talk about GBV. The second feature is acknowledging the subjective aspects of lives and the importance of meaning. Research about the stories of participants strive to explore the subjective meaning of lives as they are voiced in the narratives of participants. In my research I was interested in how each woman constructed and interpreted their experiences of digital activism against GBV.

The third feature is acknowledging the contribution of the context of meaning. Context consists of several layers, these include historical, cultural, and social layers. In addition, context is inseparable from the construction of narrative. Nicolson (1995) as cited in Kirkman (1999) is an example of a feminist researcher who went to the extent of aiming to contextualise the lives of women. The fourth feature is acknowledgement of the collective construction of autobiographical accounts. Culture, society, and other people collectively contribute to the construction of personal accounts. It is, therefore, important that researchers consider that the stories told to a particular person is a collective outcome of the person telling the story and the person the story is told to. Similarly, the role of the researcher should always be taken into consideration because they are the person the story is told to by the research participants (Kirkman, 1999).

5. DISCURSIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Discursive psychology was introduced by Potter and Wetherell in 1987, and labelled as such by Edwards and Potter in 1992 (Willig, 2013). Discursive psychology is defined as the practice of discourse analytical principles to psychological topics, and begins with the verbal and written discourse and is central to daily life (Edwards & Potter, 2005). Over the past several years, discursive psychology has made a considerable contribution to psychological research as well as the theoretical and methodological controversies across the social sciences and beyond (Wiggins, 2020). Discursive psychologists focus particularly on how people are positioned in talk, and highlight that people have several identities that may differ based on the occasion (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). Discursive psychology's primary concern is on how versions of self, world, and events are constructed and presented as accountable and factual. As such it does not view language as the tool to express pre-existing knowledge, but rather views language as the tool through which language is constructed (Seymour-Smith, 2017). Therefore, what people say is not perceived as what they are thinking or what really happened, but rather, what exists in the mind and what happened in reality are perceived as discursive resources for participants to draw on in conversations (Hepburn & Wiggins, 2007).

Discursive psychology focuses on how research participants utilise discursive resources (Willig, 2013). In addition, discursive psychological approaches "understand talk as social" (Taylor, 2006, p. 5) but are, however, critiqued for failing to account for progression in identity (Taylor, 2006). According to Taylor (2006), there are two ways in which discursive analysis can approach narratives. Firstly, as a resource where ideas and meanings which prevail in social and cultural context become resources for people's talk and how they make sense of the world and themselves within it. Secondly, as a construction which refers to speakers' own constructions of life narratives.

Discursive psychology originates from three key observations about the nature of discourse (Wiggins & Potter, 2020). Firstly, "discourse is action-oriented" (Cuevas-Garcia, 2015, p. 89; Potter & Hepburn, 2007; Wiggins & Potter, 2020). According to Cuevas-Garcia (2015), this means that people talk with the intention of achieving something at the end. Wiggins and Potter (2020) further argue that discourse is action-oriented because when people talk, they are mainly carrying out an action. Secondly, "discourse is situated in time" (Cuevas-Garcia, 2015, p. 89;

Potter & Hepburn, 2007; Wiggins & Potter, 2020). This means that discourse is arranged sequentially and that the environment for what is said is generally understood on what was said before and after (Potter & Hepburn, 2007; Wiggins & Potter, 2020).

Thirdly, "discourse is constructed and constructive" (Cuevas-Garcia, 2015, p. 89; Potter & Hepburn, 2007; Wiggins & Potter, 2020). Discourse is constructed by using socially and culturally available resources such as narratives and repertoires (Cuevas-Garcia, 2015). It is further constructed because it is made up of linguistic building blocks such as words, categories, and idioms to present certain versions of the world (Potter & Hepburn, 2007; Wiggins & Potter, 2020). Discourse is constructive in that these versions are a result of the talk itself, not something that may evidently exist prior to talk (Wiggins & Potter, 2020). It is constructive of interpretations of the mind, self, world, and events (Cuevas-Garcia, 2015). Cuevas-Garcia (2015) adds a fourth key characteristic of discourse. This is that discourse is processed as psychological. A more in-depth discussion of discourses is provided later in the chapter when the key analytical concepts are discussed.

In the preceding section a brief outline of both narrative and discursive psychology was presented.

6. THE KEY ANALYTICAL CONCEPTS OF THE NARRATIVE-DISCURSIVE APPROACH

I will discuss the five key analytical concepts before discussing Taylor and Littleton's (2006) narrative-discursive approach, because understanding the concepts first will provide a better understanding of the broader approach. The key analytical concepts I draw on are: narratives; discursive resources (interpretive repertoires and canonical narratives); discourses; positioning; and trouble and repair.

6.1 NARRATIVES

There are different definitions of the term 'narrative'. Despite slight differences in these definitions, there is a common understanding of what a narrative is. For example, Esin (2011), defines a narrative as a story "with a clear sequential order, that connect events in a meaningful way for a definite audience" (p. 93) and Taylor (2006) describes a narrative as "a construction, in talk, of sequence or consequence" (p. 3). Both Esin (2011) and Taylor (2006) refers to the idea of sequence in their definitions, which essentially serves the purpose of constructing the overall story or narrative told (Kleres, 2011; Rantakari & Vaara, 2017).

People create narratives to construct stories told through social interaction (Esin, 2011; Smith, 2016; Rantakari & Vaara, 2017); their experiences (Smith, 2016); their identity, the world, and others in the world (Smith, 2016). It is argued that human experience is described as having a narrative or story-telling character (Crossley, 2000). In relation to this research project, narratives are constructed during the interaction between research participants and the researcher.

The notion of time is present when a story is told. There are two kinds of time. The first kind is directly related to the sequence in a story. For example, a speaker saying, "and then this happened, and then that happened". In other words, a story has a sequential beginning, middle, and end. The second kind of time in a narrative is when several parts are taken from a sequence of events to make sense of the events relevant to one another (Crossley, 2000). In most cases, narratives follow a linear structure where events of a story are told in the order of occurrence. This flow can however be disrupted during talk as speakers tend to jump from one part of a story to the next (Kleres, 2011). In exploring the narratives of women in South Africa who use social media to talk about GBV, a semi-structured interview schedule was used to help maintain a sequential structure to the participants' narratives (more detail about this process will be described in Chapter 4).

Another aspect of these specific narratives which had to be kept in mind was the potential for the telling of emotionally-laden narratives. The construction of these emotional experiences are not fixed (Mclnnes & Corlett, 2012). Instead, these fluid experiences are portrayed by individuals to incorporate how they as narrators classify themselves and how they are classified by others who

hear the narrative (Corlett & Marvin, 2014). For example, in relation to the research topic, when women in South Africa use social media to talk about personal experiences of GBV, they may be faced with negative responses which have the potential to create an emotional experience. They will thus have to construct that emotional experience in a way which is contextually relevant by drawing on the discursive resources at their disposal.

6.2 DISCURSIVE RESOURCES

Taylor (2006) defines discursive resources as the "ideas, images, associations" that form cultural and social contexts (p. 3). Similarly, Reynolds, Wetherell and Taylor (2007) define discursive resources as a set of meanings that exist before a conversation, and are identifiable within a conversation. The social and cultural contexts in which people are placed are the "discursive resources available to speakers" (Taylor, 2005, p. 3). Discursive resources include interpretive repertoires (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Taylor & Littleton, 2006) and canonical narratives (Taylor, 2006; Taylor & Littleton, 2006).

6.2.1   INTERPRETIVE REPERTOIRES

Interpretive repertoires are a logical way of discussing objects and things that happen in the world, and a common understanding of a certain topic (Taylor & Littleton, 2006), or "a culturally familiar and habitual line of argument comprised of recognisable themes, common places, and tropes" (Wetherell, 1998, p. 400). In other words, interpretive repertoires are the general understandings of a topic by everyone (Cuevas-Garcia, 2015). Interpretive repertoires are used to understand how different accounts of the world are created and established in people's talk (Seymour-Smith, 2017). These repertoires are recognised during interviews (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). According to Hsu and Roth (2009) "interpretive repertoires can be thought as cultural resources or as a tool box with different components or a tote tray from which participants draw on for their conversations" (p. 3).

In most cases, repertoires are used to study the "social resources for people's talk" (Taylor & Littleton, 2008). These repertoires forms part of society's everyday knowledge. Discursive resources such as interpretive repertoires and canonical narratives exist before specific occasions of talk. These repertoires form part of common sense and daily logic (Taylor & Littleton, 2008). This approach assumes that meaning is constructed, unconstructed, and re-constructed in talk and

interaction (Taylor & Littleton, 2006) and emphasises the continuously changing elements when constructing narratives (Esin et al., 2014).

In this study, I identified interpretive repertoires in participants' talk to better understand social media activism against GBV.

6.2.2 CANONICAL NARRATIVES

A canonical narrative is another example of a discursive resource that speakers make use of. This is a general understanding of sequence and consequence (Taylor, 2007). A canonical narrative represents an idea of how a life should occur under ideal circumstances, or one fixed way for it to occur (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). In psychology, there is evidence that people in Western cultures share a script or a canonical narrative of what a standard life should look like. Therefore, a canonical narrative does not need to be voiced because it consists of an expected sequence of events. An example of an accepted canonical narrative about an ideal life would be that young people complete their education and become employed before marrying, producing children, and living "happily ever after".

It was not anticipated that a canonical narrative would surface in this study for two reasons. Despite the prevalence of GBV, women narrating their stories are still unlikely to draw on these experiences as an acceptable or common understanding of how women's narratives of their lives should proceed. Secondly, they were being asked to narrate limited and specifically focused experiences of using social media. A pre-existing shared script or common understanding of how this should have proceeded, given that it is a specific and narrow experience, would thus not apply.

6.3 DISCOURSES

The term 'discourse' is often described from a linguistic or sociological standpoint, but for the purposes of this project is understood as more extensive than a simple psycholinguistic or sociolinguistic understanding. 'Discourse' consists of how meaning is communicated through culture. Parker (1992) defines discourse as a "system of statements which construct an object" (p. 61). 'Discourse' not only includes verbal communication and writing, but also non-verbal and illustrated communication, and creative and poetic representation – these are examples of the symbolic material people use to represent themselves and others (Parker, 2002). According to Parker (2002) "the organisation of discourse through patterns and structures in different texts fixes the meaning of symbolic material, and thus makes it possible for discourse analysts to take those texts, unpick them, and show how they work'' (p. 124).

Parker (2002) describes three characteristics of a discourse. The first characteristic is 'variability'. Psychologists often look for consistency in narratives or accounts. Contrary to this, discourse analysts pay particular attention to inconsistency and disparity in narratives or accounts (Parker, 2002). The corpus of statements is found in a variety of texts (such as in social media and in personal conversations (which despite being historically and contextually variable) share a regularised (but not uniform) understanding of a topic. In this study, I am studying the narratives or accounts of women in South Africa who use social media to talk about GBV. Within these accounts, there are opposing and intersecting descriptions of experiences. In other words, the variable experiences of women are shaped according to the discourses they draw on to construct their accounts.

The second characteristic of a discourse is 'construction'. In traditional psychology, people are treated as having the potential to be separate from culture. The mental processes of individuals are also treated as separate from the rest of the world. Discourse analysts understand the meanings of words and phrases in language as closely connected to other meanings and activities, and as recreated by speakers in the context of those meanings and activities (Parker, 2002). Discourse has constructive effects. The more the discourse is used, the greater the effect of reinforcing the complex system of beliefs, meanings, and practices that come with it. The discourse does not only act to describe, but acts as a constructive force that is productive and simultaneously restrictive. The words and phrases used to construct accounts of women's

experiences of using social media to engage in conversations about GBV are closely connected to other experiences and reinforce what can be said about a particular topic.

The third characteristic is 'function'. Discourse does not provide a clear opening to the mind of a person, or to the world. Instead, during the process of describing things, people have a role in supporting or challenging what they describe (Parker, 2002). Discourses construct objects (such as GBV) and contain particular subjects (such as women using social media to talk about GBV). Specific to this research project, during the process of describing their experiences of digital activism against GBV, women have a role in supporting or challenging the experiences they describe and may choose to position themselves in specific ways. Discourse analysts are interested in what people achieve with a particular way of talking about a topic (Parker, 2002). For example, women may choose to narrate a story which positions them as either a victim or survivor - these alternative ways of positioning themselves achieve different things. Positioning is described in more detail in the section which follows.

6.4 POSITIONING

Positioning theory originated within the framework of discursive psychology (McVee, Baldassarre & Bailey, 2004). More specifically, it is primarily a conversational phenomenon (Davies & Harré, 1990) originating from linguistics and argues that language is the primary tool of thought and social action (Harré & Moghaddam, 1999). According to Davies and Harré (1990) when a person takes up a particular position and locates themselves there that person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position. This includes particular images, metaphors, storylines, and concepts which are made more relevant because of the discourse in which they have positioned themselves. Studies that have utilised a positioning theory focused on the narratives research participants used to position themselves and others (Harré & Moghaddam, 1999). Similarly, this research project uses positioning theory to explore the narratives of women in South Africa who use social media to talk about GBV, and to explore how they position themselves in those narratives to achieve different ends.

More specific to a narrative-discursive approach, a position or subject position refers to the identities that speakers are given by others or construct for themselves in talk (Edley, 2001). Subject positions refer to how different identities are constructed by different ways of talking

(Cuevas-Garcia, 2015). Subject positions are applicable to discursive psychology because they link discourse and interpretive repertoires to how the selves are socially constructed (Edley, 2001, as cited in Cuevas-Garcia, 2015). According to Wetherell (1998), subject positions are either troubled or untroubled. An untroubled position is one which is stable, not contradictory, and used in the same way throughout a narrative. Trouble, on the other hand, relates to inconsistency, for example, when speakers claim a different position to what was claimed before. These troubled positions may need to be repaired in order for the speaker and hearer to continue making sense of the narrative (Cuevas-Garcia, 2015). This is described in the section which follows.

6.5 TROUBLE AND REPAIR

Taylor and Littleton's (2006) narrative-discursive approach (which will be described in more detail later) is primarily aimed at, but not limited to, exploring identity work. In this way of thinking about conversations, talk is both an interaction with the listener's present, and the speaker's past experiences with other listeners. How the speaker's position was supported or critiqued during those conversations might inform how they position themselves in subsequent conversations. Taylor (2005) defines a troubled identity as "one which is potentially 'hearable' and challengeable by others as implausible or inconsistent with other identities that are claimed" (p. 254).

In narrative-discursive analysis talk is seen as flexible. This means that speakers can construct or claim an experience or position themselves or others in a way that suits them. However, speakers do not have the freedom to construct or claim whichever experience or position they want. There has to be some form of consistency. In this study, speakers may have had both formal and informal conversations about their experiences of using social media to talk about GBV. During these conversations, certain positions which they assumed for themselves, could have been questioned or critiqued. These previous critiques may influence the way in which the speaker shares their experience and how they position themselves in the narrative, in order to avoid being critiqued again. Similarly, the speaker may have decided to change the narrative by positioning themselves in a different way.

For the sake of a coherent identity, speakers generally demonstrate a version of what they have said before and position themselves in consistent ways. However, talk is impacted by different interactions and contexts. This means that people's narratives are complicated to understand when they have to orientate themselves to take into account what they have said before, who they are talking to, and the context in which the particular conversation is happening (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). Some inconsistencies in the narratives of any speakers are admissible and generally tolerated. There are, however, some inconsistencies that speakers and hearers of conversations feel need to be explained or repaired. This process of repairing some inconsistencies creates "trouble" in the experiences and positions of participants (Taylor, 2005). "Trouble" can be "repaired" by repeating or explaining what was said. In the course of this explanation the speaker may shift or change their position for the sake of achieving consistency (Taylor & Littleton, 2006; Morison & Macleod, 2013; Taylor, 2006). The narrative-discursive method is helpful because it expands the idea of "trouble" by considering the limitations of earlier accounts and the positions found in those accounts (Morison & Macleod, 2013). When conducting narrative analysis, identifying the positions from which storytellers construct their stories is important as it shows how several elements are put together in response to the available discursive resources (Esin, 2011).

The key concepts of the narrative discursive approach which are relevant to this project are narratives; discursive resources (including discourses); positioning and the notion of trouble and repair with reference to positioning. In the section which follows, how these concepts will be utilised together will be described.

7. THE NARRATIVE-DISCURSIVE APPROACH

In exploring the narratives of women in South Africa of their experiences of using social media to talk about GBV, this study will use Taylor and Littleton's (2006) narrative-discursive approach. A narrative-discursive approach to data analysis is a social constructionist approach to narrative analysis, which is positioned within socially orientated narrative research as it considers the broader social construction of stories in relation to interpersonal, social, and cultural factors (Esin et al., 2014).

The narrative-discursive approach proposed by Taylor and Littleton (2006) includes and builds on aspects of social constructionism as well as narrative and discursive psychology. Narrative-discursive psychology pays particular attention to biographical accounts (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). This makes the approach extremely useful to analyse how women in South Africa construct their experiences of using social media to talk about GBV. In exploring the narratives of women in South Africa who use social media to talk about GBV, the discursive work that research participants undertake as they construct their experiences will be analysed. To do this the three focal points of the narrative-discursive approach (as briefly described below) will be kept in mind.

7.1 THE THREE GENERAL FOCAL POINTS OF A NARRATIVE-DISCURSIVE APPROACH

Firstly, talk is understood as constructed in a complex combination of contexts. This means that stories differ depending on the occasion of telling, as well as the context in which it is told, regardless of the story being repeated. The approach looks at the individual accounts, and the social and cultural contexts in which the accounts are situated as working hand-in-hand (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). The social and cultural contexts in which speakers are placed determines how they construct their experiences (Taylor, 2006). This means that despite being reiterated, a story differs based on the time and context in which it is told. In discursive psychology, talk is understood as social in three ways. Firstly, talk is regarded as an interaction. Secondly, talk happens within the context of continuing discussions and challenges that a speaker engages with. Thirdly, talk consists of meanings which exist within the social and cultural contexts of speakers (Taylor, 2006).

Secondly, based on social constructionism, talk is social and those who interact with one another rely on regular discursive resources to create their accounts. (Morison & Macleod, 2013; Taylor & Littleton, 2006). This approach will illustrate how women make use of these discursive resources when constructing their narratives to give an account of their experiences of using social media to talk about GBV. In addition to this, speakers use a language that is familiar to them. This language includes certain ideas that have been collected. This familiar language exists before talking takes place and can be used as resources for talk. Language allows a means of constructing how the world is experienced. Conversation is the most important way to construct and reconstruct subjective realities. Subjective reality is made up of concepts that are shared by groups of people in that every time these concepts are brought up, no explanation of what the concept means needs to be given (Andrews, 2012).

Thirdly, speakers should display consistency in what they say in relation to prior experiences (Morison & Macleod, 2013; Taylor & Littleton, 2006). Inconsistency or "trouble" in narratives is seen when speakers either employ "contradictory positions" or "undesirable positions" (Morison & Macleod, 2013, p. 571). Speaker's "repair" the inconsistency by reconstructing their position to avoid being negatively positioned (Morison & Macleod, 2013).

Based on these focal points, the narrative-discursive method is a discursive approach to narrative analysis that focuses on the subject positioning of particular discursive contexts. The integration of narrative theory and discursive theory, and using a discursive approach to narrative analysis, enables analysts to study how people "do" narrative by using culturally available discursive resources to create narratives within a specific interaction (Morison & Macleod, 2013).

8. CONCLUSION

This chapter started with a discussion on social constructionism based on the three assumptions by Burr (1995). Social constructionism is the overarching paradigm of this research. This was followed by a discussion on critical feminisms, including the shift from first-wave feminism to fourth-wave feminism. I then discussed narrative psychology and discursive psychology. This provided a strong foundation on which the theoretical framework was based. The key analytical concepts were then discussed. These concepts are: narratives; discursive resources (interpretive repertoires (which are included in this research project), and canonical narratives (which are not

included in this research project); discourses; positioning; and trouble and repair. I discussed these concepts before discussing the narrative-discursive approach, because understanding the key analytical concepts provides a better understanding of the approach. I then discussed Taylor and Littleton's (2006) narrative-discursive approach, and the three focal points of the approach.

