

## Exploring the Nexus between Alcohol Abuse and Rape Cases in Limpopo Province, South Africa

Azwihangwisi N. Mulaudzi<sup>1</sup>, Adewale A. Olutola<sup>2,\*</sup> and Paul O. Bello<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Criminal Justice, School of Law, University of Venda, Thoyandou, Limpopo, South Africa*

*E-mail: azwihangwisi.mulaudzi@univen.ac.za*

<sup>2,\*</sup>*Department of Safety and Security Management, College of Humanities, Tshwane University of Technology, (Soshanguve Campus), Pretoria, South Africa*

*E-mail: olutolaa@tut.ac.za*

<sup>3</sup>*School of Criminal Justice, College of Law, University of South Africa (UNISA), Pretoria, South Africa*

*E-mail: paultosinbello@gmail.com*

**KEYWORDS** Alcohol Abuse. Consumption. Rape. Limpopo. Sexual Assault South Africa

**ABSTRACT** This paper explores the linkage between alcohol abuse and rape cases in Limpopo Province of South Africa. Contemporarily in South Africa, the media is saturated with news and reports of rape incidences. Official police records and crime statistics have also shown an increase in the menace. Although measures were taken by the State to address the menace, they have not really been productive. From the findings of a broader doctoral study, using qualitative method approach, it was discovered that there is a strong linkage between alcohol abuse and rape in Limpopo province. In point of fact, alcohol abuse was reputed as the main causative factor of rape in the province. The researchers also found that despite the increased awareness level of the linkage between alcohol abuse and rape, appropriate actions at combating the menace were found to be weak and ineffective.

### INTRODUCTION

The contribution of alcohol to sexual assault and rape cannot be discussed without also describing the general characteristics of rape (Holloway and Bennett 2018). This paper thus alternates between providing information about rape in general, and contrasting this information with findings regarding alcohol-related rape. A survey conducted in South Africa (SA) (Letsela et al. 2019) found that young women indicated that alcohol advertising and marketing are appealing, and entices them to consume alcohol, including binge drinking. Rape statistics are often published by the police, but such statistics cannot be taken as an accurate measure of either the extent or trend of the crime (Olutola 2012). Moreover, results published in the National Victims of Crime Survey (NVCS) (Statistics South Africa 2015: 66) show an approximately 11 percent decline in the number of sexual offence incidents reported to the police from 2011 to 2014/15; hence, many rape incidents have occurred in several communities in South Africa, that were not reported to the police.

The above scenario is not peculiar to SA alone. Conservative estimates of sexual assault

prevalence suggest that 25 percent of American women have experienced sexual assault, including rape (Muehlenhard et al. 2017). Approximately one half of those cases involve alcohol consumption by the perpetrator, the victim or both. Alcohol contributes to sexual assault through multiple pathways, often exacerbating existing risk factors. Reports have also shown that alcohol consumption has a significant effect on sexual and aggressive behaviour, and stereotypes about drinking women. The effect of alcohol on cognitive and motor skills also contributes to alcohol-related sexual assault. Despite advanced research on the relationship between alcohol consumption and sexual assault, one is yet to see any reduction in the rate of alcohol consumption (Muehlenhard et al. 2016).

Concerted efforts have been made by the South African government and other relevant stakeholders to address alcohol abuse as a major factor fuelling rape incidences in South Africa, including the establishment of structures, public sensitisation and a range of other initiatives (Letsela et al. 2019). Despite these efforts, rape incidences are still on the rise, and alcohol abuse has been labelled as a major causative factor (Anderson 2009).

## Objectives

This study therefore seeks to explore the linkages between alcohol abuse and rape incidences in Limpopo province, South Africa. The study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the nexus between alcohol abuse and rape in SA. It will also provide contextual information on the effect of alcohol abuse that could shape policy formulation in combating this menace in the broader society.

