

Lived Experiences of Women Who Were Sexually Assaulted in the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province, South Africa

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ABSTRACT The purpose of the study was to explore and describe the lived experiences of women who experienced sexual assault in the Vhembe district Limpopo Province, South Africa with an aim of developing a support model. A qualitative, phenomenological, explorative, descriptive design, which is contextual in nature, was used. Population comprised women who experienced sexual assault and reported at the trauma centers. Purposive sampling was used to sample the participants; those who consented completed the forms. Data saturation was reached after interviewing twenty five participants. Ethical principles of conducting research were adhered to. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Venda; Provincial Department of Health in Limpopo province. Permission was also sought from Tshilidzini; Donald Fraser Hospitals; Victim empowerment – Limpopo Province. Findings revealed that sexual assault victims suffered physical, psychological, spiritual trauma and coping problems related to the myths held by the victim, community members and care providers. The conclusion from the research was that although people still have myths related to sexual assault, good interaction between the sexual assault survivors and the care providers including the Justice system can promote effective coping. Recommendations were made for health care providers and nursing education to equip them with knowledge regarding sexual assault and to include sexual assault issues in undergraduate curriculum.