4

METHODOLOGY

1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the methodology utilised to explore the narratives of women in South Africa who use social media to talk about gender-based violence (GBV) is described. I explicate the chosen research design, the study aims and research questions, sampling methods, data collection methods, data analysis processes, rigour and trustworthiness and the ethical considerations of this research project. In this chapter, I also reflect on the research process and the relationships in the research process. The first section discusses the chosen research design. The second section is an explanation of the study aims and a list of the research questions. The section that follows is a discussion on the methods used to choose the appropriate sample and sample size, and recruit research participants. The attributes of the recruited research participants are also presented and discussed. Non-probability sampling methods were used – namely volunteer and purposive sampling. Facebook and Twitter, which are social networking sites, were used to recruit research participants. Twelve women in South Africa who use social media to engage in conversations about GBV was recruited. The section that follows describes the methods used to collect data. This includes a discussion on narrative interviews, Mueller's (2019) episodic narrative interview, and how the interviews were conducted. The section that follows discusses the data analysis and interpretation processes. I start by discussing transcription, which is the first step to analysis. I then discuss the key elements to narrative analysis and discourse analysis. This was followed by a discussion on the narrative-discursive analytic process I followed. The rigour and trustworthiness of the study, ethical considerations and reflexivity is then discussed.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

This research project utilised a qualitative research design to explore the narratives of women in South Africa who use social media to talk about GBV. Qualitative research employs a rigorous, holistic approach and is a flexible research design to study the phenomenon being investigated (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). The primary objective of a qualitative research design is to obtain data that is descriptive and informative (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). This research design is

appropriate because it concentrates on human conversation and experience (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018), and allows the researcher to explore an under-researched topic (Aspers & Corte, 2019; Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018) to its fullest extent. The specific qualitative research design that was used is a narrative research design.

Anderson and Kirkpatrick (2016) provide a useful description of the narrative approach; "the narrative approach places the people being studied at the heart of the study process and privileges the meanings that they assign to their own stories" (p. 631). This approach thus allowed me to focus primarily on the stories of the research participants (Lewis, 2015). Once again, this specific research design is appropriate because the study is story oriented (Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark & Morales, 2007). In addition, the units of analysis were the South African women whose narratives, about using social media to talk about GBV, were studied (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013).

3. STUDY AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this research project was to explore the experiences of women in South Africa who use social media or digital platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, to talk about GBV. This was done by focusing on the discourses drawn upon by women to construct narratives of their experiences of using social media to talk about GBV, the subject positions employed by women in their narratives, and how "trouble" and "repair" featured in the narratives of women.

Research on social media activism against GBV is important because women all over the world have turned to social media to contribute to the fight against GBV. According to Wasuna (2018), social media activism or digital activism is a new phenomenon; therefore, not much research exists on the topic. The purpose of this research project was to explore women's accounts of using a large platform to talk about a sensitive topic, such as GBV. To achieve this, the research was guided by the following research questions:

a. How do women in South Africa, who use social media to talk about GBV, narrate their experiences of using these platforms?

b. What discursive resources are seen in participants' talk about their experiences of using social media to talk about GBV?

c. What subject positions do women in South Africa take on in their narratives of using social media to talk about GBV?

d. How does "trouble" and "repair" feature in women's talk about their experiences of using social media to talk about GBV?

The methods which were used to answer these research questions will be described in the section which follows.

4. METHODS

This section is a description of the way in which the participants were sampled and recruited to participate in the study.

4.1 SAMPLING

As already mentioned, the aim of this research project was to explore the experiences of women in South Africa who use social media to talk about GBV. I used non-probability sampling techniques, meaning that the sampling was subjected to judgement (Sharma, 2017). Non-probability sampling means that the probability of being chosen to participate in the research study is not relevant (Acharya, Prakashi, Saxena & Nigam, 2013). The specific sampling strategies used in this study were volunteer sampling and purposive sampling. Volunteer sampling, which is also referred to as self-selection sampling, involves research participants volunteering or self-selecting, and contacting the researcher to participate in the research project (Sharma, 2017; Vehovar, Toepoel & Steinmetz, 2016). Potential participants were recruited through advertisements (Vehovar et al., 2016). A significant advantage of volunteer sampling is that participants are more committed to the research study because they self-selected and were not randomly induced to participate (Sharma, 2017). The utilisation of this sampling strategy was

appropriate for the purposes of this study because GBV is a sensitive topic, and women were given the freedom to decide whether they were willing to engage with the topic or not.

Purposive sampling aims to include participants who have the appropriate characteristics to answer the overall research question (Rowley, 2012; Sharma, 2017), as well as participants who are exposed to the research topic (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). Once again, the utilisation of a purposive sampling technique guaranteed the selection of research participants who were appropriate for the purpose of this study. The inclusion criteria, therefore, included women who were: 18 years or older, which is the appropriate age to obtain informed consent from research participants; `currently in South Africa, and active participants on social media regarding discussions about GBV. This study was not limited to women who have experienced GBV. Advocates for social change who use social media to talk about GBV were also included. Participants were required to identify as a woman and be in South Africa because the study focuses on the experiences of women in South Africa.

4.2 PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

The world of technology is developing at a fast rate (Levine, 2011). It is with no surprise that society has advanced technologically, with an increased number of people having access to social media and using social media as a tool to communicate (Andrews, 2012) and gain information (Andrews 2012; Zaleski et al., 2016). The use of social media platforms has, therefore, become normalised (Zaleski et al., 2016). According to Headworth (2015), social media has integrated in society. In other words, social media has become mainstream (Andrews, 2012). For several years, researchers have made use of a diverse range of recruitment methods to encourage research participants to participate in their studies (Andrews, 2012). Recruiting research participants on social media is an example of one of these methods (Carpentier, Van Hoye & Weng, 2019). According to Denecke et al. (2015), recruiting participants on social media platforms is an effective strategy and very well suited to the aims of this particular project.

Since this research project was focused on women who use social media it seemed appropriate to recruit research participants on that platform. Information was shared on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter requesting women who were willing to participate, to volunteer (see Appendix A). As explained earlier, Facebook has been one of the most used social networking sites (Caers, De

Feyter, De Couck, Stough, Vigna & Du Bois, 2013) and allows users to interact with friends, family, and colleagues by sharing texts, videos, and links with others. Instagram is a photo-sharing, video-sharing, and social networking service that allows users to take and share both pictures and videos (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016; Ting, Ming, De Run & Choo, 2015). Twitter involves posts limited to 280 characters and is used to share thoughts, pictures, and short videos with others in the form of tweets and retweets (Duong, 2020). My Facebook post was liked thirteen times and shared 37 times, my Twitter post was liked twelve times and retweeted 27 times, and unfortunately, I was not able to monitor the number of times my recruitment post was interacted with on Instagram.

The end of the recruitment post encouraged as many as possible social media users to share the information to reach a larger audience. I am aware that it is generally not advised to use public forms of recruitment strategies if participants are from vulnerable populations or if research involves sharing "sensitive" experiences. This is because it may harm emotionally fragile participants. However, I deemed social media the appropriate platform to recruit participants as the primary focus of this research was based on social media usage.

An immense advantage of using social media as a recruitment procedure is its potential to immediately reach a larger and more diverse audience (Andrews, 2012; Benedict, Hahn, Diefenbach & Ford, 2019), as opposed to more traditional ways of recruiting research participants such as using posters at specific locations. I successfully recruited research participants from different parts of South Africa. The exact locations are not specified. Furthermore, social media, by its nature, encourages interaction. This serves as a benefit on its own allowing potential research participants to interact with the recruitment post and ask any questions they may have (Andrews, 2012).

The recruitment of research participants was not an easy task. Prior to sending out the recruitment post, I had to apply for ethical clearance from Rhodes University. After ethical clearance was granted (see Appendix B), I immediately shared the recruitment post on social media. A few women were immediately interested in participating in the research project and contacted me for more information. This is when I shared a more in-depth recruitment letter with potential participants (see Appendix C). While some potential participants responded

immediately to my email regarding what the study entails, others did not. I had to be patient and politely send follow-up emails.

Initially my aim was to recruit a minimum of twelve and a maximum of fifteen research participants. When I reached six research participants, I had to share the recruitment post on social media again. I shared the post daily for approximately one week before reaching twelve research participants. I was then satisfied that I had sampled to saturation since I had the minimum number of participants needed for the study.

4.3 ATTRIBUTES OF THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

A total of twelve women volunteered to participate in the research study. The table below contains information on participants' pseudonyms, occupation, duration of use, and a brief description of when they started using social media to talk about GBV.

TABLE 1 – THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Participant Number	Pseudonym	Occupation	Duration of Social Media Activism against GBV
Participant 1	Daisy	Unemployed	5 years
Daisy started using social media to talk about GBV in 2016. 2016 was her first year at university. During her interview she made reference to the RU Reference List that started in 2016 and its significant contribution to her using digital platforms to talk about GBV.			
Participant 2	Lerato	Student	2 years
Lerato started using digital platforms to talk about GBV in 2019, after the brutal rape and murder of Uyinene Mrwetyana.			
Participant 3	Liyabona	Student	3 years
Liyabona started her journey as a social media activist against GBV in 2018. 2018 was her first year at university.			

Participant 4	Bongie	Employed	6 years
Bongie started using digital platforms to talk about GBV in 2015. 2015 was her first year at university.			
Participant 5	Busi	Student	2 years
Busi started using social media to engage in discussions about GBV in 2019. According to Busi, this is when the majority of social media users started making use of the platform to talk about GBV.			
Participant 6	Victoria	Unemployed	5 years
Victoria started commenting and engaging in GBV related conversations in 2016 after she completed high school.			
Participant 7	Danielle	Employed	7 years
Danielle started her journey as a digital activist in 2014. During her interview she indicated that her involvement grew and amplified in 2016 going forward.			
Participant 8	Zama	Student	7 years
Zama started digital activism against GBV in 2014. 2014 was her first year at university, and the first year she was exposed to conversations about GBV on social media.			
Participant 9	Buhle	Student	4 years
Buhle started using social media to talk about GBV in 2017. 2017 was her first year at university.			
Participant 10	Karabo	Student	•
Karabo did not specify when she started using social media to talk about GBV.			
Participant 11	Vuyo	Student	•
Vuyo did not specify when she started using the digital platforms to talk about GBV.			
Participant 12	Tandi	Student	1 year
Tandi started using social media to talk about GBV quite recently.			

I found it appropriate to include how long the women have made use of digital platforms to engage in conversations about GBV, because it is interesting to see the similar and different experiences of women regardless of whether they are experienced or relatively new social media

activists. It is noteworthy that out of the ten people who specified when they started using social media to talk about GBV, five of them started at university. This speaks to the normalisation of digital activism against GBV at tertiary institutions.

5. DATA COLLECTION

In the following section, I describe the methods that I used to collect data for the study and the procedures followed. As seen in the previous section, data was collected from twelve women in South Africa. As a rough guide, it is generally advised that novice researchers conduct twelve interviews that are roughly 30 minutes in length each, with more time being allocated to interviews that are sensitive in nature (Rowley, 2012). The duration of each interview which I conducted was between 30-90 minutes. In this section, I discuss narrative interviews, and more specifically Mueller's (2019) episodic narrative interview method that was utilised. I also discuss the process of conducting the interviews.

5.1 NARRATIVE INTERVIEWS

People use stories to live and make meaning of their lives (Guenette & Marshall, 2009). The purpose of narrative interviews is to use the stories of research participants to contribute to the creation of new knowledge, and to provide a thorough understanding of the social phenomenon being studied (Bates, 2004; Guenette & Marshall, 2009; Muylaert, Sarubbi, Gallo, Neto & Reis, 2014). Narrative interviews are based on the primary assumption that the best way for research participants to share their views is by using stories (Bates, 2004). Bates (2004) and Riessman (2008) further describe a narrative interview as a conversation that takes place between the researcher and the research participants. A narrative interview is, therefore, made up of several narratives, narrative units, or stories (Bates, 2004). In addition, the interaction that takes place between the researcher and research participant is an essential collaborative element of narrative interviews (Muylaert et al., 2014). This allows the researcher to better understand the research topic from the point of view of the research participants (Bates, 2004).

The use of language has a crucial role in narrative interviews; the language used can have an impact on the way in which the conversation proceeds. It is, therefore, important that the researcher and research participants converse in a way that shows that they clearly understand each other and in a way that will encourage the research participant to share their experiences in

a clear manner (Bates, 2004). In some interviews, I had to be cognisant of the way I structured the interview questions. The interviews were conducted in English, a language that is not the home language of all my participants. Some research participants required me to further elaborate on research questions or rephrase a research question. Since English is not my home language either, during the process of familiarising myself with the research questions, I made sure that I was prepared for the possibility of elaborating or rephrasing questions.

5.1.1 MUELLER'S (2019) EPISODIC NARRATIVE INTERVIEW

Since I was utilising a narrative approach to studying the experiences of women in South Africa who use social media to talk about GBV, Mueller's (2019) episodic narrative interview was most appropriate. An episodic narrative interview is a systematic approach to motivate research participants to share their accounts about certain experiences they have had regarding a specific phenomenon (Mueller, 2019). Mueller's (2019) method enables prompting participants' narrative orientations towards their personal experiences. This approach was, therefore, used to encourage women in South Africa to share their experiences of using social media to talk about GBV – the phenomenon under investigation.

Mueller (2019) defines an episodic narrative interview as "a method that provides a targeted window into the experiential aspect of social concepts and issues" and "it helps us to uncover the layered reality of difficult-to-see social phenomena by way of storytelling" (p. 3). Mueller's (2019) episodic narrative interview is 3-fold. Firstly, this technique presents a new way of producing tightly fixed, phenomenon-driven accounts without denying research participants the chance to decide on the content and detail of their stories. Secondly, this method provides a point of entry into narrative research, especially for novice researchers. Thirdly, the approach respects storyteller's accounts of their experiences, as well as offers a feasible and rigorous means of data collection and analysis. This method is an innovative approach to data collection because it provides a specific approach for taking part in narrative research that centers around experience, it provides a structure that novice narrative researchers can follow, and it enables researchers to explore a phenomenon in depth rather than limiting themselves to the context in which the phenomenon under investigation is immersed (Mueller, 2019).

An episodic narrative interview is an integration of semi-structured interviews, narrative inquiry, and episodic interview (Mueller, 2019). Mueller (2019) uses the term 'fusion' to describe how elements from these three parts of research were used to create the episodic narrative interview method. Firstly, semi-structured interviews are the primary method of data collection in qualitative research and are based on the conversation that happens between two people, in this case the researcher and research participant. I used in-depth, semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences of women in South Africa who use social media to engage in conversations about GBV.

Secondly, narrative inquiry centers on storytelling as a powerful tool for the purpose of creating data. Narrative inquiry focuses on understanding the experiences of people. It is, therefore, a partnership between the researcher and the research participants (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016). "The inquiry starts with an open-ended request to share experience of the research phenomenon" (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016, p. 15).

Thirdly, the episodic interview emerged in alignment with the psychological claim that memories about experience are associated with time, space, situations, and events that form episodes in an individual's life (Flick, 1997, as cited in Mueller, 2019). The purpose of an episodic interview is to evoke the memories of research participants concerning these episodes, which are relayed through short accounts during an interview (Flick, 2009, as cited in Mueller, 2019).

The episodic narrative interview consists of six stages (although I did not use all of Mueller's (2019) proposed stages). These stages include the preparation and implementation of the method. The first stage was done in preparation to conduct the interview. This stage consisted of preparing the interview schedule (see Appendix D) and making arrangements to enable the interview to run smoothly. Preparing the interview schedule required me to formulate questions that would best encourage participants to share their experiences of using social media to talk about GBV, and that would allow me to gather the appropriate data to answer the research questions. The second stage consisted of the researcher explaining the interview structure and process to the participant. I explained the interview structure and process both in an email before the actual interview, and at the start of each interview.

In the third stage, as the researcher, I asked the research participants about their general understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The fourth stage is based on the researcher asking the research participants about specific experiences they have had. I asked women about specific experiences of using social media to talk about GBV, for example, how they experienced interactions with other social media users who share similar or different opinions to theirs, or whether they experience social media as an effective platform to talk about sensitive topics such as GBV. Stage five is similar to stage four where the research participants are asked to share their accounts about the phenomenon under investigation within the context of their specific experiences. I did not include this section as it would have been repetitive. The sixth and final stage consists of research participants altering anything they may have said during the interview or adding anything else. I included this section at the end of each interview by asking research participants whether there was anything else regarding the topic that they would like to contribute. Most participants capitalised on this opportunity, by elaborating on what they had previously said.

5.2 CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS

My supervisor, co-researcher and I had a meeting to discuss the research questions, alter some of the questions, and make sure that the questions are presented in a logical manner that research participants would understand with no difficulty. For example, one of the questions in my interview schedule was "What are your experiences of the different encounters you have had on social media regarding conversations about GBV". During our discussion, we changed this question to "Can you please tell me about a time you encountered a difference of opinion on social media when talking about GBV" and "Can you please tell me about a time you encountered a similar opinion on social media when talking about GBV". Further feedback during this meeting required me to change close-ended questions to open-ended questions. I found this feedback quite useful because I did not realise that questions that may appear open-ended to me, may appear closed-ended to the research participants. For example, I had to change questions like "When did you start using social media to talk about GBV" to "Tell me a little about your engagement on social media since you started". Despite the nerves, after the meeting with my supervisor and co-researcher, and after conducting the first few interviews, I gained more confidence.

Considering the social distancing restrictions due to COVID-19, data was collected via online interviews on Zoom. Not much is known about the use of Zoom interviews for narrative research (Holt, 2010). However, the interviews that we conducted on Zoom were convenient and might have had the added benefit of eliminating interviewer bias (Bryman, 2001, as cited in Rowley, 2012).

Holt (2010) explored the use of telephonic interviews for narrative interviews when encountering difficulties accessing research participants for her study. They found telephonic interviews to be extremely fruitful and effective as a methodological tool. One of the main benefits was the researcher having to clearly take control of the conversation because they could not rely on visual cues (Holt, 2010). In this study, this also applied during the Zoom interviews since some research participants chose to not have their cameras switched on. Another reflection included that they were no longer concerned about potential participants being unavailable, because conducting interviews telephonically increases the availability of possible research participants (Holt, 2010). In the case of this project, online interviews increased the availability of participants since it was easy to reschedule an interview time when the potential research participants could no longer make the initial time slot.

However, despite the benefits, it is difficult for researchers to establish rapport with research participants (Rowley, 2012) from a distance. Building rapport with research participants is important as it allows the research participants to feel comfortable about giving a rich and comprehensive description of the experiences central to the study. I was aware of this and attempted to use the informal conversations we had before the interviews started for this purpose.

Holt (2010) notes the difficulty in creating a balance between talking and listening in an interview. The use of encouraging prompts such as 'umms', 'ahhs', and 'yes' has proved to be quite useful. During the interviews, I was extremely aware of my use of these prompts and whether I was using these at appropriate times and possibly overusing them. Sometimes speakers do not only make use of spoken language to tell stories. Their silence can be very meaningful and the researcher should take that into consideration (Riessman, 2008). I was able to distinguish between awkward silence, and the silence of participants who needed time to breathe and collect their thoughts. I approached both these moments appropriately. Taking the appropriate measures during this time was difficult when research participants did not have their cameras switched on.

For those who did have their cameras switched on, I relied on visual cues to determine what the silence meant.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data collection and data analysis is a lengthy process and it makes sense to start the analysis of data as soon as possible, while the conversations are still fresh in the mind of the researcher. In fact, data collection and data analysis are normally conducted simultaneously in qualitative research (Johnson, Adkins & Chauvin, 2020). This allows the researcher to become more conscious of appearing themes and sub-themes (McGrath et al., 2014). During this time, researchers may have "Aha" moments. I experienced this where I suddenly related to something one of my research participants had said, days, weeks, or even months after the interviews had been concluded (Goldstein, 2017). The use of the reflective journal is important for these moments. I will go into greater detail in a later section in the chapter.

There is no one way of going about data analysis (Rowley, 2012). Rowley (2012) best describes the process of data analysis as a spiral as the researcher moves closer and closer to a valid interpretation of the data. The first and very important step in the process of qualitative data analysis is transcription (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2016; Bailey, 2008). The transcription process followed in this project will be described in the section which follows.

6.1 TRANSCRIPTION

Audio recordings were used to collect the data for this project. I listened to the recordings immediately after each interview. This enabled me to write down notes that helped me to understand the interview as well as interviews with other research participants at a later stage (Rowley, 2012). Each interview was transcribed as soon as possible after it had taken place. This allowed me to start putting a name to analytical structures as well as note the similarities and differences between the experiences of different research participants (McGrath et al., 2014).