## Literature Review

Alcohol abuse is a pattern of drinking which results in harm to one's health, interpersonal relationships and ability to work. According to Edwards et al. (2020), alcohol abuse is linked to suicide, as well as other serious delinquencies. In this paper, alcohol abuse can be defined as the excessive drinking of alcohol as the driving force to commit crime. Alcohol abuse is not a new phenomenon in several parts of the world, and SA is no exception. Many studies have been carried out on the impacts of alcohol abuse on human health, crime and an increasing level of accidents that have claimed several lives (Edwards et al. 2020; Fritzsche et al. 2020; Möhring et al. 2019; Holloway and Bennett 2018). However, relatively few studies in SA have focused on the nexus between alcohol abuse and rape. In addition, studies that explored the role of the criminal justice system of SA in combating alcohol abuse and rape, are relatively few (Govender et al. 2017).

It is important to note that there are different forms of alcohol consumption. It could be by perpetrators, by perpetrators and victims, and moderate consumption, among others. Alcohol consumption by perpetrators and victims tend to co-occur: when one of them is drinking, the other is generally drinking as well (Gadd et al. 2019). It is rare that only the victim is drinking alcohol. This form of consumption is not surprising, because in social situations (for example, in bars or at parties), drinking tends to be a shared activity (Birditt et al. 2019).

Another form or level of alcohol consumption is moderate consumption. Moderate alcohol consumption has been shown to have significant health benefits, but the disruption caused by alcohol abuse often culminates in family breakdown and crime (Chiva-Blanch and Badimon 2020). This presents policymakers in SA with the dilemma on whether

to encourage moderate consumption of alcohol or promote total abstinence, as the Food-Based Dietary Guidelines for South Africa do not clearly stipulate how much alcohol should be consumed to retain the proposed health benefits attributed to moderate use of alcohol. Hlomani-Nyawasha et al. (2020) note that there are indications that the African population is increasingly prone to alcohol dependency, due to abuse.

The next level of consumption is heavy alcohol consumption. This form of alcohol consumption has often been linked to sexual assault perpetration (Butler et al. 2020). In studies involving two different subject groups (that is, incarcerated rapists and college students), men who reported that they drank heavily (the term 'heavy drinking' is defined differently by each researcher and therefore is used here as cited in the original article) were more likely than other men to report to have committed sexual assault (Abbey et al. 1994). General alcohol consumption could be related to sexual assault through multiple pathways (James and Proulx 2020). Abbey (2011) notes that men with these expectancies may feel more comfortable forcing sex when they are drinking, because they can later justify to themselves that the alcohol made them act accordingly.

Attitudes about women's alcohol consumption also influences perpetrators' actions, and may be used to excuse sexual assault of intoxicated women. Despite the liberalisation of gender roles during the past decades, most people do not really approve of alcohol consumption and sexual behaviour in women. In fact, women who drink alcohol are frequently perceived as being more sexually accessible and promiscuous, compared to women who do not drink (Riemer et al. 2019).

The prevalence of sexual assault (rape), both involving and not involving alcohol use, cannot be accurately determined, because it is usually unreported (Hatcher et al. 2014). Estimates of sexual assault prevalence have been based on a variety of sources, including police reports, random national reports by crime victims, as well as interviews with incarcerated rapists, and intertwined with victims who seek hospital treatment, general population surveys of women, and surveys of male and female college students (Crowell and Burgess 1996). Tourangeau et al. (2019) note that in such studies, the estimated adequacy varies with the sources of information used. One of the

commonest forms of sexual assault, and as used in this study, is rape.

Traditionally, rape is defined as unlawful and intentional sexual intercourse with a female *or male* without her *or his* consent (Snyman 1995: 445). Snyman (1995: 466) describes rape as deliberate, illegal sexual intercourse between a man and a woman without her *or his* consent. However, according to the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007 (South Africa 2007), rape is an act of sexual penetration of a victim, without consent, and constituted by any of the following actions: (1) Someone inserts his or her genital organs into the mouth, anus or genital organs of a victim. (2) Any part of someone's body such as a finger, goes into the anus or genital organs of the victim. (3) Any object, such as a stick, or a bottle, is put into the anus or genital organs of a victim, or the genital organs of an animal are put into the mouth of the victim.