Conducting interviews and transcribing the interviews conducted means that the researcher has an important role in constructing the narrative data that will be analysed. The interview enables the researcher to "critically shape the stories participants choose to tell" (Riessman, 2008, p. 50). Transcription is defined as the task of reconstructing what was said during an interview and

adapting it to a written form. Data transcription is a time-consuming procedure that can take on an average of four to eight hours for every hour of recorded data (McGrath et al., 2019). Nevertheless, transcription is an important part of research and talks to the validity of the study as it determines how participants are understood (Oliver, Serovich & Mason, 2005).

Widodo (2014) mentions five important methodological issues that may arise and should, therefore, be taken into consideration during the transcription of research interviews, especially for upcoming researchers with no experience. I have made use of these considerations. Firstly, listening to what was said during the interview by fully immersing myself in the data. This meant listening to the recordings several times as well as listening to the recording while transcribing. Secondly, presenting what was said in a format that could be easily followed. The study used an adapted form of Ian Parker's (1992) transcription conventions (see Appendix E). Thirdly, communicating what was said with an interpretive intent. This meant interpreting the data in a methodologically sensible manner (Widodo, 2014). Transcription is best understood as a continuum where on the one end is naturalism and on the other end is denaturalism. Naturalism means that what is said during the interview is transcribed verbatim and in detail, including every utterance, and specifying components such as pauses and overlaps in speech. Denaturalism means that any idiosyncratic or distinct parts of the speech such as pauses, stutters, and non-verbal signals are withdrawn (Oliver et al., 2005; Widodo, 2014). By relying on Ian Parker's (1992) transcription convention, a desensitised form of transcription was completed. For example, I included pauses.

6.2 THE NARRATIVE-DISCURSIVE ANALYTIC PROCESS

This study used an integration of Riessman's (2008) thematic model of narrative analysis and Taylor and Littleton's (2006) narrative-discursive analysis method to analyse common themes that emerged across the data set or stories told. This method of analysis is appropriate because it allowed me to engage in both the similarities and differences in the narratives of women in South Africa who use social media to talk about GBV. The key interest was to create thematic categories across individuals and their experiences of using social media to talk about GBV. This was done by fully immersing myself in the data (Riessman, 2008).

Riessman's (2008) thematic narrative analysis focuses entirely on what is said, as opposed to how, why, and to whom it is said. In addition, Riessman (2008) suggests four issues to consider when examining data. These are: how the concept of narrative is used; how data is constructed into text for analysis, with particular attention to language and form (if present); the unit of analysis or focus in each study; and, the researcher's attention to both micro and macro contexts (Riessman, 2008). In thematic narrative analysis, language is considered a resource. As a result, researchers occasionally deal with certain word choices used by the interviewee. However, it is noteworthy that thematic analysts usually "do not attend to language, form, or interaction" (Riessman, 2008, p. 59)

The table that follows summarises the analysis process.

TABLE 2 – STAGES OF ANALYSIS

STAGES	DESCRIPTION OF PROCESSES
• Stage 1	Gather and name sections of the transcript that are relevant to the research questions **(Riessman, 2008)**.
• Stage 2	Identify thematic categories by naming the selected sub-texts **(Riessman, 2008)**. Find recurring themes across various interviews, and at different times during one interview **(Taylor & Littleton, 2006)**.
• Stage 3	Place data (the narratives) into the categories identified in stage 2 **(Riessman, 2008)**. Study how discursive resources are used during the interviews to understand the positioning and experiences attained by making use of certain resources **(Taylor & Littleton, 2006)**.
• Stage 4	Writing up and reporting on the data collected **(Riessman, 2008)**.

This sub-section will describe the four stages to Riessman's (2008) thematic model of narrative analysis, and the two iterative tasks based on Taylor and Littleton's (2006) analysis method (as summarised in Table 2 on the previous page).

Stage 1

Based on the protocol put in place by Riessman (2008), as the researcher I was required to select sub-texts during this stage. This meant gathering and naming any sections of the transcript that were relevant to the research questions. In order to do this, I had to familiarise myself with the data by reading and re-reading the transcribed data, and making notes. To complete this stage, all the sections in the transcribed data involving the experiences of women who use social media to talk about GBV were noted for analysis. This was done by printing a copy of the transcribed data, reading through it, and highlighting any information relevant to the research topic.

Stage 2 and stage 3 are specific to the actual analysis of data. These tasks do not form a linear process.

Stage 2

The second stage is integrated with Taylor and Littleton's (2006) first iterative task when analysing data. This is the stage where I identified thematic categories which consisted of naming the selected sub-texts (Riessman, 2008). While reading through the transcribed data multiple times, I placed the highlighted information from the previous stage into categories. This stage required careful reading of participants' stories or listening to the recordings of stories told multiple times (Riessman, 2008). The data was analysed using theories and analytical concepts from the theoretical framework chapter (Chapter 3).

In addition, the thematic categories were identified by finding recurring themes across various interviews, and at different stages during one interview (Taylor & Littleton, 2006), and looking for the similarities and differences within and between the narratives of women (Riessman, 2008). I analysed the narratives of women by looking at their reference to whether or not social media is an effective platform to talk about GBV, and their positive and negative engagements on social media. These narratives are micro-narratives and were presented to explain the

interpretive repertoires. In addition, this first iterative task (Taylor & Littleton, 2006) required me to look at the discursive resources (common patterns in the data) and the discourses drawn upon by women to construct narratives of using social media to talk about GBV.

Stage 3

The third stage is the placement of data into categories, meaning that different parts of narratives were categorised under the categories defined in the previous stage. Thematic categories were generated across individuals and their experiences of using social media to talk about GBV, and the underlying assumptions in each story was named (Riessman, 2008). This is where the second key iterative task in the analysis suggested by Taylor and Littleton (2006) was used, which was studying how discursive resources are used during an interview to understand the positioning and experiences attained by making use of certain resources (Morison & Macleod, 2013; Taylor & Littleton, 2006).

More specifically, I positioned the discursive resources within the specific narratives of women, and asked myself how these discursive resources were deployed. In other words, how women constructed their narratives of using social media to talk about GBV. During this stage, I also looked at how the women in this study positioned themselves and others, and how they are positioned by others in their narratives. Furthermore, I identified how these positions were accepted or resisted by women, as well as any "trouble" that emerged in the narratives of women, and if "repaired", how.

Stage 4

Stage four consisted of writing-up the conclusions and reporting on the meanings in the content of stories told (Esin, 2011; Riessman, 2008). During this stage, I once again came to the realisation that research is not a linear process, and a lot of changes are made along the way to create a thorough research project.

7. RIGOUR AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

There are several issues that may arise when conducting narrative research. There are two levels of validity which are important in narrative research: first, the story the research participant tells, and second, the story the researcher tells. This determines how valid the analysis is. When conducting research in the social sciences it is important to convince the reader about the trustworthiness of the data, and that the data and interpretations presented are trustworthy - trustworthiness in the sense that the stories used are real, and that the methodical path used was directed by ethical considerations and theory (Riessman, 2008).

Researcher's use trustworthiness to persuade themselves and the readers that their research findings are worthy of attention (Nowell et al., 2017). Lincoln and Guba (1985) developed the idea of trustworthiness by introducing the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

The credibility of a research study is like internal validity (Pandey & Patnaik, 2014). The credibility of the study would have been obtained through member checking by asking participants to read the transcripts of their dialogues (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017; Pandey & Patnaik, 2014). None of the participants were keen to read through the transcript. The transferability of a research study is similar to external validity or generalisability (Pandey & Patnaik, 2014). Transferability was achieved by producing a thick description of the phenomena under investigation (Bowen, 2005; Nowell et al., 2017; Pandey & Patnaik, 2014).

The dependability of a study is similar to reliability (Pandey & Patnaik, 2014). The dependability of the study was achieved by using an audit trail to thoroughly examine the research process and results (Nowell et al., 2017; Pandey & Patnaik, 2014). An audit trail shows readers evidence of the decisions and choices made by the researcher regarding theoretical and methodological issues throughout the research project (Nowell et al., 2017). Confirmability is like objectivity which is the degree to which the results of a study are determined by the research participants and not researcher bias, motives, or interests (Pandey & Patnaik, 2014). The co-researcher also has a part in ensuring confirmability. The conversations with my co-researcher allowed me to feel more confident about the research process. For example, the co-researcher clarified things from the interview that I was unsure about. In addition, as a woman in South Africa who also uses social

media to talk about GBV, some of the participants' experiences reminded me about mine. I was able to share this with the co-researcher; she would allow us to talk about some of the other experiences that emerged that I might not have focused on because of my experience. Confirmability will be present when credibility, transferability, and dependability are all obtained (Nowell et al., 2017).

8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical principles are understood as a set of guidelines researchers make use of as a reminder of the key considerations they need to be conscious of when conducting research (Hammersley, 2013). The role of research participants in qualitative research is crucial because human beings are the source of data. This means that special attention needs to be placed on how research participants are treated, as well as the ethical considerations when dealing with participants (Arifin, 2018; Hossain, 2011) to ensure that participants are not harmed in any way (Rani & Sharma, 2012). This section will discuss the ethical principles that was adhered to during the research process. These ethical principles are informed consent; principles of beneficence and non-maleficence; the deception of research participants; and confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy of both the research participants and the data collected.

8.1 INFORMED CONSENT

Obtaining informed consent forms a crucial part of research as it is considered the foundation on which ethical conduct is based (Arifin, 2018; Bhupathi & Ravi, 2017; Connelly, 2014). Informed consent allows research participants to freely choose whether or not they want to participate in the research study (Rani & Sharma, 2012).

Research participants were, therefore, asked for their consent at the start and the end of the research process to ensure that they remain comfortable with their narratives being used (see Appendix F). The semi-structured interviews, which is the method of data collection, could not commence without research participants' informed consent (Hossain, 2011; Houghton et al., 2010). Providing the informed consent meant that the participants were aware of what the research was about, and which procedures would be followed (Hossain, 2011). During the process of obtaining informed consent, I placed an emphasis on the right research participants have to withdraw from the study should they no longer feel comfortable participating, or due to

any other reason (Houghton et al., 2010) without facing any consequences (Arifin, 2018; Connelly, 2014; Hossain, 2011). At the beginning of each interview, I reminded research participants about this right. During informed consent, research participants were notified of the purpose of the study, the methodology used, as well as the potential risks and benefits associated with participating in the study (Nordentoft & Kappel, 201; Patel, Moore, Crauer & Feldman, 2016). The last point will be discussed in more detail in the next sub-section.

8.2 PRINCIPLES OF BENEFICENCE AND NON-MALEFICENCE

The principles of beneficence and non-maleficence emphasises the role of researchers to ensure that the well-being of research participants is not put at risk. As the researcher, I had an important part in maximising the benefits and minimising the risks associated with the research study. In the context of exploring the narratives of women in South Africa who use social media to talk about GBV, research participants may have been distressed due to the sensitivity of the topic. I tried to minimise the risk of harm as well as protect the psychological health and self-respect of research participants at all times (Willig, 2001, as cited in Hossain, 2011).

Research participants were not asked about their experiences of GBV, but rather about their experiences of using social media to talk about GBV. However, due to the nature of the study, I prepared for the likelihood that some research participants would want to open up and talk about their first-hand experiences of GBV. Some of the women in this study did open up about their personal experiences of GBV.

I did take into consideration that I may or may not be the first person participants had spoken to about their experiences. Either way, the information they disclosed was handled with great sensitivity. I used skills that I learnt during basic counselling skills training in 2019 to manage this. My counselling training was also used to contain any immediate distress which became apparent before terminating the interview. However, I took into consideration that dealing with experiences of trauma requires more expertise. Hence, the co-researcher (who is a qualified counselling psychologist with many years of experience) monitored the emotional tone of the interviews. The co-researcher was prepared to request a pause should she have a concern, but this was not necessary. In addition, we were also prepared for the co-researcher to offer telephonic counselling and onward referral if necessary. Once again this was not necessary.

Furthermore, I ensured that research participants were aware of free telephonic counselling such as GBV helplines which provide anonymous, confidential, and telephonic counselling in all 11 official languages. In the event that a research participant displayed distress during the interview, I was prepared to suggest that we take a break from the interview, request telephonic counselling where necessary, and remind participants that if they do not feel comfortable continuing, they have the right to withdraw from the study.

One of the main difficulties about online interviews was that the researcher was not physically with the research participant should they encounter emotional distress; therefore, I had prepared a number of strategies to reach out to the research participants to check on them and possibly reschedule the interview. Conducting interviews on sensitive topics such as GBV also placed the researcher under immense distress. I prepared for unexpected emotions by making use of available counselling services.

Participants may be at high risk of feeling uneasy after sharing their experiences. Talking about their experiences may remind them of past traumas they may have had. These risks were mitigated by providing research participants with an opportunity to talk about how they feel after the interviews have taken place, and how they felt opening up about their experiences. All the research participants capitalised on this opportunity. The best way to minimise the potential of these risks occurring, is being open to research participants about the risks involved and about the measures that will be taken to manage these risks, such as debriefing, requesting a telephonic counsellor, and being able to withdraw from the study at any point before and after the research interviews have been conducted. A debriefing session may also be used by researchers to once again explain the research to the research participants (Hossain, 2011). Debriefing sessions after each interview is an effective tool to deal with any psychological distress that may occur during the interview. This is where researchers can also answer any questions or address any grievances participants may have (Polit & Beck, 2010, as cited in Greaney et al., 2012).

8.3 CONFIDENTIALITY, ANONYMITY, AND PRIVACY

Maintaining confidentiality is a fundamental value in research (Stiles & Petrila, 2011). Confidentiality should be maintained to its fullest extent throughout the research process (Hossain, 2011). I made use of pseudonyms to protect the identity of research participants (Houghton et al., 2010). This ensured confidentiality of the data (McGrath et al., 2014). Anonymity in research is associated with identity, confidentiality, privacy, and protection. More so, the link between anonymity and confidentiality is significant because researchers use anonymity to keep confidentiality (Novak, 2014).

Besides pseudonyms, other measures were also put in place to protect the privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality of research participants. The interviews were conducted telephonically which had a significant part in protecting the privacy of the discussion (Holt, 2010). In addition, the use of headphones or earphones during the interview helped research participants with privacy. Research participants were given the option to remain anonymous to the researcher and the co-researcher as well. This was clearly stated in the participant recruitment letter. Records which include the recordings of interviews, and the capturing of data is kept in password protected files. All confidential information is stored within secure systems. I ensured that research participants were aware of their rights. I was open to revising the confidentiality agreement to make changes if the participant is not comfortable with some aspects of the agreement. Confidentiality and privacy risks associated with participation was clearly communicated with research participants.

Furthermore, participants have not been deceived (Connelly, 2014).

9. REFLEXIVITY

Another way in which to increase the trustworthiness, reliability, and ethicality of research conducted is utilising reflexivity as it enables the researcher to become conscious of the position they occupy during the research. Reflexivity refers to how a researcher is able to reflect on their position or their experience and understand how it affects the research (Johnson et al., 2020).

It is important to remember that as the researcher, I am the co-creator of the data and the primary tool of data collection. As the researcher, it is important to remember that my personal experiences may have had an impact on the way in which I interpreted the data (McGrath et al.,

2014). I used a self-reflective journal to facilitate reflexivity. This enabled me to share my experiences, thoughts, and feelings and to allow for these to form an important part of the research design, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the data (Ortlipp, 2008).

This research topic was encouraged by the increased use of social media to talk about issues of GBV, as well as my personal experiences of using social media to engage in discussions about GBV. This is another reason why reflexivity is important. I was able to detach my experiences from the experiences of research participants, and my own experience of social media activism against GBV did not cloud my interpretation. This process of engaging in constant reflection enabled me to be open to the different experiences research participants may have. This was important because of me potentially expecting certain responses from participants because of my own experiences, therefore, restricting myself. This improves the standard of the analytic process as it encourages the researcher to take on "a more triangulated position" (Goldstein, 2017, p. 153) from which to approach the experiences of women who use social media to talk about GBV with empathy.

The approach to reflexivity that qualitative researchers take has a significant impact on the end result of the research (Day, 2012). Qualitative research methods have increasingly leaned on reflexivity and its importance. Regardless of this, researchers do not often explain their reflexive analysis in great detail (Probst & Berenson, 2014, as cited in, Goldstein, 2017). This is because the reflexivity process usually takes place internally, which may be difficult to put into words externally. Day (2012) writes about how reflexivity allows researchers to investigate important questions in the thinking, doing, and evaluation of a qualitative research methodology. Thinking, doing, and evaluating qualitative methodology are the three kinds of issues that reflexivity aims to address.

The ways I went about reflexivity includes writing in a reflexive journal after each interview. I used the opportunity to write about my experiences of the interview and the kinds of feelings that got evoked within me. This gave me the platform to write about the conversation with each research participant. This was also a form of field notes to write down things that happened which the recording of the conversation did not convey. Additionally, I listened to the interview during the transcription process. Listening to each interview several times helped me become aware of anything I may have missed during the initial interview such as changes in emotions. It

also allowed me to be more open in terms of approaching the interpretation of what was said. After transcribing, I went back to the reflexive journal again for confirmation.

Furthermore, the research was presented at Work in Progress Colloquiums, as part of the Critical Studies in Sexualities and Reproduction research unit, where colleagues gave input and suggestions in relation to the research process.

9.1 RELATIONSHIPS IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS

According to Parker (2002), research cannot be executed independent of a research relationship. These relationships collectively contribute to the overall research project and are important during the reflexivity stage. Parker (2002) refers to three kinds of relationships: between the researcher and research supervisor; between the researcher and co-researcher; and between the researcher and research participants. I discuss each of these relationships relative to my research journey below:

9.1.1   RESEARCHER-SUPERVISOR

The constructive feedback from my supervisor was key to the write up of this research project. Along with this feedback were meetings and words of encouragement. During the meetings, several ideas were brainstormed. I was quite eager to include every single idea, whether it was directly relevant to the research topic or not. My supervisor contributed significantly to my understanding and acceptance that research is not a linear process; therefore, some ideas that I was confident would be included were excluded, and other ideas that I was hesitant to include at first, were included at the end. My supervisor and I interacted with mutual respect for one another and for each other's ideas. This relationship was built on regular communication. Initially, when we discussed the research topic, my topic was quite broad (the experiences of marginalised groups). Together, we decided to narrow it down to women in South Africa. In addition, we discussed the aims, methodology, appropriate methods, and theories. For example, I was initially fixed on critical postmodernism, which we changed to a more appropriate theory, critical feminism. Finally, we arranged and re-arranged my data several times.

9.1.2   RESEARCHER- CO-RESEARCHER

Reflexivity was improved by including a co-researcher in the study (Berger, 2015). The role of the co-researcher was to join in and help reflect on the interviews. I used my co-researcher's expertise to have reflective sessions with her after each interview, which contributed significantly to the trustworthiness of this study. The relationship between my co-researcher and I was short because we only worked together during data collection. After each interview, we had a phone call to reflect on the interview and to reflect on how I was feeling. Since I was conducting the interview, and my co-researcher was listening, she picked up on certain emotions that I was not aware of. She helped me to reflect on how those emotions could affect the research. These reflective conversations fulfilled a therapeutic role and mitigated some of the negative affects of being overwhelmed which ultimately helped me to remain focused on conducting the research. The effect of my emotions was also picked up by research participants which is described in the section below.

9.1.3   RESEARCHER- RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The authenticity of the research process is tied closely to the ethical principles especially regarding qualitative research, and the relationship between the researcher and research participant (Mockler, 2011). The relationship that forms during an interview may cause serious ethical issues. These issues include how the relationships are established and controlled, the power disparity between the researcher and research participant, and the psychological, emotional, and personal impact the relationship has on research participants (Houghton et al., 2010). These issues can be mitigated, but not necessarily completely avoided. As the relationship between the two parties form, participants may trust the researcher more in terms of providing a precise version of their discussion (Mockler, 2011; Novak, 2014). It is normally assumed that the researcher controls the relationship, however, it was interesting to see one of the research participants pick up on my hesitation during the interview process. This surprised me and made me realise that I was not always able to hide my feelings. She encouraged me not to be afraid to ask the research questions because she recognised that I was hesitant and concerned about unintentionally hurting research participants' feelings. She reminded me that if a person reached out to participate in the research study, they were aware that certain questions may open up old wounds and had prepared themselves for that.

10. CONCLUSION

This chapter began with delineating the study aims and research questions. This was followed by a brief discussion on the research design utilised in this study. Next, I discussed the methods, these included the sampling strategies, participant recruitment, and attributes of the recruited participants. I then discussed the data collection methods; these were narrative interviews and more specifically Mueller's (2019) episodic narrative interview. I also outlined the procedures for conducting the interviews. I then discussed the data analysis and interpretation processes. This included the transcription process, the key elements of narrative analysis, the key elements of discourse analysis, and the analytic process which was an integration of Riessman's (2008) thematic model of narrative analysis and Taylor and Littleton's (2006) analysis that consists of two iterative tasks. I then discussed the ethical considerations, these were: informed consent; principles of beneficence and non-maleficence; and confidentiality, anonymity and privacy. This was followed by a discussion on the rigour and trustworthiness of the study. Lastly, I discussed reflexivity and the three important relationships in the research process.

5

DATA ANALYSIS: THE POWER AND UTILITY OF SOCIAL MEDIA

1. INTRODUCTION

The data analysis and the interpretation of research findings will be presented in the next two chapters. An integration of Riessman's (2008) thematic model of narrative analysis and Taylor and Littleton's (2006) analysis method was used. During the different stages of analysis, I was interested in the discursive narratives of women in South Africa who use social media sites, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, to talk about gender-based violence (GBV). The first set of discourses speak to the idea that social media is powerful and useful because of its reach, immediacy, convenience, and ability to share information. This group of discourses highlight the significant role social media has in service of the fight against GBV. In other words, these discourses are more general and "outward" looking because they focus on what the use of social media achieves irrespective of the topic being discussed.

The second set of discourses (which will be discussed in Chapter 6) are centered on the notion that social media is a supportive space. Social media is a supportive space because in sharing their experiences of GBV and engaging in conversations about GBV, women have found a community and solidarity, and their experiences and thoughts have been validated. In other words, these discourses are more personal and "inward" looking because they focus on what the use of social media does for the people participating in discussions about a difficult topic such as GBV.

In their narratives about the power and utility of social media as a platform to talk about GBV, women utilised discourses around 'efficacy', 'convenience', and 'education'. These discourses are all related to the power and utility of social media because they focus on the fight for justice, achieving goals, and raising awareness. To highlight the discourses employed by women in their talk of using digital activism against GBV, this chapter starts by discussing the discourse of 'efficacy' and the narratives that draw on this discourse when women describe the power of social media because of its reach, speed, and diversity. This is followed by an outline on the

'convenience' discourse and the narratives about the user-friendliness of social media. I find it appropriate to start the chapter with a discussion on these, because they speak directly to the reason women started using social media to talk about GBV in the first place. These two discourses are then followed by a discussion on the 'education' discourse that women draw on in their narratives about the power of social media as a learning platform. Within each narrative, the subject positions women employ are identified and described.

2. AN 'EFFICACY' DISCOURSE

The 'efficacy' discourse draws on the idea that social media is an effective platform to have conversations about GBV. The participants utilised this discourse when speaking about social media's potential to reach a larger audience and a diverse group of people, compared to speaking about GBV in a specific geographically-bounded space or setting. This reflects what was found in the literature review which is that, according to Hoffman (2021), reach and speed are the main advantages of social media activism, and the main reasons social media is used to initiate conversations about GBV. Hashemi (2020) expands that social media allows people who are geographically separated to construct a collective identity. In addition, the speed at which information is shared and the variety of platforms social media users can choose from further speaks to the effectiveness of social media. Information has been communicated instantly, allowing people from different parts of the world to participate in conversations about GBV in real time (Kumar, 2010).

The extracts that follow are a description of the 'efficacy' discourse. An in-depth analysis of the data is provided after specific narratives and subject positions are identified. In the extracts that follow, Daisy speaks to social media's reach, Vuyo speaks to the diversity of people reached, Victoria speaks to social media's speed, Karabo speaks to the diversity of social media sites, and Buhle expands on what Karabo said by identifying specific social media sites:

Extract 1

Daisy: Uhm:: you can (.) reach out to a wider audience (.) using social media (.) = /mmm/ = because if you use platforms like (.) Twitter (.) uhm your audience might not even need to be following you (.) in order to (.) come across your tweet (.) you know. It might just be your mutual retweeting and: someone can just get your message you know, or … come across what you have to say (.) uhm in terms of gender-based violence.

Extract 2

Vuyo: Definitely … in most cases, I'd say yes [social media is an effective platform to talk about GBV] because … we're able to (.) reach people and reach (1) different kinds of people. So, we're able to share (.) our stories.

Extract 3

Victoria: Social media plays a big role (1) because I mean (.) yeah also news spreads faster (.) through social media (.) hashtags spread faster =yeah= … it's more effective (.) if you want something to be done (.) it's better to do it over social media because (1) it gets spread quicker.

Extract 4

Karabo: Uhm (1) for me, it's [using social media to talk about GBV] effective (1) because uhm (1) virtual is going viral … everybody is always on their phones = /mmm/= their tablets, their laptops. And (.) one other thing is that (.) uhm online activism does actually (1) do something, because = /mmm/ = uhm (.) the world now is starting to revolve around (1) virtual things ... and there's different platforms. You can choose what (.) ever one that you feel is best for you (.) and whichever one that you're comfortable with.

Extract 5

Buhle: You know, in today's society (.) even if someone doesn't have (.) Twitter, they might have Facebook or they might have Instagram … so (1) it … reaches a broader audience. It's not just (.) you know, within your friend group (.) or within (.) your community. It's actually, it's going (.) further than (1) uhm (1) what one thinks.

Daisy (Extract 1) speaks about the effectiveness of using social media to talk about GBV because of its potential to reach a bigger audience. This echoes Drake's (2018) finding that social media deserves the credit for engaging people in GBV-related conversations on a global scale. It also echoes Ghadery's (2019) finding that social media movements, such as #MeToo, illustrated its global reach and global strength because people from all over the world were able to interact with the hashtag. Daisy (Extract 1) speaks specifically about Twitter, because on Twitter people do not have to follow each other in order to interact with each other's posts. This is mirrored in Dadas' (2017) finding that some social media users interact with the same post several times if they follow both the creator of the post and the person sharing the post, but also that the post can reach several other people who do not follow the creator of the original post. Vuyo (Extract 2) agrees with Daisy (Extract 1) that more people can be reached. Vuyo (Extract 2) also suggests that a diverse group of people can be reached. Sanatan (2017) and ElSherief et al. (2017) agree that different kinds of people can be reached in this way.

In Victoria's (Extract 3) argument about the effectiveness of using digital platforms to talk about GBV, she speaks about the speed associated with social media. This is mirrored in findings by Makwembere and Tambo (2017) that social media has introduced speed that traditional, offline activism does not have. Kumar (2010) and Wasuna (2018) also agree that information on social media is communicated instantly. According to Karabo (Extract 4), social media is effective to engage in discussions about GBV because 'virtual is going viral'. This is because in recent times, people spend more time on their digital devices such as cellphones and tablets. This is mirrored in recent statistics – in 2018, there were roughly 2.78 billion social media users globally; in 2019, there were approximately 2.95 billion social media users in the world; and it is roughly calculated that there will be 3.43 billion social media users in the world in 2023 (Duong, 2020).

Karabo (Extract 4) speaks directly to the fact that there are different social media sites, and that social media users can choose a site they are comfortable using. Although Karabo (Extract 4) indicates that different social media platforms can be used, Buhle (Extract 5) expands by mentioning specific social networking sites. Alhabash and Ma (2017) also speak to the fact that there are different social media platforms that are used. These platforms include Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (Knight-McCord et al., 2016), as indicated by Buhle (Extract 5) as well.

Buhle (Extract 5) speaks directly to the effectiveness of social media because along with reaching more people, one does not need access to all the social media platforms to interact in conversations about GBV. She further speaks about the effectiveness because information goes beyond individual communities, to several communities globally. The section that follows will show specific narratives and how the speakers use the narratives to position themselves.

2.1 "THERE'S ACTUALLY HOPE BECAUSE THERE'S MORE PEOPLE TALKING ABOUT THIS"

In their narratives about using digital platforms to talk about GBV, the women in this study shared stories about the power and utility of social media. Drawing on the 'efficacy' discourse, some women express feelings of motivation, while others express feelings of hopefulness. The motivation and hopefulness are encouraged by the effectiveness of social media. Vuyo and Lerato share their experiences in the extracts below:

Extract 6

> **Vuyo:** I think what motivates me is… it reaches (1) more people … all around (.) the world… I feel like (1) if I had to share something (.) about gender-based violence (1) on social media (1) uhm it will touch and reach more people than (1) if I had just (1) you know, spoken of it (1) in a specific place or setting.

Extract 7

> **Lerato:** There's actually hope because there's more people (1) talking about this [gender-based violence]. There're more people (.) that want to end (.) gender-based violence. There're more advocates … for gender-based violence. So yeah (.) that's how I feel. Gives me hope (1) gives me hope!

In the above extracts, Vuyo (Extract 6) and Lerato (Extract 7) employ the discourse of 'efficacy' to construct their positive experiences and feelings associated with the power and utility of social media. Vuyo (Extract 6) speaks about the power of social media to reach more people as opposed to speaking about the topic in a specific space. Das (2019) conducted a study in Bangladesh that yielded similar results. According to the findings in Das' (2019) study, women indicated that talking about GBV-related experiences on social media enables them to interact

with a larger group, compared to what physical protests would have allowed. Lerato (Extract 7) highlights that there is hope because more people are talking about GBV on social media. This means that more people want to bring an end to GBV, and more people are advocates fighting against GBV. Furthermore, within their narratives, Vuyo (Extract 6) positions herself as motivated to use social media to talk about GBV because of its reach, and Lerato (Extract 7) positions herself as believing in the efficacy of using social media to talk about GBV. Trouble features in Vuyo's positioning later in her interview when she articulated a different narrative questioning the extent to which using social media is helpful. This narrative is described below:

2.2 "ARE WE HELPING?"

Extract 8

> **Vuyo:** So, I think it's [using social media to talk about GBV] challenging in the sense that (1) we can't reach everyone = /mmm/ = when we do post it. And (.) I think we forget that because we do reach a lot of people. But that doesn't necessarily mean we reach (.) all the people we need to reach…I feel (2) it's not (1) doing as much as we want it to do = /mmm/ = … we're sharing, we're posting, we're (1) talking (1) but (2) are we healing? Are we helping? = /mmm/ = … are we having that impact (1) and … how do we put our foot down when we don't get justice?

Vuyo (Extract 8) highlights that using social media to talk about GBV is challenging because regardless of reaching a lot of people, not everyone can be reached. This challenge is echoed in Makwembere and Tambo's (2017) finding that one of the biggest concerns of social media activism is its inability to include the experiences of marginalised groups who do not have access to technology. Therefore, it also raises the question of whether social media reaches everyone it should reach. Despite positioning herself as motivated to use social media because of its reach (Extract 6), she now positions herself as questioning the efficacy of using digital platforms to talk about GBV (Extract 8). She highlights the limitations attached with social media's reach. Vuyo (Extract 8) acknowledges that social media activists, including herself, are sharing posts and talking about GBV; however, she questions whether they are healing and helping. This question can be seen as trouble featuring in the narratives and positioning of women since they

position themselves as simultaneously helpful and limited in how helpful they can be in the fight against GBV.

3. A 'CONVENIENCE' DISCOURSE

In utilising this discourse, the convenience of using social networking sites to engage in discussions about GBV is highlighted. Social media is considered a convenient platform for consciousness-raising. While some women acknowledge that social media is easier to use, others acknowledge the advantage of being able to raise awareness from home. GBV awareness hashtags, such as #MeToo, is an example of how sharing personal experiences of GBV on social media is easier. This is because by sharing a post that merely says #MeToo, survivors can share experiences with others without having to go into much detail about their traumatic experiences (Clark-Parsons, 2019). In the extracts below, Lerato and Zama talk about the convenience of social media making raising awareness easier. Once again, these extracts are a description of the 'convenience' discourse.

Extract 9

> **Lerato:** So (1) uhm (2) I think you know, with using … social media, it's much easier to, you know (.) to get the message out, like it's much easier to bring (.) awareness (.) to gender-based violence, you know.

Extract 10

> **Zama:** Usually, I'll go on Twitter and see what's happening on Twitter and (.) which hashtags are … trending. And (.) I can see how many people participate in hashtags (.) uhm to (.) to create awareness … cause every time you log in =yeah= you see what kind of (.) problem we're talking about today and what happened to someone today.

In Extract 9, Lerato talks about the ease with which she is able to raise awareness about GBV. In Extract 10, Zama speaks of the convenience of being able to log in to social media platforms and having access to information about the issues being discussed. This echoes the results in a study by Alhabash and Ma (2017) on what motivates college students to use social media. According to the results, alongside entertainment, convenience was one of the highest motivations indicated

by the research participants (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). The section that follows will look at a few narratives and positions employed by women within their narratives.

3.1 "IT'S MUCH EASIER TO GET THE MESSAGE OUT THERE"

In this narrative, the women in this study speak about the user-friendliness of social media. This narrative draws on the 'convenience' discourse. In describing the ease-of-use of digital platforms for the purpose of activism, Lerato and Daisy said:

Extract 11

> **Lerato:** And it's 2021 (.) you know, it's the (.) 21st century. So (.) we do everything through social media, you know … You have (.) an audience, you know, especially for us (1) who, I don't really call myself an influencer. But you know, (.) we have followers, so it's much easier to get the message out there.

Extract 12

> **Daisy:** I wanted to not teach per se, but raise awareness on gender-based violence =oh okay= and I didn't know how to do it because (.) uhm I:: wasn't in any community engagement =oh okay= sort of (.) things and stuff. So, I wanted to do it whilst being at home as well, and so social media was easier.

Lerato (Extract 11) emphasises that it is the 21st century, and in contemporary times a lot of things are done on social media. This is directly related to Karabo's statement in Extract 3 that 'virtual is going viral' because people all over the world are increasingly spending more time on their digital devices. Lerato (Extract 11) describes social media as an easier way to share information and create awareness. This is echoed in Asur and Huberman's (2010) findings that social media is relatively easy to use. Furthermore, Lerato positions herself as having followers on social media. Daisy (Extract 12) speaks to the discourse of 'convenience' when she describes her experience of raising awareness while being at home. Scott (2014) agrees that it is easier to communicate, share information, educate ignorant people, and raise awareness on social media. She positions herself as wanting to raise awareness. While some women view social media as user-friendly, Liyabona reflects on the fact that this is not always the case. This is seen in the narrative that follows:

3.2 "INSTAGRAM DELETED IT"

Extract 13

> **Liyabona:** So, a friend of mine took pictures of me = /mmm/ = and … as we were taking pictures … there were men next to us, and I was in like shorts and then the men literally started making me feel very uncomfortable = /mmm/ = and then after that (.) I shared it [on Instagram] and my caption was just saying (.) how (.) I was made to feel uncomfortable, I was basically harassed by a man ... and then Instagram deleted it (.) because (1) apparently I expressed hatred or whatever … it made me very angry because … my post … wasn't expressing hatred … my caption was basically just saying what happened (1) before the pictures (.) even came up. I felt like (1) Instagram is not really a safe space like we think it could be. It really isn't a safe space since (.) when someone expresses such a thing (1) they could … it made me very mad.

In her narrative, Liyabona (Extract 13) describes an experience of being harassed by a group of men while taking pictures. After sharing this experience on social media, Instagram deleted the post because she allegedly expressed hate speech. In her narrative, she positions herself as a victim of the arbitrary way in which social media works impersonally (which is to indiscriminately remove posts without due consideration to the context). Her understanding of social media not being a safe space speaks to the fact that one can be unfairly excluded. From her perspective, the exclusion is unfair because it does not reflect the complexities of the situation. In the extract above, Liyabona further positions herself as being at the mercy of the way social media works. Liyabona's narrative troubles the previous positioning within the discourse of convenience and the narrative of ease.

4. AN 'EDUCATION' DISCOURSE

In constructing their narratives, the women in this study placed an emphasis on social media as a space to educate and be educated. Women have not only taught other social media activists and social media users about aspects of GBV, but have used social media as a platform to learn more about GBV as well. As seen in the literature review, social media has changed the way in which individuals learn, and what they learn (Naccarelli & Miller, 2020). The extracts below provide clear descriptions of the 'education' discourse. These extracts lean on the idea of using social media to challenge common narratives, to share information, to respond to ignorance, and to learn from others. These extracts are descriptions of the 'education' discourse. A more in-depth analysis follows after specific narratives that draw on the discourse are identified, and subject positions utilised by participants.

Extract 14

> **Daisy:** I think social media (.) in this time and age (.) is … one of the (.) biggest platforms that you can use to (.) sort of impart knowledge (1) with regards … to such [gender-based violence] issues. So, I think it's just (.) engaging those … common narratives of trying to … sort of blame the victim … it's trying to teach people that (1) why did the man do this (.) as opposed to trying to victimise the women … So … trying to change those narratives and if people are willing to engage, if people are willing to learn, if people (.) are willing to un-learn and re-learn and have the conversations no matter how comfortable they are, especially with men (.) then (.) you know, let's have them.

Extract 15

> **Liyabona:** Uhm (.) at first … what (.) encouraged me was (1) uhm (1) you know, seeing people actually bring awareness and talking about it [gender-based violence] … So (.) I started using it as a way to (.) also inform people about = /mmm/ = certain … aspects about it [gender-based violence] … that most of us don't know about…. And we need to inform ourselves more about (1) uhm gender-based violence, and (1) inform people around us (.) about the whole (1) topic, because (.) this is something that has been happening (1) a long time … = /mmm/ = and it's only just coming into light a bit more now because of (.) social media, and (.) you know (.) technology and everything else.

Extract 16

> **Victoria:** But as time went by (.) I started like (.) you know, you read comments or you go through social media and stuff like that = /mmm/ = you just see some (.) very ignorant comments sometimes = /mmm/ = like (.) so I think that's what motivated me because (.) I just felt like okay (.) maybe people need to be educated more on the subject (1) or people need to <u>know</u> like more about the subject or know … other people's point of views more. So, I think that's what motivated me (.) to start talking about it on social media.

Extract 17

> **Tandi:** Uhm I think (.) uhm (1) I think you, you learn a lot more of people's perspectives and uhm (2) and (.) … I think … that you learn other people's perspectives, because I, I think we all get stuck in our (1) in our one way of thinking.

Daisy (Extract 14) speaks to the idea of challenging common narratives. This is echoed in findings by Clark (2016) and Storer and Rodriguez (2020). According to Clark (2016), creating, gaining, sharing, and discussing information on social media has contributed significantly to women challenging dominant discourse. For example, the social media campaign #WhyIStayed called into question dominant discourses of domestic violence (Clark, 2016). Storer and Rodriguez (2020) agreed that #WhyIStayed was used to challenge accepted norms regarding intimate partner violence (IPV). Daisy (Extract 14) indicates that social media is one of the biggest platforms to share knowledge about GBV. In addition, she places an importance on

educating others about the problematic normalisation of victim-blaming. This is echoed in studies conducted in Ukraine (Lokot, 2018) and South Africa (Orth et al., 2020). Women in Ukraine have used social media to address victim-blaming (Lokot, 2018). Similarly, #RUReferenceList and #EndRapeCulture emerged on social media to address rape culture and victim-blaming (Orth et al., 2020). Social media platforms have been used to hold perpetrators of sexual violence accountable for their behaviour (Rentschler, 2014).

Daisy (Extract 14) is confident that if people are eager to engage, learn, un-learn, and re-learn, conversations about GBV should take place, especially with men. This is because men are often perpetrators, and women often victims of GBV (Purohit, 2015). Liyabona (Extract 15) talks about using social media as a platform to inform others and themselves about GBV. In other words, using social media to share information. Stornaiuolo and Thomas (2017) agrees that social media is an information center that allows the sharing and receiving of information. Similarly, a study conducted in Zimbabwe also recognised social media as a powerful tool to share and receive knowledge about gender issues (Makwembere & Tambo, 2017). Liyabona (Extract 15) highlights that even though GBV has been in existence for a very long time, more people know about GBV in recent times because of social media.

Victoria (Extract 16) speaks to the importance of social media in responding to ignorance. According to Victoria (Extract 16), ignorant comments on social media proves that people need to be educated about GBV and people need to be more aware of other's perspectives on the topic. Education on the topic has motivated women like Victoria (Extract 16) to continue talking about GBV on social media. Tandi (Extract 17) agrees in learning more about different people's points of views, and acknowledges the importance of educating on these platforms because people tend to get stuck in their own ways of thinking. The section that follows identifies specific narratives and subject positions that women employ within these narratives.