## Theoretical Framework

### *Feminist Theory*

An important theory used in this study is the feminist theory of sexual coercion (Cheever and Eisenberg 2020). This theory holds that all men use rape as a process of intimidation by which all women are kept in a state of fear (Mgolozeli and Duma 2020). From the past to the present, rape and sexual coercion have hindered women's rights to choices and opportunities, sexually and otherwise. Research has shown that one in four women will be a victim of forced sexual acts at least once in their lifetime (Garrido-Macías and Arriaga 2020). In providing valuable explanations of sexual assaults, feminists have argued that a key motivation to engage in sexual activity is the lack of an oestrus cycle in females, thus leaving them open to regular copulation (Hawkesworth 2020).

Furthermore, most feminists believe that sexual coercion is motivated by the desire to exert control over women, and not by lust (Sweeney 2020). Rape, according to feminists, is not necessarily a sexual act, but an act of violence (Sweeney 2020). Violence asserts power, and men use this as a weapon of domination (Sweeney 2020). This theory views rape as emerging from a social framework that emphasises group conflict. Since men have constructed a patriarchal society in which they are the holders

of wealth and power, they engage in behaviours that maintain this control, whether consciously or unconsciously (Kepler 2021).

Banarjee (2020) asserts that any woman may be a victim of rape, despite her appearance, age or status. Thus, any woman can be the target of a rapist, simply because she is female. Besides, most rapists are often the same age as, or younger than, their attacker (Buratai 2021). Similarly, rape victims are typically smaller than their attackers in weight and height (Buratai 2021). This is why rape prevention programmes need to focus on self-defence, since rapists usually target those least likely to effectively resist (Abbey et al. 1994). Moreover, rapists should be handed harsher sentences when found guilty, noting that research finds that where societal regulation and punishment is highest, rape rates are lowest (Ames and Bennett 2011).

Historically, alcohol consumption contributed to the strengthening of the socio-cultural fibre of several communities. Alcohol was also regulated by social rules, and used in moderation. Unfortunately, the pattern has changed. Considering its impact on society, however, being a public health and social problem, particularly its role in the perpetration of sexual assaults and other gender-based crimes, the State is saddled with the responsibility of addressing this malaise (Nyirenda et al. 2020). Although significant efforts have been made by the State in the policy and legislative domain, the impact does not seem to match the extent of the disruption caused by alcohol abuse. Hence, there may be the need to review these policies and strategies for an ensured outcome.

### *Rape Incidences in South Africa*

Rape has become a crime of national concern in SA, to such an extent that foreign countries have labelled this country as the rape capital of the world (Jewkes and Morrell 2010:23). Incidences of rape are high in SA. From a study conducted by the University of Cape Town's Medical Research Council (MRC), it was discovered that "one in three South African women will be raped in their lifetime" (Cloete and Stevens 1993: 229). This is of great concern, because less than one in twenty rape cases are reported to the police, and 40 percent of girls' first sexual experience is non-consensual. The MRC found that rape is the safest crime to commit in SA, because the statistics they

obtained showed that less than 1 percent of rapes are successfully prosecuted (Calhoun et al. 1997: 153; Selepe et al. 2020).

From an earlier study, Martin (1993: 362) identified 1132 rape cases comprising 1013 females (mean age 20.7 years, Standard deviation (SD) 11.2) and 119 males (mean age 11.3 years, SD 8.7). They found that there was substantial clinical evidence of alcohol use in 20.7 percent of rape survivors, and 3.0 percent in drug use survivors. It was also revealed that 33 percent of survivors who had been gang raped had consumed alcohol and drugs. The study found that previous rapes were reported by 6.9 percent of alcohol users, and by 6.3 percent of drug users. In 67.8 percent of the incidences, the perpetrator was known to the survivor. Rape victims who were 15 years old and below, had previously been raped by someone known to them. Physical evidence that was documented in a study carried out, revealed that 10.9 percent of female survivors of rape tested positive for the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) (Dube and Rishi 2017). Of the whole sample, 11.9 percent indicated that they had been raped previously. Among females, virginal rape was reported in 93.7 percent (843/899), and anal rape in 2 percent (18/899), of cases. Anal rape was also reported in all male cases (Dube and Rishi 2017).