4.1 "I'VE GAINED KNOWLEDGE"

In utilising the 'education' discourse, most of the women in this study were open to the idea of learning and educating. Women in South Africa have used social media platforms to learn and teach others about GBV. Some women have gone to the extent of using their personal experiences of GBV to educate others. Social media platforms have encouraged social media users to share experiences of GBV (O'Neill, 2018). Hashtags such as #IamNotAfraidToSayIt have encouraged both women and men to share their experiences (Lokot, 2018). Sharing their narratives, Liyabona, Lerato, Victoria, and Busi said:

Extract 18

> **Liyabona:** After I experienced (1) something of that sort [gender-based violence] (.) it made me just start (.) bringing more awareness = /mmm/ = because (2) I mean … I went through the same thing so I started just being more active about it and using every platform I can use to let people know about (.) these things happening to other people, yeah… Uhm what I've (.) gained is (.) firstly, more knowledge (.) about it [gender-based violence]. Uhm (.) I've learned (.) that (1) there's things we (1) ignore about … gender-based violence that we don't actually take seriously (.) which could affect people. And I've also learned that … it happens in different ways for other people.

Extract 19

> **Lerato:** I think I've gained (.) knowledge = /mmm/ = because as much as we all know, okay, the (1) the dictionary definition of (.) what (.) gender, gender-based violence means (.) I don't think we (.) <u>really</u> know what it means. And through social media, you know, I get to hear about different (.) uhm (.) cases, experiences = /mmm/ = and obviously, what other people think (.) gender-based violence is.

Extract 20

> **Victoria:** Uhm it's [using social media to talk about gender-based violence] been <u>educating</u> because there's a lot of things that I learn off of social media (.) about (.) gender-based violence in general and (1) generally like … what it consists off because there's a lot of layers to gender-based violence = /mmm/ = it's not only like (1) you know (.) hitting women or stuff like that… And I just feel like the more you share; the more people get educated on it (.) uhm the more you call out people on the stuff that they say. It will just like (.) for me personally, I just feel like, yeah, you must just keep sharing, keep speaking about it [gender-based violence], don't keep quiet.

Extract 21

> **Busi:** I've learned a lot (.) on social media … over the past two years…Uhm (.) so, for me, it was quite (1) eye-opening, I would say… It's so important to educate people through social media. That's how I (1) unlearnt some of my thinking throughout the years (1) by seeing posts and (.) people just educating each other about things.

Liyabona (Extract 18) highlights that she has learned more about the ignorance around GBV, and that GBV happens in different ways. Within her narrative and utilisation of an 'education' discourse, she positions herself as using her experience of being a victim of GBV to raise awareness. She further positions herself as being educated and gaining knowledge through social media. This is echoed in an interview with Ronelle King, founder of #LifeInLeggings. Ronelle King indicated using social media to create awareness about the problems that affect people in society (Sanatan, 2017). According to Wasuna (2018), awareness or consciousness-raising forms an important part of social media activism. Lerato (Extract 19) also positions herself as being educated and gaining knowledge through social media. In her narrative, she refers to the term 'dictionary definition of gender-based violence'. The dictionary definition of GBV is seen in the introductory chapter where GBV is defined as any physical, sexual, or psychological (ElSherief et al., 2017; Gouws, 2018) injury or threats of such injury (ElSherief et al., 2017). Lerato (Extract 19) argues that despite knowing the dictionary definition of GBV, no one really knows or understands what it means. Social media has allowed her to learn more about different experiences of GBV, and what other social media users think GBV is.

Victoria (Extract 20) has learned a lot about GBV on social media and has learned that there are different layers to GBV, and different understandings and kinds of GBV. She believes that the more people share posts about GBV, the more others learn about GBV. Within her narrative, Victoria (Extract 20) positions herself as being educated on social media, and as constantly engaged and keeping up the momentum of doing GBV-related work through educating others. This is seen in her saying 'I just feel like you must keep sharing, keep speaking about it, don't keep quiet.' Busi (Extract 21) has learned a lot about GBV on social media in the last two years. She also speaks about the hashtags and posts that have educated people. In addition, she positions herself as having an eye-opening experience as a social media activist against GBV. Busi (Extract 21) places an importance on using social media as a platform to educate and be educated; therefore, she positions herself as teaching others and learning herself. Furthermore, by highlighting that engaging on social media has allowed her to unlearn some of her thinking, she is placing an emphasis on the importance of life-long continuous learning.

Danielle agrees that social media is a learning platform. This is seen in their narrative below:

Extract 22

> **Danielle:** I actually use (.) social media as a tool (.) to talk about GBV … whether it's coming from an educational perspective, or whether … it's coming from me talking about my experience … sharing those stories (.) means that other people get to see (.) uhm my story and either learn from it, or (.) encourage uhm more people to speak up (.) and share their own uhm experiences.

Danielle (Extract 22) uses social media as a tool to talk about GBV. Her utilisation of the term 'tool' speaks to the power of social media as a tool to engage in conversations about GBV. Alingasa and Ofreneo (2021) agree that social media is a powerful tool to challenge GBV in the world. In her narrative, Danielle (Extract 22) highlights the idea that sharing stories or experiences on social media means that others can either learn from it, or encourage and motivate others, by being an example, to share their experiences as well. Therefore, within her narrative and utilisation of the 'education' discourse, she positions herself as encouraging and educating others.

Daisy employed the 'education' discourse in a different manner to challenge the dominant rape myths as can be seen in the narrative below:

4.2 "TRYING TO CHANGE THAT NARRATIVE"

Extract 23

> **Daisy:** And so, being on social media and sharing things like (.) 'It's not her fault because she was walking around at night'. You know, trying to change that narrative. It's not her fault because (.) she was intoxicated, you know. It's not her fault because (.) she was wearing something short…We get grandmother's being (.) taken advantage of and they wear long pinafores, you know. So, I guess it's just educating that (1) it's not the victim that is at fault here (1) you know. We always have to question the perpetrator, you know.

In her narrative, Daisy (Extract 23) positions herself as an activist challenging the dominant narrative through educating others. She talks about the dominant narrative of victim-blaming and challenging that narrative, because even if a victim was under the influence of alcohol or wearing something short, does not mean that they were asking to be abused. However, later in the interview, trouble features in the discourse of 'education'. While some women have managed to get through to others and change minds through educating and being educated, other women have not managed to get through to others. Despite Daisy (Extract 23) positioning herself as an activist challenging the dominant narrative through educating others, in the extract that follows, she uses a different narrative and positions herself as not being able to educate others and get through to others.

4.3 "THERE'S A LIMIT TO WHAT YOU CAN TEACH AN INDIVIDUAL"

Extract 24

> **Daisy:** Uhm (.) I think (.) one of the key things that I've gained was that … there's a limit (.) to (.) what you can teach an individual (.) you know. Like (.) you get a lot of people saying (.) uhm (.) very problematic things right. I mean you're gonna [going to] call them out and be like 'This [what they are saying] is problematic because of this and this and this', and they're gonna [going to] be like 'Okay teach me.' And one thing I've learned with those people is that … there's also a certain attitude that they come at you with (.) So, most of the people that are like 'Okay teach me' (.) they don't really want to (1) be taught or they don't really want to:: learn in order to change their perspective or their narrative.

Daisy (Extract 24) indicates that one of the primary things she has gained as a digital activist against GBV, is that there is a limit to what one can teach others. She acknowledges that a lot of people say problematic things on social media. She also indicates calling people out who make problematic comments. Daisy (Extract 24) has come to the realisation that those who indicate that they are open to being taught about GBV, are not necessarily open to being taught, or open to changing their perspective. Within this narrative and drawing on the 'education' discourse, she positions herself as not being able to educate and get through to everyone. She further positions herself as understanding the limitations that come with trying to educate others.

In the extract that follows, Daisy then repairs this troubled position when she positions herself as continuing the work for those who are willing to learn, even though there are those who are not open.

Extract 25

> **Daisy:** Uhm but social media, what I like about it is that even … when someone just (.) isn't ready to learn = /mmm/ = you know, because there's this quote … that says (.) uhm:: once you're ready to learn (.) uhm the master will always be there to teach, you know = /mmm/ = so, whenever people are ready to sort of change their perspectives and (.) actually be open to learning more about GBV (.) and learning more about (.) uhm rape culture, about sexual harassment = /mmm/ = there will always be information on social media, you know.

Daisy (Extract 25) now positions herself as understanding and accepting when someone is not ready to learn and acknowledging that information about GBV will stay on social media until they are ready to learn. Similar to Daisy (Extract 23) challenging a dominant narrative on social media, a notion of changing the common narrative is seen in the extract below:

Extract 26

> **Liyabona:** So, I posted a picture (.) that showed (.) different clothes saying '… I'm still not asking for it' [I'm still not asking to be raped] = /mmm/ = And then a man said (2) 'How do you expect me (.) to not (.) come for you if you're dressed in … a certain way' … because we live in (1) this (.) time of age, and I expect people to know (.) about most of the things … when (.) he responded in that manner (2) I was (1) very confused and then he was like yeah, it's his opinion (1) that he thinks that (.) you know (1) I'm dressed in a certain way (.) and how … do I expect <u>him</u> (.) not to react in a certain way.

Liyabona (Extract 26) expects people to know that how one dresses should not determine how one is treated. This speaks directly to the importance Daisy (Extract 14) placed on educating others about victim-blaming. Liyabona (Extract 26) further positions herself as confused when she had an encounter with someone who still believes that women who wear certain kinds of clothing are indirectly asking to be sexually violated. Similarly, through educating, in the extract above, Liyabona positions herself as being willing to challenge dominant gender-norms. In the same breath, she positions herself as facing difficulties because these norms are so pervasive and not easy to talk back to.

In the narratives of women, the misinterpretation of posts creates trouble in the 'education' discourse. Along with the limitations that come with educating others, the misinterpretation of posts places a further limitation when it comes to trying to educate others. Social media posts take on a life of their own when they are shared multiple times by multiple social media users. In other words, one of the limitations of using social media to share information is that the person who originally posted loses control over the post. Danielle and Lerato speak to this in their narratives below:

4.4 "YOUR WORDS CAN EASILY GET LOST IN TRANSLATION"

Extract 27

> **Danielle:** On Facebook and Twitter … your words can easily get lost in translation. And people can (1) can and that gaslighting comes, 'Why you're being emotional?' But I'm not being emotional. I just literally just typed this and I'm very calm (.) I'm relaxed.

Extract 28

> **Lerato:** Sometimes people take (1) maybe what you're trying to say, you know … in a wrong way, and you don't have time to explain yourself cause it's already out there = /mmm/ = you get what I'm trying to say.

In their narratives that employ an 'education' discourse, Danielle (Extract 27) positions her words as being easily lost in translation, and Lerato (Extract 28) positions herself as not having time to explain herself. They are thus questioning their ability to educate others on social media. This troubles the previous narratives about the value of using social media to educate others about GBV.

5. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I discussed three of the discourses that the women in this study utilised in constructing narratives about their experiences of using social media to talk about GBV. I started the chapter by discussing how, through a discourse of 'efficacy', women justify their reasons for using digital platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, to talk about GBV. The 'efficacy' discourse is based on the idea that social media is an effective platform to engage in

discussions about GBV because of its reach, speed, diversity of people reached, and variety of platforms social media users can choose from, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

The women in this study utilised an 'efficacy' discourse to construct positive experiences and feelings of using digital platforms to talk about GBV. In their narratives, women speak about the power of social media because information reaches more people compared to speaking about GBV in a specific space. Women are also hopeful because more people are talking about GBV on social media. One of the participants shared narratives about the challenges that come with using social media to talk about GBV, because information does not reach everyone. In their narratives, women positioned themselves as believing in the efficacy of using social media to talk about GBV. Interestingly, one of the participants positioned herself as motivated to use social media for GBV-related conversations. Later in the interview, she positioned herself as questioning the efficacy of social media for these kinds of conversations because of its inability to reach everyone it should reach.

This was followed by a discussion on the 'convenience' discourse. Women also utilised this discourse to justify their use of social media to talk about GBV. The discourse of 'convenience' highlights the convenience of using digital platforms to engage in discussions about GBV. Women spoke about social media as being easy to use, and the advantage of being able to raise awareness from home. In addition, women shared narratives about the user-friendliness of social media. However, some women do not believe in user-friendliness because of certain policies. While some women positioned themselves as finding it easier to raise awareness, others positioned themselves as being at the mercy of the way social media works, because it arbitrarily removes flagged posts which are not harmful.

This was followed by a discussion on the 'education' discourse. Once again, several positions are taken by women, and some troubled positions are identified and repaired. Furthermore, women have used social media to educate and be educated on topics about GBV. 'Education' is one of the primary discourses that emerged. Based on the narratives and existing literature, social media is one of the biggest platforms to share and gain knowledge about GBV. In recent times, more people are exposed to, and understand GBV as a worldwide problem because of social networking sites. Women utilised the 'education' discourse in their narratives about the power of social media as a learning platform. Within their narratives, women positioned themselves as

gaining knowledge, sharing knowledge, victims of GBV using their personal experience to educate others, and keeping up with the momentum of doing GBV-related work. In the narratives of women, women also talked about the limitations that come with trying to educate others, and the misinterpretation of social media posts as a huge disadvantage of digital activism against GBV. The women in the study implied that once a post is shared on social media, the person who originally shared the post loses control over the post.

6

DATA ANALYSIS: SOCIAL MEDIA AS A SUPPORTIVE SPACE

1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on the power of digital platforms to talk about gender-based violence (GBV) because of its global reach, immediacy, convenience, and power to educate and be educated. The utility of social media could apply to discussions on any topic. This chapter, however, focuses on social media as a supportive space, and more specifically the emotional effects and labour related to participating in this space. Women in general (and specifically those who have experienced GBV) have found a community. They have also found other social media users who stand in solidarity with victims and survivors of GBV. In addition, the experiences and thoughts of women have been validated. The vulnerability associated with using social media to engage in discussions about GBV is also discussed.

This chapter starts by discussing the discourse of 'community and solidarity', the narratives that draw on this discourse, and the subject positions employed by women within this discourse. This is followed by a discussion on the 'validating' discourse. Narratives are shared to demonstrate how women draw on these discourses and which subject positions are employed by women. Lastly, the discourse of 'vulnerability' is discussed, followed by the narratives that utilised this discourse and the subject positions employed by women in the study.

2. A 'COMMUNITY AND SOLIDARITY' DISCOURSE

According to Roberts and Marchais (2018), social media and digital technologies provide a platform where collective action can take place. Collective action has thrived in its aim to create a community (Wasuna, 2018) and solidarity (Eslen-Ziya, 2013). Women have established a community on social media or what they term a 'sisterhood' – a relationship between women who have a similar goal to uplift, liberate, and empower other women (Datiri, 2020). In addition, the more women express how they feel about social problems such as GBV, the more their response creates a chain of solidarity (Flores et al., 2020). Feminist solidarity is critical in the

fight against gender discrimination (Datiri, 2020). This sense of community and solidarity is echoed in the extracts below:

Extract 29

Liyabona: So, I think the response that I've been getting from social media mainly hasn't been (.) as (1) bad as it is when I bring the things I get from social media … home. Yeah, so it's at home mainly where I experience (1) uhm (1) issues (1) when it (.) comes to such [gender-based violence] topics.

Extract 30

Vuyo: Uhm (.) I feel like social media (.) has (1) the tendency (.) to (1) either make or break a post = /mmm/ = But (.) in this case … I feel it unifies people because (1) people aren't very confident or (1) let me not use that word. /sigh/ I don't think (1) people are comfortable (.) speaking about their experiences, speaking about (.) the specific situation (1) uhm (1) openly in … an environment where (.) it gets publicised = /mmm/ = and where they are publicised.

Extract 31

Bongie: There's people that are going to be talking about it [gender-based violence]. And (.) that (.) kind of just (1) I think it's the sense of community and also (1) a place to:: to use as an outlet =yeah= … There was also a lot of support (.) from people (.) but I must say, over … the few years, like between then and now (.) a lot more has changed. You know =yeah= like (1) I don't know if I can say that it's more accepting, but like, people are more accustomed (1) to having these types of conversations.

Interestingly, Liyabona (Extract 29) speaks about a community when she compares the different responses she receives when talking about GBV. Based on these responses, she experiences a sense of community on social media because she has a voice and a platform for expression, which is not something that she has at home. Vuyo (Extract 30) acknowledges that social media can either make or break a post. This speaks to literature on the responses to social media activism against GBV. On the one hand, victims receive the anticipated support from other social media users (Salter, 2013), and on the other hand they do not (Hosterman et al., 2018). Vuyo

(Extract 30) also argues that social media brings people together. This is mirrored in literature by Harris et al. (2020) and Hashemi (2020) who argue that social media enables people who are from different parts of the world to construct a collective identity. Similarly, in a study conducted by Clark-Parsons (2019), one of the social media activists expressed their feeling of collective solidarity because engaging on social media is an indication of how survivors are everywhere and that they are together. Bongie (Extract 31) describes social media as creating a means of expression and a sense of community. In addition, the idea of community and solidarity is evident in the support available on social media. Datiri (2020) agrees that collective action contributes to solidarity, community, and support. The section that follows shows specific narratives and how speakers use the narratives to position themselves.

2.1 "THERE'S LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE"

The women who participated in this research study were asked to share their experiences of using social media to talk about GBV. In their narratives, several women utilised the 'community and solidarity' discourse when describing their engagement with like-minded people. Bongie, Victoria, and Daisy draw on this discourse in their narratives below:

Extract 32

> **Bongie:** I think it's [social media] the only space where I feel like (1) the conversation actually happens = /mmm/ = uhm (.) at least in my experience and are one of the reasons why (.) I'm on Twitter so much is because there's like-minded people … I found a lot of solace in (.) conversations happening like online or like reading up on stuff… Like I found community (1) and people on Twitter. And (1) when there's an issue (1) uhm (1) you don't feel like (.) you're muffled up about it, like you angry about it by yourself… It feels like someone is giving you a warm hug.

Extract 33

> **Victoria:** I can say it feels comforting, knowing that (.) it's not only me that this (.) has happened to, you know what I mean ... also, you know I've gained allies, I've gained people that have maybe (.) gone through similar situations that I've been in = /mmm/ = … it feels good to know that there are people who have your back … So, it feels great knowing that there's people that actually (1) care.

Extract 34

> **Daisy:** I think it's easier (.) when … you come across people that share the same thoughts as you do = /mmm/ = because then the engagement (.) is quite good, you get to learn a lot also as well because those people (.) when let's say perhaps unintentionally you say something that can be problematic and they come and they correct you and they say 'Okay (1) we get what you're trying to say but (.) this [what is said] is a bit problematic because of that and that and that and that' and I like those engagements because those are the engagement where you grow (.) you know.

Bongie (Extract 32) believes that social media is the only space where conversations about GBV actually take place. Her engagement with similar-minded people is the reason she spends a lot of time on Twitter. This is echoed in literature that this is a digital era, and that collective action has shifted to digital platforms (Alingasa & Ofreneo, 2021). It is further echoed in findings by Gurman et al. (2018) and Roberts and Marchais (2018) that social media provides like-minded people with a space where collective action can take place. Bongie (Extract 32), therefore, positions herself as constantly using social media because of her engagement with like-minded people. She found both comfort and a community in conversations happening online. This is mirrored in the findings in a study conducted in Bangladesh. Women in Bangladesh indicated choosing to share experiences of GBV on social media because it links them to a community of women who have similar experiences (Das, 2019). Bongie (Extract 32) also positions herself as not being angry about GBV by herself. This speaks directly to solidarity. Women in Ukraine (Lokot, 2019) have used social media to stand in solidarity with one another.

In her narrative and drawing on a 'community and solidarity' discourse, Victoria (Extract 33) positions herself as finding comfort and gaining allies. She also positions herself as being part of this online community and having a legitimate voice to speak about the topic owing to personal experience. Similar to Bongie (Extract 32), Victoria (Extract 33) also positions herself as engaging with like-minded people, and Daisy (Extract 34) describes the engagement on social media as good when engaging with people who have the same views as hers.

2.2 "I THINK IT'S GOOD TO HAVE A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION"

The narratives in the previous section are based on women engaging with similar-minded individuals. However, it is unlikely that every interaction on social media will be one with like-minded people. Women have also engaged in a space where listening and sharing is respected despite differences in opinion. In other words, conflict is perceived as productive. Buhle, Victoria, and Vuyo illustrate this in their narratives below:

Extract 35

> **Buhle:** I think it's good to have a difference of opinion = /mmm/ = Uhm (.) as long as it's not harmful to others = yeah = I think when people have (.) difference of opinion … it educates both parties = /mmm/ = So, I might learn something that (.) I never knew (.) you know. Something that I perhaps did not know I was ignorant about, you know. Or (.) uhm (.) they might learn something new… If someone has (1) a difference of opinion from me, you know. Sometimes you don't have to (.) go guns blazing. And (.) you know, fireballs.

Extract 36

> **Victoria:** I feel like personally, I can't get angry or stressed out about other people's opinions = /mmm/ = because I wouldn't want someone to (.) feel that way about my opinion when I decide that (.) I need to give my opinion on something now. I wouldn't want someone to get angry or to get (1) frustrated with me for giving my opinion. So, I try my best not to get angry or frustrated with someone else for giving their opinion. So, I would generally say I feel calm (.) mostly.

Extract 37

> **Vuyo:** As much as we're allowed to share our opinions (.) it doesn't necessarily mean that … we shouldn't be (.) understanding of (.) the difference in opinion. And (.) and that people will always disagree. People will always disagree. They can't agree (.) with everything you say, and you can't agree with everything everyone else says. So (1) I think (.) that is something we always need to remember and understand = /mmm/ = Uhm:: (.) yes.

Buhle (Extract 35) believes that it is good to have a difference of opinion, as long as it is not harmful to the opinions of others. In her narrative, Buhle (Extract 35) positions herself as being reasonable and willing to listen and engage with those who have a different opinion. Victoria (Extract 36) argues that she cannot be angry about the opinions of others because she would not want others to be angry about her opinions. In her narrative, she positions herself as understanding the space as reciprocal. Linda (Extract 37) positions herself as understanding. She argues that people cannot agree with everything one says. Everyone has the equal right to share their opinions; therefore, everyone should be understanding of differences in opinions.

2.3 "YOU CAN'T FORCE SOMEONE TO WANT TO LEARN"

A troubled position in the narrative of engaging with like-minded people and engaging in a space where listening and sharing is respected emerges when women describe their experiences of engaging with ignorant people. This is seen in the extracts below:

Extract 38

> **Buhle:** It [using social media to talk about GBV] made me realise just how (1) dark (.) the world (.) really is, how dark people are, how ignorant people are, and also how (1) you can't force someone to want to learn (.) you know … and (.) uhm (2) I also learned that some people only learn through experiences, you know …

Extract 39

>**Victoria:** I started like (.) you know, you read comments or you go through social media and stuff like that = /mmm/ = you just see some very ignorant comments sometimes = /mmm/ = … So, I think that's what motivated me (.) to start talking about it [gender-based violence] on social media.

Extract 40

>**Danielle:** And then when I realise, okay, you know what, you're tripping (.) then … I switch, you know, to, 'Okay, you actually don't want to learn, you're just here to … be a concern troll and (.) play devil's advocate and I'm not here for that. This is why I said what I said. Here's the evidence backing what I'm saying. What … are you saying? = /mmm/ = … you can have your opinion, as long as your opinion doesn't infringe on my rights. If (.) your opinion is now infringing (.) on my rights, that's not (.) an opinion… or you're (.) you're being problematic … and I think that's where… there's that (1) thin line of having an opinion and just being wrong.

Buhle (Extract 38) draws on the 'education' discourse described in the previous chapter and the limitations of trying to educate or get through to others. This is seen in her narrative when she acknowledges that she cannot force someone to learn. In her narrative, Buhle (Extract 38) positions herself as coming to the realisation that the world is a dark place. In her narrative, Victoria (Extract 39) positions herself as being motivated to continue talking about GBV on social media because of her engagement with ignorant people. This is echoed in Scott's (2014) finding that social media is used to educate ignorant people. In terms of her engagement with ignorant people, Danielle (Extract 40) believes that there is a difference between having an opinion and just being wrong. In her narrative about her engagement with ignorant people, she positions herself as only willing to engage to the extent that her rights are not being infringed upon. Women also draw on the validating discourse to describe their experiences of using social media as can be seen in the section that follows.

3. A 'VALIDATING' DISCOURSE

The 'community and solidarity' and 'validating' discourses speak to one another because through a sense of community and solidarity, women's experiences of GBV are validated. According to Storer and Rodriguez (2020), words such as 'you are not alone' have a crucial part in online campaigns against GBV because it validates the experiences of women and recognises the courage it took to share these experiences. The 'validating' discourse is seen in the extracts below:

Extract 41

> **Tandi:** So, yeah, there have been (.) many instances where uhm (1) uhm (2) I think it's a very validating conversation to have = /mmm/ = because you're like 'Oh okay, maybe (.) this isn't for nothing when I (1) do this or that' … whereas … you have people who have (.) uhm a similar, similar experiences or similar opinions, you're like 'Oh, it feels validating = /mmm/ = when you express yourself.'

Extract 42

> **Vuyo:** I think (.) it's [someone sharing a similar opinion] definitely a confidence (1) booster. I think (1) it definitely makes me feel like yes (1) wow, like somebody actually (1) knows what I'm talking about or (.) somebody actually has thought about this the way I've (.) thought about this or seen something the way I see it. I think it's definitely something that encourages me (.) to uhm (1) I think (2) post or reshare or (.) delve deeper into the conversation.

Extract 43

> **Karabo:** Uhm (1) for me, I (.) it [interacting with people who agree with what I am saying] made me feel good (.) honestly … when I see (.) uhm other men, other women doing this, it (.) it gives me a sense of affirmation … it brings me back to earth = /mmm/ = sometimes … so, when I see other women, other men doing it, other organisations = /mmm/ = it (.) just (1) it makes me feel good about myself … because now I know that (.) I'm not the only one who sees this as a real problem.

Extract 44

> **Busi:** I've posted before, and people would share:: or they would comment and agree. Uhm (1) and that would give you some level of comfort. And (1) yeah, it will just be an all-around good feeling like, 'Okay, I'm not alone. There's other people that agree and that think the way I think.'

Tandi (Extract 41) describes conversations about GBV as validating. This is seen in her acknowledgement that she is not crazy for speaking against GBV. In addition, women feel validated when others share similar experiences and opinions to theirs. This is directly related to the 'community and solidarity' discourse when similar opinions and experiences are shared. A 'validating' discourse is seen when Vuyo (Extract 42) describes experiencing an interaction with people who share a similar opinion to hers as a 'confidence booster'. This experience is validating because there is someone who understands, knows, and has thought about something in a similar manner. This validation that is experienced further encourages women to continue engaging in conversations about GBV.

Karabo (Extract 43) describes a sense of affirmation when others are engaging in conversations about GBV as well. Her use of the word 'affirmation' proves that the experience or conversation is validating. She further indicates that the feeling of validation makes women feel good about themselves because they are, therefore, not the only ones who see GBV as a real problem. Similarly, Hawkins (2012) views GBV as a real and global problem. According to Busi (Extract 44), when people comment and agree on social media posts, a level of comfort is given. Once again, this level of comfort speaks to the 'community and solidarity' discourse. Feelings of validation emerge because women feel that they are not alone, and that there are people who agree and think the way that they think.

3.1 "I WAS ABLE TO HEAL"

Employing a 'validating' discourse, women share narratives about social media's contribution to their healing. Three of the women who participated in the study employed a narrative about healing. Below, Buhle, Karabo, and Danielle share their experiences:

Extract 45

> **Buhle:** Sometimes (.) the other person will end up opening up or I'd end up opening up and (.) uhm it [social media] starts feeling like a (.) a healing space really, you know. It starts feeling like (.) a really safe space just to say (1) uhm anything to someone, or just to blurt out that … this is what happened to me (.) or (.) you know, this is what happened to me. And … it just feels like, just /sigh/ released a breath of fresh air.

Extract 46

> **Karabo:** Uhm (.) for me … it's personal (.) in the sense that I … was able to like (.) heal through like (.) … my rape and the rape attempts, you understand. It's just (.) that whole thing of (2) you know, when you come (1) when you meet people (.) that have the same experiences as you … So, it (1) for me, it created a safe space (.) for me to know that I have sisters.

Extract 47

> **Danielle:** And it's also (.) I think, I find it (1) healing. It's … a healing thing for me as well, to be able to talk about what happened and (.) to remove the shame (1) as well for what happened because yes, it happened to me, I didn't ask for it (.) and uhm (.) everyone else (.) needs to know that this also happens to other people too… there was a lightbulb moment that (.) … I feel like I'm healing through this, you know.

All three of these women in the extracts above position themselves as finding or experiencing healing. In Buhle's (Extract 45) narrative, social media becomes a healing space when women start opening up to one another. She draws on the 'validation' discourse when she describes social media as a safe space because of the healing experienced. In addition, she describes her experience of healing as a breath of fresh air. Karabo (Extract 46) describes healing from her personal experience of sexual violence in her narrative. She draws on the 'validation' discourse

as well when she describes meeting people on social media who have similar experiences. Danielle (Extract 47) describes healing from a personal experience of GBV as well. These experiences are echoed in findings by Hosterman et al. (2018) that social media activism has an important part in understanding victims of GBV and finding ways to assist them during their healing process.

3.2 "IT'S VERY INVALIDATING"

A troubled position emerged when women are not believed or they are accused of using social media to get attention. This illustrates a backlash against people who speak out and an attempt to silence them. This can be an invalidating experience. Bongie, Daisy, Vuyo, and Buhle demonstrate this in their narratives below:

Extract 48

> **Bongie:** Uhm, I think the thing that I have a problem with when it comes to social media and this topic, right, about gender-based violence, any violence or abuse that happens, right, is that (.) there's always that (.) immediate (1) … response by people to (1) discredit whoever is saying this thing, you know.

Extract 49

> **Daisy:** It has been [challenging] (.) It has been (.) a lot (.) you know (.) because uhm (3) you can (.) post something like let's say a victim comes out (.) right (.) and:: (.) you'd be like 'We believe you so and so [name of the victim]' (.) and then you're going to get people commenting 'But where's the proof? Where's this and that? Didididida [and so forth]'

Extract 50

> **Vuyo:** And (2) in reading … these posts, I felt (.) like when these people started commenting about (1) uhm (.) the guy and saying 'Well (1) this is his side of the story' = /mmm/ = this is what they think (1) right? I felt like (.) it was (2) it was very conflicting. I felt like … they were giving him a voice without him (1) even being present on the post = /mmm/ = or even being present (.) on social media…But I feel (1) as though (1) we need to give the benefit of the doubt for (.) anyone who comes forward. Because I think it takes a lot for somebody to come forward, especially on social media.

Extract 51

> **Buhle:** But a lot of the negative ones [comments], you see a lot of, they're more (1) about how people are looking for attention, like 'Oh (1) you posted this, so you're looking for attention' or 'Oh (.) uhm (.) if this was real, then you would have went to the police' or 'Oh (.) uhm (.) why are you only opening up now?' I think, I think it's very (2) it's, I think for people who (.) have experienced gender-based violence = yeah = or (.) know someone close to them who has, it's very invalidating.

Bongie (Extract 48) finds social media activism against GBV problematic when people discredit the posts or experiences of others. In her narrative, she positions herself as having a problem with social media users who behave in this manner. Daisy (Extract 49) describes using digital platforms to talk about GBV as challenging because despite some people believing victims, other social media users ask several questions and want proof. Within her narrative, Daisy (Extract 49) positions herself as standing up for those whose posts are discredited. Vuyo (Extract 50) describes people who invalidate the experiences of others, as people who are giving the perpetrator a voice. Vuyo (Extract 50) positions herself as giving those who come forward the benefit of the doubt. In her narrative, Buhle (Extract 51) describes using social media to talk about GBV as challenging because of people accusing others of seeking attention. In her narrative, she describes this as invalidating for people who have experienced GBV.

Further trouble emerges as participants reflected on the fact that celebrities do not experience this kind of backlash. While they are believed, ordinary people do not get this kind of exposure.

Their authority and authenticity are, therefore, questioned. In addition, ordinary people are positioned as automatically more questionable since they lack the status of celebrities who are idolised. Those with status and privilege get believed, and those with less are seen as lacking credibility. This is seen in the narrative shown in the extracts that below:

3.3 "IT AFFECTS US THE SAME WAY WHETHER WE ARE FAMOUS OR NOT"

Extract 52

Liyabona: When … like very famous people like experience (.) certain things = /mmm/ = … that's the only time people actually start (1) taking the whole GBV (.) uhm thing seriously … I said … we should keep the same energy (.) for like everyone else, we shouldn't (.) only (.) uhm (.) express how we feel only based on how (.) popular the person is (.) and (1) I got a very different response as well … I can't remember what they said … exactly, but it was just them saying (.) they will only recognize when (1) everyone is talking about it. And that was one conversation also I wasn't expecting to have from people because (1) it affects us the same way whether we're famous or not. = /mmm/ = So, yeah.

Extract 53

Buhle: For example, if it's (.) uhm (.) a very (.) public person or a celebrity = /mmm/ = uhm (1) then (2) you, you see how (.) people shift the blame. And (.) how (.) people (1) you know, believe you according to status, or don't believe you according to status…Uhm (1) I think, I think that's the only time where uhm I (2) I really see it (.) going into the negative light because (.) you know, how can you share one and not the other, you know = yeah= how can you:: (.) support one but not the other.

Extract 54

Daisy: I think another thing with social media is that (.) when you get well-known women or (2) maybe not so well-known women uhm (.) sharing their stories about well-known men, that's when you see /giggle/ people's mindsets because they're going to be like (.) 'Oh this person wants their money …' So, there was that conversation that is it because of the power … they have? Is it because of their social capital? What warrants you not to believe the victim? = /mmm/ = … If you say you believe the victim first (.) that has to stay (.) no matter (.) <u>who</u> … you can't just choose (.) when to believe her (.) or when not.

Extract 55

Vuyo: And I kept (.) like replaying this in my mind and I kept asking myself like (1) … are we selective of (1) who we share and who we don't share? … And is that (.) a problem that needs to (.) be addressed as well?' … I didn't want to (.) get it to (.) get to the point of this discussion, where (1) I'm thinking, 'Is my story, if something like this happens to me, is my story (.) not going to be shared because I'm not popular? Is it not gonna be shared because (.) I'm (1) not seen as (1) a socialite, I'm not (.) popular on Instagram?

In their narratives, Liyabona (Extract 52) positions herself as questioning this hierarchy of credibility and challenging it as unfair. Buhle (Extract 53) positions herself as questioning social media users' logic behind their use of this hierarchy. Daisy (Extract 54) also positions herself as questioning social media users' logic behind their use of this hierarchy, and Vuyo (Extract 55) positions herself as questioning her popularity should she experience GBV. The women in this study have a different understanding of the role celebrities have in social media activism against GBV because celebrities are often favoured. According to research done by ElSherief et al. (2017), celebrities have an important part in motivating people to fight GBV. Women in this study do not focus on this aspect because of their negative experiences of celebrities being treated differently.

4. A 'VULNERABLE' DISCOURSE

The vulnerable discourse refers to statements which construct the women who use social media to talk about GBV as vulnerable. In this discourse there is a tension between being over-exposed and desensitised because of having to deal with too much trauma vicariously by listening to the conversations. In these circumstances the women take steps to protect themselves and implement self-care boundaries. In these forums, inappropriate comments indicative of rape culture and victim-blaming occur and, therefore, ironically while the platform is meant to be a safe space women are still vulnerable to experiencing GBV. Women feel less comfortable reporting cases or experiences of GBV, because the judges, police and legal practitioners are often men who do not take GBV matters seriously enough; therefore, women have made use of social media because the justice system has failed them (Das, 2019). This does not mean that women are not exposed to further vulnerabilities on social media when they share experiences of GBV or engage in conversations about GBV. A 'vulnerable' discourse is described in the extracts below:

Extract 56

> **Tandi:** It [using social media to talk about gender-based violence] is challenging, because … sometimes you don't set boundaries … uhm (1) that you normally would in person or something … you get overexposed to things or you get uhm (.) desensitised to things that you think you can handle … you realise at a later stage that uhm (.) actually uhm reading that one thread or (1) uhm watching that video, it wasn't necessarily uhm (.) good for my health or whatever, or (.) good for my (.) peace of mind.

Extract 57

    Karabo: And (.) it [using social media to engage in conversations about GBV] (.) it's, sometimes it's dehumanizing, because (.) you are (.) literally exposing (.) yourself (.) to the world. You're exposing yourself to (1) all uhm (1) the dangers of the world… Because when you're open to talking, they text you, they ask you, 'Have you been raped? Okay, this happened to me.' You know, they start talking. You don't even have to ask them questions. They just start opening up (.) you understand? So, it just brings me great pleasure … knowing that … as a stranger (1) to them, but they still see (.) somebody that they can trust uhm with their (.) vulnerabilities.

Extract 58

    Bongie: But it's also conversations around people talking about their own experiences. Uhm, I think it's very difficult not to get triggered by (.) any sort of (1) sexual assault communication or, or conversation that (.) emerges on social media and not take it back to what you have experienced personally.

Tandi (Extract 56) draws on the idea of vulnerability when she describes using social media to talk about GBV as challenging because sometimes boundaries are not set. This is because people only tend to set boundaries when they are exposed to GBV-related conversations in-person. As the researcher, I would like to take this back to the anonymity that social media provides. Perhaps social media activists and social media users are too focused on the advantage of not feeling exposed, they forget about the disadvantage of being in a space that could lead to further feelings of vulnerability. Karabo (Extract 57) agrees that by using social media to talk about GBV, women are exposing themselves to the dangers of the world. Karabo (Extract 57) refers to the price she has to pay for being able to help someone else. This creates a sense of vulnerability. She also speaks about women on social media trusting others with their vulnerabilities. Bongie (Extract 58) speaks to the difficulty of not being triggered when conversations about GBV are happening online, especially as a victim of GBV. This means that women are vulnerable to both triggers and re-traumatisation. The women in this study draw on the discourse of 'vulnerability' in their narratives that follow.

4.1 "MENTALLY AND EMOTIONALLY, IT BECOMES VERY TRIGGERING"

Social media is considered a triggering, draining, and vulnerable space. Buhle, Karabo, and Danielle describe this experience in the extracts below:

Extract 59

> **Buhle:** And (.) also, people just asking questions that they don't (.) … need to know … I mean (.) that is in itself triggering you. Why didn't you … go and report it? I mean, the person is already eating themselves up about that … because now nobody believes them (.) you know. You don't need to be asking those questions. I think, that's also another problem I have … I think it's triggering for me (1) personally … mentally and emotionally it becomes very triggering and (.) depressing and uhm (2) just (.) overwhelming. And I think also sometimes (.) when people do share their stories with you uhm (1) it's never with the intention to like trigger you or (.) make you feel some type of way. Sometimes you never know because triggers just … happen, they just come (.) at any moment.

Extract 60

> **Karabo:** Yeah, the challenges … I would say is … mean texts, like … random men texting you, telling you that (1) 'You are crazy. You deserve to die.' And some would even go to the extent of saying that (.) they're gonna rape you, 'No wonder you were raped. You're stubborn' and stuff like that (.) you understand. We come across people (.) saying that (.) even if you do (.) get angry, you … as a woman … there's no way you can get angry from the waist below.

Extract 61

> **Danielle:** I think the first time that I shared my (1) uhm story (2) … It was a lot because I (.) there was that fear that kicked in that 'Oh my gosh (2). He is going to see it. And (.) he's going to call me, or who's going to believe me, who's gonna [going to] this' you know, it was that…Uhm … it could be a very triggering time for, for other people and there were times where I'd … be highly triggered… it could be quite triggering (.) for survivors (.) to be in that space.

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Buhle (Extract 59) positions herself as vulnerable to triggers. In her narrative, she draws on the 'vulnerable' discourse. Karabo (Extract 60) also draws on the 'vulnerable' discourse in her narrative. She positions herself as experiencing secondary traumatisation because of men telling her that she deserved to be sexually violated, and that they too will sexually violate her. Danielle (Extract 61) positions herself as vulnerable and a possible victim to further trauma. She further positions herself as vulnerable to triggers. Within her narrative and subject positioning, she utilises a 'vulnerable' discourse as well. This demonstrates that women understand social media as a tool that has limitations, despite its potential. For example, it can heal, but it can also trigger. These findings are mirrored by Gouws (2018) who conducted research that indicated that the use of social media does not always work and can further harm victims, survivors, and women because it initiates further harassment and humiliation of survivors. In addition, the identities of survivors are disclosed, therefore, causing retraumatisation.