A study conducted by Meel (2008: 69) presented the following statistics on the trends of rape in Mthatha, Eastern Cape, South Africa: a total of 2378 victims of sexual assault were seen at Sinawe Centre over a period of six years (2001/2006). The average rate of sexual assault was 198 per 100 000 women a year, with a tenfold increase of sexual assault from 39 per 100 090 women in 2001 to 417 per 100 000 women in 2006. Of the victims, 70.9 were children under the age of 20 years. In total, 46.3 percent were under the age of 16 years, and 22.9 percent were younger than 11 years. Children of five years or younger represented 9.4 percent of sexual assault victims. The least vulnerable age group (1.3 Holloway and Bennett 2018; was those between 46 and 50 years. The minimum cost for successful conviction of a rape case is between R5 000 and R10 000, and does not account for the pain and suffering of the family involved (Meel 2020).

The Sowetan (newspaper) (2013: 17) reported that 64 514 rapes were reported in South Africa during the period 2011/2012. It was also found that

most estimates reveal that 80 to 90 percent of most rapes are not reported to the police (Yesufu 2020). Figures range from one out of every nine, to one out of every twenty-five cases being reported, depending on the society being analysed. The Saturday Star reported that 580 626 rapes were committed in SA in 2012 (Yesufu 2020). This means that one out of every 86 South Africans was raped in 2012, assuming that victims were raped only once and not multiple times. From the above literature, one can deduce that rape in SA is a problem of national concern that requires a joint effort from all stakeholders for it to be addressed (Yesufu 2020). Over the years, the statistics of rape in the country have fluctuated, but such information is often not available to the general public.

Researchers have contended that crimes of a sexual nature (particularly rape) are mostly perpetrated by young men who have little hope of finding meaningful employment, and who feel excluded from society (Peters and Besley 2019). This underscores the fact that unemployment is a major factor fuelling rape in the country (Bello et al. 2017). Arguably, young men who are economically inactive look for alternative means of survival through crimes such as robbery and housebreaking (Peters and Besley 2019). When these crimes are committed, female victims are often raped. At times, young men rape to trigger their masculinity or dominance in the social strata (Schwartz 2021).

Unfortunately, most senior police officials blame poverty, drug addiction and heightened gang activity for spawning a generation of young men with no respect for human life or for women and children. These days, many rapists do not have any regrets after their invasion of the privacy of a woman's body, such as the four students who raped a schoolgirl at the University of Pretoria in 2003 (Malhotra and Sood 2000). The patriarchy that exists among the Black and Afrikaans communities is a major factor that might foster violence against women and children (Govender 1999: 1).

Rape has been categorised as a statutory crime in SA, and has a specified minimum sentence. Reference of this is the Criminal Law Amendment Act 105 of 1997, which provides that life imprisonment shall be imposed, inter alia, in a case of rape where the victim is a girl under the age of 16 years. A mandatory minimum sentence of 15 years is given to any individual who rapes an adult over 18 years. In spite of this law, rape



incidences have persisted, and remain unabated in SA (True and Riveros-Morales 2019). It suffices to say, therefore, that legal measures alone are often inadequate in combating crime (rape) (Wagenaar et al. 2000).

Sexually related crimes (including rape) in SA are often linked to alcohol abuse: many men, in a bid to “get back” at their partners (women) who either disobey them or make them angry, often get drunk to beat them and, ultimately, rape them (Falb et al. 2020).

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study adopted a qualitative approach in gathering data. The choice of approach was premised on the fact that it gives room for a variety of opinions and information relevant to the furtherance of the study. Specifically, a combination of both interview and observation was adopted for the study (Nédélec et al. 2019). A semi-structured interview was the dominant instrument adopted in collecting data for the study.

Data for this study were gathered by means of a cross-sectional survey of participants in three of the five municipalities in Limpopo province (that is, Capricorn, Mopani and Vhembe Districts). Limpopo province ranks fifth in South Africa in terms of surface area and population. It covers an area of 125 754km<sup>2</sup>, with a population of approximately 6million people in 2019, which makes a prominent province in South Africa (Statistics South Africa 2020). Limpopo is situated in the northern part of South Africa, and it shares borders with three Southern African countries, namely - Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Botswana. In addition to its border status, Limpopo is also rich in wildlife and a major agro commercial hub of the country. Its capital Polokwane is the cultural hub of the province, with impressive historical structures and scintillating art exhibitions. Mining and farming are the major economic activities there, and the province is also rich in mineral deposits, which includes metals, iron ore, gold, silicon, chromium, diamonds, phosphate and copper, to mention a few. Major languages spoken in the province includes: Sepedi, Tshivenda and Xitsonga. The province is rich in grassland and trees. All these make Limpopo province a suitable site for this study.