4.2 "IT CAN HAPPEN TO YOU"

This narrative speaks to the pressure social media users place on themselves and is directly related to the triggers they experience. Tandi and Vuyo share narratives of the pressure they feel on social media after being triggered, and the realisation that they are not exempt and could experience some of the horrors they are reading about. This is seen in the extracts below:

Extract 62

> **Tandi:** I think they [conversations about GBV] (.) … trigger me and then I (1) … think it's uhm (.) a bit of annoyance (.) at times. So, uhm (1) yeah … I get uhm (.) triggered by things uhm quite (.) quite easily. Uhm so (.) I think uhm (1) sometimes … when things are:: (.) are in front of you … you don't really uhm (2) when it's on social media, I just think you just feel the need that you have to (.) read something, you have to uhm (.) you have to respond to something, whereas you necessarily don't have to.

Extract 63

> **Vuyo:** I feel like (.) you're now (.) scared, you're now intimidated. Because (.) as much as (1) it, it's happening to other people, it can happen to you. And I think (.) we, we always distance these things because (1) we (1) we read stories on (.) social media, and we feel like (.) it doesn't affect us because =yeah= it's not happening to us (.) and it's not happening around us. But as soon as it hits home (.) it's a different story (.) it's an entire different story. So (1) yes, I think (1) we all need (.) we all need to (1) remember that.

Tandi's (Extract 62) narrative describes being triggered by things quite easily. In her narrative, Tandi (Extract 62) also speaks about the unnecessary pressure social media users place on themselves. She argues that sometimes she feels the need to argue with a social media post that is triggering her, whereas she does not necessarily have to. In her narrative and utilisation of the 'vulnerable' discourse, she positions herself as vulnerable to triggers. Vuyo (Extract 63) describes feeling intimidated because the GBV-related experience she reads about on social media can easily become her experience. Within her utilisation of the 'vulnerable' discourse, she positions herself as vulnerable and at risk of being affected by the trauma.

In the extracts below, Busi (Extract 64) positions herself as recognising the possibility of being triggered and the importance of a trigger warning, and Karabo (Extract 65) draws on the 'vulnerable' discourse when questioning why she is putting her life at risk by using social networking sites to engage in discussions about GBV.

4.3 "TRIGGER WARNINGS ARE VERY IMPORTANT"

Extract 64

> **Busi:** That's why sometimes (1) I'm almost hesitant to … re-post or share = /mmm/ = cause I don't know how the person's gonna feel if they see something and it triggers them. Sometimes I would obviously (.) put it in the comments, or in the caption 'trigger warning' (.) because I think trigger warnings are very important (1) for people.

Extract 65

> **Karabo:** But (1) as much as you had a reason to begin (1) I believe that you can always have a reason to stop. Cause sometimes like I mentioned, like I do see my mental health (.) declining (.) and it doesn't make me feel good about myself. I start asking myself (.) why am I putting my own life (.) on the line? I mean, we have … we have (.) uhm … we have, we have people, why are they not doing it? Why am I putting myself here? = /mmm/ = you understand? It just (1) makes you feel useless.

Busi (Extract 64) describes feeling unsure about sharing a post because she is cautious of those around her who could be triggered. Karabo (Extract 65) speaks back to the motivation people have to use social media to talk about GBV. She believes that a reason to start using social media for GBV-related conversations means that there can also be a reason to stop. Sometimes she goes to the extent of questioning why she is putting her mental health at risk. This speaks directly to the narrative and the tension between the pressure that social media users or women activists place on themselves to be active, but also to be responsible to themselves and others.

4.4 "IT'S DRAINING ME PHYSICALLY OR EMOTIONALLY, SPIRITUALLY BUT YEAH"

According to Losh (2014), participating in social media activism can be physically and emotionally tiring – physically because of creating the social media posts and emotionally because of exposure to online abuse. Therefore, using social media to talk about GBV can be an exhausting experience for women. In the extracts below, Daisy, Tandi, and Bongie describe their tiredness:

Extract 66

> **Daisy:** There are times when you just get tired of trying to explain to people, because it's clear that they don't want to understand (.) or they don't want to gain a perspective of why (1) whatever happened to that individual is wrong or … = /mmm/ = why this cause is so important or why it's (1) mostly women that are affected (.) you know.

Extract 67

>   **Tandi:** And then (2) a negative one [experience of using social media to talk about GBV] is … where … leave that conversation and (.) not necessarily that I didn't learn anything, but uhm (.) where I feel like I leave that conversation, and it's … draining =okay= whether it's draining me physically or emotionally (.) spiritually = /mmm/ = but, yeah.

Extract 68

>   **Bongie:** It's [social media activism against gender-based violence] tiring because … like how many /sigh/ how many more stories do people need to like = /mmm/ = read of or see or like (1) you know.

Daisy (Extract 66) describes the tiredness that comes with constantly having to explain to people who clearly do not understand or want to gain a perspective on why certain behaviours are wrong, why conversations about GBV are important, and why most women are affected by GBV. Tandi (Extract 67) describes a negative experience of using social media to talk about GBV as leaving the conversation physically, emotionally, and mentally exhausted. Bongie (Extract 68) agrees that engaging in conversations about GBV is tiring because of the number of times stories about GBV are reported with no change evident.

In the extracts that follow, Vuyo, Danielle, Karabo, and Buhle share narratives of their tiredness and employ specific subject positions to indicate that they are paying a personal price for engaging on these forums.

Extract 68

Vuyo: I think let me say this (.) social media as a whole (.) is very … draining. Uhm (.) I think … we are privileged in the sense that we can share =/mmm/ = whatever we feel on social media, and we can (.) tell people exactly what we think. But (1) in the same breath I think it's draining because (1) I think we constantly (1) are needing to substantiate or motivate or (1) I think (.) find reason or (.) explain ourselves =yeah= when we're posting or when we're sharing (.) or when we're commenting on social media… Social media is very draining. I think (2) we need to understand that mentally (2) it's draining for = /mmm/ = people who … have experienced this =yeah= And also people who haven't experienced this because I feel if you're going onto social media and reading all of this …

Extract 70

Danielle: If you're not engaging it, and you're just leaving it as is (1) other people that interact on the timeline may think that okay, this is normal, or this is right, or this is wrong, or (.) whatever is in between. So, I will engage (.) because it's in line with my work. Yes, having to do that … level of (.) intellectual labour and emotional labour can be quite draining at times... So, how do I (.) strategically (.) engage with them in a way that (.) … doesn't let my anger or my emotions get into the way, or (.) that let's my (.) … exhaustion of, of men get in the way, you know.

Extract 71

Karabo: Honestly it (1) it gets tiring = /mmm/ = because you get (1) … tired of explaining the same thing over and over again. What is consent? Consent means if you ask. You get tired of (1) uhm (.) cause even sometimes when you're doing these things, even women are not even in the forefront of saying that (.) 'Thank you. Thank you dear. Thank you for putting this out there' or at least uhm (1) 'Thank you for educating like (.) our men, our daughters.

Extract 72

> **Buhle:** And also … it gets very tiring (.) having to constantly educate people (.) having to constantly (.) tell people to be empathetic, or be considerate, or (.) what if that was your sister? That is not … the conversations we still should be having in 2021 … I think that would be the negative part of (.) constantly sharing, constantly retweeting because (.) it does get tiring, having to (.) always (.) see another hashtag or another face or another missing person or another (.) uhm someone who's confessing to having being abused by their significant other.

Vuyo (Extract 68) describes social media as draining. It is mentally draining for those who have experienced GBV, and those who have not experienced GBV. In her narrative, and utilisation of the 'vulnerable' discourse, Vuyo (Extract 68) positions herself as struggling with the contradiction inherent in the use of social media. It drains her and she understands the intention of raising awareness can be compromised. She is aware that women engaging and helping comes at the cost to their own mental health. In her narrative, Danielle (Extract 70) also describes using digital platforms to talk about GBV as draining. In utilising the 'vulnerable' discourse, she positions herself as strategic in understanding the contradiction and protecting herself from further harm. Karabo (Extract 71) draws on the 'vulnerable' discourse in her narrative when she describes of constantly having to explain the same thing to other social media users. She positions herself as tired of having to educate people, as does Buhle (Extract 72) who agrees with Karabo (Extract 71).

4.5 "I CHOOSE HOW TO ENGAGE"

Below, women further describe how they use strategies to alleviate the tiredness that comes with using social media to talk about GBV:

Extract 73

> **Danielle:** So, uhm sometimes I choose to engage, sometimes I don't, even if it's something that I would have said myself = /mmm/ = where uhm (.) I tweet something (.) and, or post something and then there are people that come in with their diverging views (.) uhm or whatever the situation is, and uhm (1) I choose how to engage …

Extract 74

Tandi: So (1) I think more often than not, I think I've just learned to just uhm (1) just detach myself from those = /mmm/ = conversations. Because (.) people are gonna [going to] try and (.) argue their points, whether (.) it's the truth or not.

Extract 75

Liyabona: No (.) no, no. I think the only time it didn't go well is when people would (1) respond to (.) it and probably say mean things = /mmm/ = to me. Yeah, I think that's (.) just it. But I'd delete their … comment because I don't want to have such images around me. Yeah.

Extract 76

Buhle: I think sometimes it gets very overwhelming (1) uhm (1) because (.) … it really does become too much. It, it (.) not just because of personal experience, but also because (3) being someone who (1) who (.) I'm very empathetic or I, I understand situations, or I always try to understand people, and (.) be kinder because we don't know what someone is going through. … So, I think it, it, it takes a toll, it takes a toll emotionally and mentally. So, I do (1) I would just shut off from social media and (.) take a break because it (.) gets overwhelming.

Extract 77

Bongie: I don't always engage because I've learned the hard way that (1) sometimes in a person's viewpoint and something (.) rather don't engage with it or try and make them see from your side because you just going to exhaust yourself, you know… And after I felt like I was exhausted, and I was like 'Okay, I'm done with this' I unfriended him and I disassociated (.) myself from that conversation … when you can see that it's going to go (.) pear shaped. I immediately just dissociate myself because = /mmm/ = it's a <u>tiring conversation</u> … I think it's just a matter of having to choose what you want to engage in, or what's <u>worth</u> (.) engaging.

The women in this study shared narratives about how they deal with the exhaustion that comes with using social media to talk about GBV. Danielle (Extract 73) positions herself as being able

to distinguish when to engage in a conversation and when not to. Tandi (Extract 74) positions herself as having learned when to detach herself from certain conversations on social media about GBV. Liyabona (Extract 75) positions herself as actively responding to mean comments by deleting them and not allowing them to affect her. Buhle (Extract 76) positions herself as recognising that social media can be harmful and limiting her exposure. Lastly, Bongie (Extract 77) positions herself as immediately dissociating herself from a tiring conversation.

5. CONCLUSION

The three discourses that speak to social media as a supportive space is described in this chapter. These are discourses of 'community and solidarity', 'validation', and 'vulnerability'. Participants described a 'community and solidarity' discourse when they spoke about receiving better support on social media, social media's potential to bring people together, and the platform allowing women to express themselves. However, some women do not receive the anticipated support on social media. Participants utilised this discourse in their narratives about engaging with like-minded people. Their engagement with like-minded people has encouraged them to continue talking about GBV on social media. Women positioned themselves as finding comfort, gaining a community, and having the legitimacy to speak about GBV owing to personal experiences. Women also shared narratives about engaging with people who have a different opinion. They described this engagement as good if the interaction is based on respect. The women positioned themselves as reasonable, understanding, and willing to listen. They further positioned themselves as understanding the space as reciprocal. Lastly, women shared narratives about their inability to force others to learn. Despite positioning themselves as motivated by the ignorance, they also positioned themselves as willing to engage to a certain extent.

I then discussed the discourse of 'validation'. This goes hand-in-hand with the 'community and solidarity' discourse because through a sense of community and solidarity, the experiences and thoughts of women are validated. Women described feelings of validation, gaining confidence, affirmation, and comfort. The women drew on this discourse in narratives about healing. Women positioned themselves as experiencing healing from personal experiences of GBV. Women also shared narratives about invalidating experiences. The experiences of women are often discredited. Women positioned themselves as having a problem with people who invalidate the experiences of others. Furthermore, women positioned themselves as standing up for those

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whose posts are discredited, and as giving those who come forward the benefit of the doubt. Participants also drew on the fact that the experiences of celebrities are seldomly discredited. Participants positioned themselves as questioning the logic behind this credibility, questioning the use of this hierarchy, and challenging it as unfair. Some women went to the extent of questioning their own popularity should they experience GBV.

A 'vulnerable' discourse is then discussed. Women drew on the idea of vulnerability when they described social media activism against GBV as challenging because boundaries are not put in place. Women described themselves as exposing themselves to the dangers of the world, and described social media users as trusting others with their vulnerabilities. Participants drew upon this discourse in narratives about social media activism against GBV being mentally and emotionally triggering. Here, women positioned themselves as vulnerable to triggers and further trauma. The women in this study also shared narratives about the pressure social media places on them because they realise that at any point, they could become victims of GBV. Here, women positioned themselves as understanding the importance of trigger warnings. Women also shared narratives about digital activism against GBV being physically, emotionally, and mentally tiring. Women positioned themselves as struggling with the contradiction inherent in the use of social media. Some women positioned themselves as strategic in understanding this contradiction. Lastly, narratives about choosing how to engage were shared. Participants demonstrated dealing with the tiredness of social media activism by choosing when to engage and when not to. They also positioned themselves as recognising that social media is harmful; therefore, they limited their exposure.

<center>**7**</center>

<center>**DISCUSSION**</center>

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1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the research findings. In this chapter, I revisit the research questions that I worked towards. The research questions were: 1) How do women in South Africa who use social media to talk about GBV narrate their experiences of using these platforms? 2) What discursive resources are seen in participants' talk about their experiences of using social media to talk about GBV? 3) What subject positions do women in South Africa take on in their narratives of using social media to talk about GBV? 4) How does "trouble" and "repair" feature in women's talk about their experiences of using social media to talk about GBV? Therefore, the aim of this research project was to explore the narratives of women in South Africa, who use social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, to engage in discussions about GBV. This study has contributed to a growing body of knowledge on social media activism against GBV.

The literature review (Chapter 2) demonstrated that not much research on social media activism against GBV has focused on Black, African women (Wasuna, 2018); therefore, not much is known about how women in South Africa experience using social media to talk about GBV. Several studies suggest that global reach and speed are the primary reasons social media is used for activism (Hoffman, 2021). This is because it allows people from different parts of the world to immediately join the conversation (Harris et al., 2020; Hashemi, 2020). Social media has been used as a tool to fight GBV. Women have used the platform to share personal experiences of GBV (ElSherief et al., 2017; Wasuna, 2018). The platform has also been used as an alternative reporting space (Gurman et al., 2018) and to name perpetrators of violence (O'Neill, 2018) after being failed constantly by the justice system (Gjika & Marganski, 2020). In addition, social media has been used to raise awareness about GBV (Linder et al., 2016), address rape culture and victim-blaming (Lokot, 2018), collectively act against GBV (Duong, 2020), and encourage social change (Storer & Rodriguez, 2020). The utility of social media for activism against GBV has contributed significantly to the overall goal of women breaking their silence (Linabary et al.,

2020). Most importantly, while some women have received the anticipated support from other social media users (Salter, 2013), others have not (Hosterman et al., 2018).

In exploring women in South Africa's narratives about their experiences of using social media to talk about GBV, the study utilised Taylor and Littleton's (2006) narrative-discursive approach. As stated in the theory (Chapter 3), speakers use narratives to construct their experiences (Crossley, 2000; Smith, 2016). 12 semi-structured, narrative interviews were conducted with women in South Africa who fit the inclusion criteria and volunteered to participate in this research project. The participants were given an opportunity to openly talk about their experiences in a safe space with a registered counselling psychologist present. The data was analysed using an integration of Riessman's (2008) thematic model of narrative analysis, and Taylor and Littleton's (2006) analysis method.

This chapter starts with a table of summary of the research findings. This is followed by a brief discussion explaining the table. This is followed by a discussion on the overarching argument. Lastly, the limitations of this research study are discussed, and recommendations for future research.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In the previous two chapters (Chapter 5 and Chapter 6) I analysed the participants' narratives of using social media to talk about GBV. I now present a table summary of the research findings.

TABLE 3 – TABLE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

THE POWER AND UTILITY OF SOCIAL MEDIA		
DISCOURSES		
An 'Efficacy" Discourse	A 'Convenience' Discourse	An 'Education' Discourse
NARRATIVES		
• "There's actually hope because there's more people talking about this" • "Are we helping"	• "It's much easier to get the message out there" • "Instagram deleted it"	• "I've gained knowledge" • "Trying to change that narrative" • There's a limit to what you can teach an individual" • Your words can easily get lost in translation"

SOCIAL MEDIA AS A SUPPORTIVE SPACE		
DISCOURSES		
A 'Community and Solidarity' Discourse	A 'Validating' Discourse	A 'Vulnerable' Discourse
NARRATIVES		
• "There's like-minded people" • "I think it's good to have a difference of opinion" • "You can't force someone to want to learn"	• "I was able to heal" • "It's very invalidating" • "It affects us the same way whether we are famous or not"	• "Mentally and emotionally, it becomes very triggering" • "It can happen to you" • "Trigger warnings are very important" • It's draining me physically or emotionally, spiritually but yeah" • "I choose how to engage"

The first set of discourses speak to the idea that social media is powerful and useful. These discourses are "outward" looking because it focuses on what the use of social media achieves in the world. This is more about the utility of using social media irrespective of the topic being discussed. Briefly, the 'efficacy' discourse describes the power and utility of social media because of its reach, speed, and diversity. The discourse of 'convenience' speaks to the user-friendliness of social media. An 'education' discourse describes the power of social media to educate and be educated.

The second set of discourses are centered on the notion that social media is a supportive space. These discourses are "inward" looking because it focuses on what the use of social media does for the people participating. This refers to the emotional labour that is engaged in, specifically in

relation to the topic of GBV. Briefly, the 'community and solidarity' discourse and 'validating' discourse speaks to social media as a supportive space because in sharing experiences of GBV and engaging in conversations about GBV, women have found a community, solidarity, and their thoughts and experiences have been validated. Women also draw on a 'vulnerable' discourse to describe the limitations of using social media to talk about GBV.

Whether women in this study spoke about the power and utility of social media, or about social media as a supportive space, they justified their use of social media to talk about GBV. In other words, in the narratives of women, they utilised discourses of 'efficacy', 'convenience', 'education', 'community and solidarity', 'validation', and 'vulnerability', and they positioned themselves in ways that explained why they use such a global platform to talk about such a sensitive topic. The section that follows discusses the overarching argument.

3. THE OVERARCHING ARGUMENT

Women utilised the discourse of 'efficacy' in their narratives about feeling hopeful because more people are talking about GBV on social media. This speaks to the impact social media has and the difference social media makes because more people are reached, compared to speaking about GBV in a specific space or setting. This research finding was not unexpected because existing literature speaks to these advantages. For example, previous studies have shown that social media has engaged people on a global scale (Drake, 2018), different kinds of people have been reached (ElSherief et al., 2017; Sanatan, 2019), information on social media has been shared instantly (Kumar, 2010; Wasuna, 2018), and a variety of social networking sites exist (Alhabash & Ma, 2017), such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (Knight-McCord et al., 2016).

In this narrative, the women positioned themselves as motivated to use social media to talk about GBV because of its reach, and as believing in the efficacy of social media activism against GBV. However, later trouble featured in the narratives of women questioning the extent to which using social media is helpful in bringing about change in behaviour. These narratives described digital activism against GBV as challenging because regardless of reaching more people, not everyone can be reached. The women positioned themselves as questioning the efficacy of using social media to talk about GBV. In addition, the women acknowledged that despite its potential, there

are some limitations of using social media to talk about GBV. Tension is indicated in women's self-doubt about how effective they are actually being in practice.

In the 'convenience' discourse, the women further justified their use of social media for activism against GBV. The women drew on this discourse when they shared narratives about social media being easy to use. This is another finding that was not unexpected because literature by Asur and Huberman (2010) and Scott (2014) agree that social media is easy to use. According to the participants, a lot of things are done on social media in the 21st century. In their narratives, the women positioned themselves as appreciating that social media is an easier way to share information and create awareness. However, trouble featured in the narratives and positioning of women when they shared stories or experiences about being victimised by the arbitrary way in which social media works. One of the women in the study shared a personal experience of harassment on Instagram. Her post was deleted because she allegedly expressed hate speech. The women positioned themselves as victims and being at the mercy of the way social media works. In addition, they recognised that social media is a space where they can be unfairly excluded. Tension was indicated in the ease of use being balanced with the way in which one can be arbitrarily excluded. Once again, the women acknowledged that social media activism against GBV has its limitations.

One of the main findings regarding the power and utility of social media was the power of social media as a learning platform. Therefore, social media activism against GBV was presented as useful to educate and be educated. Women utilised an 'education' discourse to share narratives about gaining knowledge. They have, therefore, used the platform to learn and teach others about GBV. Literature by Naccarelli and Miller (2020) agrees that social media has changed the way people learn and what they learn. Some of the women in this study went to the extent of using their personal experiences of GBV to educate others. In addition, they have learnt more about the ignorance surrounding GBV, and that GBV happens in different ways. The women positioned themselves as activists who are able to use social media to educate and be educated. They also positioned themselves as having an eye-opening experience as social media activists against GBV. This was also seen in their narratives about trying to change common thoughts and ideas about victim-blaming. The participants positioned themselves as activists challenging the dominant narrative through educating others.

At the same time, they shared narratives acknowledging that there are limitations when they question the extent to which they are able to educate others on social media. The women positioned themselves as not being able to educate and get through to others, understanding the limitations that come with trying to educate others, accepting when someone is not ready to learn, and acknowledging that information about GBV will stay on social media until they are ready to learn. An additional narrative they shared was about their words being easily lost in translation. This narrative was about the misinterpretation of social media posts. The women positioned themselves as not having the time to explain themselves. This narrative created further trouble in the 'education' discourse, and placed a further limitation when it comes to trying to educate others. Therefore, there was trouble in the narratives about the value of using social media to educate others about GBV. In other words, tension exists between using social media to learn and teach others about GBV, and acknowledging the limitations of being able to do this.

Women drew on a 'community and solidarity' discourse in their narratives about engaging with like-minded people. This discourse was one of the primary discourses utilised by women in the narratives about their experiences of using social media to talk about GBV. According to Roberts and Marchais (2018), social media provide a platform where collective action can take place. In addition, the goal of collective action is to create community (Wasuna, 2018) and solidarity (Eslen-Ziya, 2013). Their engagement with similar-minded people encourages them to use the platform to talk about GBV. Once again, researchers such as Gurman et al. (2015) and Roberts and Marchais (2018) agree that social media allows like-minded people to collectively take action.

The women in this study described their engagement on social media as good when they are engaging with people who have the same views as theirs. In addition, the women positioned themselves as not being angry about GBV by themselves, as finding comfort, and gaining allies. Furthermore, the space gave them legitimacy in the form of a voice to speak about the topic owing to personal experience. It is unlikely that every interaction on social media will be one with like-minded people. Therefore, the women also shared narratives where they acknowledged that social media is also a space where listening and sharing is respected despite differences in opinion. In other words, conflict was perceived as productive. They supported the notion that it is

good to have a difference of opinion, as long as it is not harmful to the opinion of others. They, therefore, positioned themselves as being reasonable and willing to listen and engage with those who have a different opinion. Most importantly, they positioned themselves as understanding the social media space as reciprocal.

A troubled position in the narrative of engaging with like-minded people, and engaging in a space where listening and sharing is respected emerged when women described their experiences of engaging with ignorant people. The women described the limitations of trying to get through to others, and acknowledged that they cannot force someone to want to learn. While some women positioned themselves as coming to the realisation that the world is a dark place, and as motivated to continue talking about GBV on social media because of their engagement with ignorant people, others positioned themselves as only willing to engage to the extent that their rights are not being infringed upon. Tension arose between understanding that the space which creates a community and a sense of solidarity can also be an unsafe space in which their rights are infringed upon.

The 'community and solidarity' discourse is related to the 'validating' discourse, because through a sense of community and solidarity, the experiences and thoughts of women are validated. The women in this study utilised a 'validating' discourse when they described social media as a healing space because of their healing from personal experiences of sexual violence. This healing stems from meeting people on social media who have similar experiences to theirs. The research participants positioned themselves as finding or experiencing healing. A troubled position emerged when women demonstrated not being believed, or when they are accused of using social media to get attention. This illustrated a backlash against people who speak out and an attempt to silence them. This experience can be invalidating. The women positioned themselves as having a problem with social media users who discredit the posts or experiences of others, and giving those who come forward the benefit of the doubt.

The women also expressed frustration with a different standard being applied to celebrities who are more easily believed. They positioned themselves as critical of this double standard and challenging it as unfair. According to the women, GBV affects everyone in the same manner, whether they are famous or not. Tension arose between social media being a space which is healing, but also a space which can very quickly invalidate someone's experiences if they are not

believed or if they are dismissed. The women positioned themselves as standing up for those who are not believed and being frustrated at the double standards.

Once again, an interesting finding emerged when women spoke about the experiences of celebrities almost never being invalidated. However, ordinary people are often positioned as questionable and lacking credibility. This contradicts findings by ElSherief et al. (2017). In ElSherief et al.'s (2017) study, the role of celebrities in consciousness-raising was highlighted because people generally look up to them. Celebrities shared hashtags to encourage social media users to share experiences of GBV. The women in this study view celebrities in a different light. Instead of seeing the part they could have in raising awareness about GBV, they view celebrities as people whose experiences are never invalidated.

Women drew on the 'vulnerable' discourse in their narratives about social media being mentally and emotionally triggering. The women positioned themselves as vulnerable to triggers and possible victim exposed to further trauma. This demonstrated that women understand social media as a tool that has limitations, despite its potential. For example, it can heal but it can also trigger. This is seen in their narratives about social media being a triggering space for those who have experienced GBV and for those who have not. The women also shared narratives about their realisation that they are not exempt and could experience some of the horrors that they are reading about. Sometimes they questioned why they put their mental health at risk and do the work which is exhausting and draining. The women in this study shared this in their narratives about social media activism against GBV being physically, emotionally, and spiritually draining. Losh (2014) agrees that online activism is physically tiring because of sharing the actual social media posts, and emotionally tiring because of exposure to further online abuse and victim-blaming. The women employed positions to indicate that they are paying a personal price for engaging in digital activism.

This speaks directly to the narrative and the tension between the pressure that social media users or women activists place on themselves and others. The research participants shared narratives about how they deal with the exhaustion of digital activism against GBV. In these narratives they positioned themselves as being able to distinguish when to engage in a conversation and when not to. This is done by learning when to detach from certain conversations and not allowing tiring conversations to affect them. The women in the study also positioned themselves as

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recognising that social media can be harmful, as a result they limit their exposure. Overall, tension arose when they understood the risks to themselves, but they continued to do the work because they felt responsible to others, and wanted to establish a space of community and solidarity for victims. Social media proved to be a precarious space which came at the cost to their own mental health. They dealt with this draining experience by being strategic in understanding the contradiction and protecting themselves from further harm by instituting boundaries.

4. LIMITATIONS

The research participants were either currently students at university, or they were students at a maximum of 7 years ago. Therefore, the participants are not representative of women in South Africa. In addition, the participants cannot speak for socially vulnerable women who cannot be activists, or who are not visible on social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The experiences of married, and economically and socially vulnerable women are victims of GBV daily. However, they do not have the 'luxury' to become visible on social media. These women are, therefore, excluded by digital activism.

All 12 interviews were conducted in English. English was not the home language of all the research participants. This may have placed a limitation on the study. In addition, women may have provided socially desirable responses so that their narratives align with common narratives of using social media to talk about GBV. Lastly, due to the COVID-19 laws and regulations, data was collected via Zoom. This was slightly disadvantageous in terms of establishing rapport with research participants. Participants may have been hesitant to share further experiences of social media activism against GBV because they were not completely comfortable.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Regarding future research, it would be useful to include the experiences of men who engage in digital activism against GBV. More specifically, it would also be useful to include the violence experienced by the LGBTQAI+ community and how they experience social media activism when they talk about their experiences of violence.

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APPENDIX A

SOCIAL MEDIA RECRUITMENT POST

SUBJECT: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT FOR RESEARCH PROJECT

TRIGGER: GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Greetings,

My name is Donica Walton, and I am a master's candidate in the Department of Psychology at Rhodes University.

I am conducting a qualitative research study on the experiences of women in South Africa who use social media platforms (such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) to talk about or share experiences of GBV. The study is not limited to women who have personally experienced GBV. Advocates for social change, who are active in these discussions, are also welcome.

This post serves to recruit twelve to fifteen volunteers who are women; living in South Africa, 18 years or older; and active members of social media regarding discussions about GBV. If you are interested or have any questions, please contact me at donicawalton30@gmail.com or my supervisor, Professor Tracey Feltham-King, at t.feltham-king@ru.ac.za

Please feel free to share this post.

APPENDIX B

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

Rhodes University Human Ethics Committee
PO Box 94, Makhanda, 6140, South Africa
t: +27 (0) 46 603 7727
f: +27 (0) 46 603 8822
e: s.manqele@ru.ac.za
NHREC Registration number: RC-241114-045

https://www.ru.ac.za/researchgateway/ethics/

19/04/2021

Ms. Donica Walton

Email: g16w6697@campus.ru.ac.za

Review Reference: 2021-2701-5978

Dear Dr. Tracey Feltham-King

Title: The Narratives of South African Women who use Social Media to talk about Gender-Based Violence.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Tracey Feltham-King

Collaborators: Ms. Donica Walton, Professor Catriona Macleod, Ms. Yamini Kalyanaraman

This letter confirms that the above research proposal has been reviewed and **APPROVED** by the Rhodes University Human Ethics Committee (RU-HEC). Your Approval number is: 2021-2701-5978

Approval has been granted for 1 year. An annual progress report will be required in order to renew approval for an additional period. You will receive an email notifying when the annual report is due.

Please ensure that the ethical standards committee is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators. Please also ensure that a brief report is submitted to the ethics committee on the completion of the research. The purpose of this report is to indicate whether the research was conducted successfully, if any aspects could not be completed, or if any problems arose that the ethical standards committee should be aware of. If a thesis or dissertation arising from this research is submitted to the library's electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) repository, please notify the committee of the date of submission and/or any reference or cataloging number allocated.

Sincerely,

Prof Arthur Webb

Chair: Rhodes University Human Ethics Committee, RU-HEC

cc: Mr. Siyanda Manqele – Ethics Coordinator

RECRUITMENT LETTER

Greetings

My name is Donica Walton and I am a master's candidate in the Department of Psychology at Rhodes University. I am the primary researcher and Yolisa Bomela, a registered counselling psychologist, is the co-researcher. I am conducting a qualitative research study on the experiences of women in South Africa who use social media platforms such as Twitter or Facebook to talk about and/or share experiences of gender-based violence (GBV).

The title of the research project is 'The Narratives of South African Women who use Social Media to Talk about Gender-Based Violence.' I am supervised by Professor Tracey Feltham-King and co-supervised by Distinguished Professor Catriona Macleod.

This letter serves to recruit 12 to 15 women in South Africa who are 18 years or older, and active members of social media regarding discussions about gender-based violence. The study is not limited to women who have experienced gender-based violence and have used social media to talk about these experiences. The study will also include advocates for social change who are active in these discussions. These women should be willing to volunteer as one of the research participants.

There is a scarcity of qualitative research conducted on the different experiences women in South Africa have when using these platforms to talk about gender-based violence. The purpose of this study is to fill that gap. Research in this field is important because gender-based violence is an on-going problem in society. Social media activists have increasingly been using these platforms to advocate for change, share their experiences, encourage others to share theirs, and stand together to create solidarity amongst women. However, little is known about the positive and negative experiences they have had doing this.

Data collection will be in the form of one in-depth interview per participant. These interviews will take place at a date and time convenient for the research participant. Taking the COVID-19 restrictions into consideration, the interviews will be virtual through either Skype or Zoom

sessions, or any platform the participant is comfortable using. Interviews will be conducted in English and the duration of each interview will be 1 hour to 1 hour 30 minutes.

Participants will be required to sign a consent form at the start and end of the interview to ensure that they are still comfortable with their stories forming part of the data collection. Further, participants have the right to withdraw from the interviews without any adverse consequences. Participants will be required to provide permission for the recording of these interviews. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants will be ensured by de-identifying the data through replacing any names of people or places with pseudonyms. Participants can stay anonymous to the researcher and co-researcher as well. Additionally, the original copy of data collected that include the names of people or places will be stored in a safe place.

Gender-based violence is a sensitive topic. There is some risk involved as talking about experiences of using social media to talk about gender-based violence may bring back past trauma, sadness, or resentment. Participants may be at high risk of feeling uneasy after sharing their experiences. This is where the role of the co-researcher becomes clear. The role of the co-researcher will be to join in on the interviews and help reflect on the interviews. The co-researcher, a registered counselling psychologist, will be there to assist with research participants should they encounter any emotional difficulties. Research participants will also be referred to telephonic counselling should they need further counselling. These risks will be further mitigated by providing research participants with an opportunity to talk about how they feel after the interviews have taken place and how they felt opening up about their experiences.

Additionally, the benefits of participating in the research study includes talking about experiences without being judged. Participating in the study will further the aims of tackling gender-based violence, which may be of personal benefit to some research participants. This is particularly important since participants, for the most part, will include people and activists who are interested in dealing with gender-based violence.

If you are interested or have any questions, please contact me at donicawalton30@gmail.com or my supervisor, Professor Tracey Feltham King, at t.feltham-king@ru.ac.za

Thank you for your time.

Donica Walton

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Start of the interview by thanking the person for their time and to ensure that they have read and understood the consent form. Are you comfortable with me recording this interview?

1) Tell me a little bit about yourself

2) Can you tell me what motivates you to use social media to talk about GBV?

Probes if not answered:

- When did you start?

- Tell me about what you have gained from your engagement? How has that been for you?

- I'm wondering if using social media to talk about GBV has been challenging? How has that been for you?

3) Have you used hashtags? If you have, what has been your experience of it?

4) I am wondering about what kinds of things get spoken about or addressed on social media platforms surrounding sexual assault and gender-based violence? Maybe you can tell me a little bit more about this.

5) Please tell me about some of the discussions that stand out for you.

6) We know that on social media a lot of different opinions are expressed. Can you tell me a little bit about a time when you experienced a difference of opinion (if already mentioned, was there another time?)

7) Tell me about a time there was an expression of a similar opinion to yours? What happened?

8) I know this question seems similar to the previous questions, but tell me a little bit about a time a discussion on social media worked really well.

What do you mean by work well? Anything that you think is an example of something working well. When was it comfortable, when was it positive?

9) Please tell me about a time using social media to talk about gender-based violence did not work really well.

Conclusion: Is there something else you can think about that you think about this topic you would like to share with me? How has this interview process been for you (helpful for my own reflexivity and future interviews)? Is there anything you would like to share with me with how to do this differently?

APPENDIX E

IAN PARKER'S (1992) TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTION (ADAPTED)

SYMBOL	MEANING
( )	Round brackets are an indication of uncertainty that emerges regarding the accuracy of material.
…	Ellipses are an indication of material that has been excluded from the transcript.
[ ]	Square brackets are used to explain something to the reader.
/ /	Forward slashes are an indication of any noises, words of assents and others.
=	Equal signs are used to indicate the absence of a gap between one speaker and another at the end of one statement and the beginning of the next statement.
e.g. (2)	Round brackets with a number inserted are an indication of any pauses in speech. The number in the brackets indicates the duration of the pause in seconds.
(.)	Round brackets with a full stop are used to show any pauses in speech for the duration of less than one second.
: :	Colons are used as an indication of an extended sound in the speech.
_____	The underlining of words is an indication of anything that has been emphasized in the speech.

' '	Single inverted commas are used to show words or phrases that have been quoted (research participants may either quote themselves or others).

Consent Form at the Beginning of the Research Process

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

(Participant)

Project Title: The Narratives of South African Women who use Social Media to Talk about Gender-Based Violence.

Donica Walton from the Department of Psychology, Rhodes University has requested my permission to interview me for the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to explore the narratives of South African women who use social media to engage in discussions about gender-based violence.

2. The Rhodes University Ethics Committee has given ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen the clearance certificate.

3. By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards a growing body of knowledge in South Africa. Research on the relationship between gender-based violence, social media and the experiences of women is important. Women all over the world are using technology as a tool for social activism with regard to violence against women. However, women have different experiences of using this platform because while some are faced with the relief of sharing experiences, others are reminded constantly of their traumatic experiences and the prevalence of gender-based violence. This study will contribute to how literature surrounding such a sensitive topic is approached and ways forward, based on the narratives of women, to continue using social media for positive change.

4. I will participate in the project by doing one in-depth interview with the researcher and the co-researcher present. This interview will be between 1 hour and 1 hour 30 minutes. During this interview I will be expected to share my personal story of using social media platforms to engage in discussions about gender-based violence. I will not be expected to divulge any details of violence I have personally experienced, unless I choose to.

5. I am aware that technical difficulties may be encountered during an online interview. These difficulties will be catered for appropriately. Zoom will be the primary platform for conducting interviews. Should we encounter problems with Zoom, Skype will be used to conduct interviews. Based on my comfortability, the final platform that will be used when encountering technical difficulties will be a WhatsApp call. I will be reimbursed for any data expenses. I am aware that WhatsApp calls are not ideal due to the fact that I may continue receiving messages or calls on my cellphone.

6. During the interview I should place my cellphone on aeroplane mode to avoid being disturbed. In addition, I will notify anyone I live with that I will be unavailable for the duration of the interview and should not be disturbed to ensure that I am in a quiet space. The researcher and co-researcher will make the same arrangements by ensuring that their cellphones are also on aeroplane mode and that they do not get disturbed.

7. I am comfortable sharing my cellphone number in order to restart or reschedule the interviews due to technical difficulties.

8. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed such as data needed for downloading Zoom.

9. There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that:

   a) The following risks are associated with my participation: (i) psychological risks as I am expected to talk about a sensitive topic which may open old wounds; and (ii) loss of confidentiality should I say anything that reveals a threat of bodily harm to myself or those around me.

   b) The following steps have been taken to prevent the risks: (i) the interview will take place at a time suitable for the research participant to ensure that I am emotionally prepared; a debriefing session will take place after the interview; the co-researcher is a registered counselling psychologist who will monitor the emotional tone of the interview and will request a pause should she have concerns; the co-researcher will offer telephonic counselling and onward referral if necessary; and, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences; (ii) should the interview reveal a threat

of violence to self or others that the researchers are obliged to report to the authorities, the interview will be paused and the process for reporting discussed with me.

10. The researcher intends on publishing the research results in the form of a dissertation, conference papers and journal articles. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.

11. I will receive feedback in the form of an email regarding the results obtained during the study should I wish.

12. I will have an opportunity to review the transcripts of the interview to ensure accuracy and to withdraw elements or all of the interview. I will have the opportunity to review the initial analysis to check that no identifying information is present.

13. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by the primary researcher, Donica Walton at donicawalton30@gmail.com, the supervisor, Professor Tracey Feltham-King at t.feltham-king@ru.ac.za, or the co-supervisor, Distinguished Professor Catriona Macleod at c.macleod@ru.ac.za.

14. By signing this informed consent declaration I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.

15. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record. I agree to my interview being audio recorded. I am aware that I have the right to not have the interview recorded. I can request to have the recording of the interview deleted at any time after the interview has been conducted.

16. Electronic records which include the recordings of interviews and the capturing of data will be kept in password protected files. Hard copies will be locked in a cupboard. Additionally, data may be used by other Critical Studies in Sexualities and Reproduction researchers at Rhodes University in the future. These researchers will also be bound by the same ethics principles as outlined in the consent form.

I, …………………………………………………………………….. have read the above information and confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand. I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to

ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.

…………………………….   …………………………   …………………………….

Participants signature   **Witness**   **Date**

Consent Form at the End of the Research Process

1. I ……………………………………….. voluntarily agreed to participate in the above mentioned research study.

2. I am aware that the information I revealed during the interview will be used in the research study.

3. I am aware that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained.

4. I am willing to read through the transcript of my dialogue with the researcher to ensure the researcher's views align with what I said during the interview, ensuring a trustworthy and rigorous qualitative study.

…………………………….   …………………………   …………………………….

Participants signature   **Witness**   **Date**