## Sample Size, Sampling Technique and Method of Analysis

A representative sample of 40 participants for this study was derived from the following strata: government officials, particularly members of the Justice, Crime Prevention and Security Cluster – JCPSC), teachers/lecturers, students, unemployed persons, retirees/pensioners, traders, farmers and NGO officials. Purposive and snowballing sampling techniques was adopted for the study. While purposive sampling was useful in selecting participants based on persuasion that they would be able to provide valuable information relevant to the study, snowballing was adopted for referral purposes. A semi-structured interview was adopted, as it allowed for flexibility (Mann 2016). Notably, only 40 participants voluntarily offered to participate in the interview.

To analyse the data, a thematic approach was adopted in analysing the qualitative data. This was done after the initial coding of the raw interview data, after which themes were generated.

## RESULTS

It is imperative to reiterate that a qualitative approach was adopted in this study. From the interview conducted with the study participants, the researchers were able to assign codes to each response. Themes were then generated from the resonating codes for analyses and discussion. Notably, coding was concluded after the third author completed the preliminary review of the data in a bid to identify the dominant themes. Subsequently, an in-depth scrutiny of the interview transcript was performed to collate related data that are in line with the identified themes. The validity of the researchers’ findings was based on credibility, that is, ensuring that the results sufficiently capture the exact or authentic opinions of the research respondents. The credibility of the researchers’ findings was determined by the following factors: participants’ voluntary participation and sincerity, declaration of anonymity by the researchers and confidentiality of information supplied, to mention a few.

## The Prevalence of Alcohol Abuse and Rape

First, the prevalence of alcohol abuse as a causative factor of rape was assessed, based on

participants' perceived level of awareness of community members about the menace of alcohol abuse and its impact on rape in the Limpopo province. This is fundamental, because effective response to crime will likely be built on the prevalence of a social problem and awareness of the public about it. Hence, participants were asked about the prevalence of the menace, and their perceived awareness level of people in their communities, that alcohol abuse is a causative factor of rape incidences in the province.

When asked to rate the awareness level of community members on the pervasiveness of alcohol abuse and its effect on rape in Limpopo, thirty (30) of the forty (40) participants interviewed reported that most of the community members know that alcohol abuse is high, and that it is the main cause of rape in their communities. Three (3) of the remaining ten (10) were indifferent, while the remaining seven (7) suggested a low level of awareness of the menace. The following verbatim replies encapsulate a summary of the participants' views:

*"...Yes, alcohol abuse is the main cause of rape in our townships and people know about these things, and I can tell you that people are aware of it."* (Participant 2, 11 August 2015)

*"...awareness campaigns are not enough to reach everybody. So, the level of awareness is still low..."* (Participant 5, 11 August 2015)

*"I want to say that it will be difficult to estimate the real rate [of] the level of awareness, but I can tell you rape is common here and alcohol is part of the causes."* (Participant 17, 11 August 2015)

*"Well, I would say people are aware of alcohol abuse, but are not aware of its impact on rape."* (Participant 19, 11 August 2015)

*"I am of the view that awareness level is very low. Most communities don't have structures in place except Induna's meetings. Besides, the youth are the mostly the abusers of alcohol these days."* (Participant 5, 11 August 2015)

### **Alcohol Abuse as the Main Causative Factor of Rape**

Another resonating fact that emanated from the collated and coded data, was that participants held the view that alcohol abuse is the main causative factor of rape in the province. From the analysis, an

overwhelming 90 percent of the participants (that is, 36 of the 40 participants) affirmed that alcohol abuse is the main cause of rape in Limpopo province. The remaining 10 percent were of the view that although alcohol abuse is a cause, it is not the main cause. The latter category of participants attributed the main cause of rape in their communities to drug abuse, and others to patriarchy, and specifically masculinity—a situation in which men perceive themselves to be superior to women, and can express their masculine tendencies, including satisfying their libido at will, and remain unchallenged. When asked about their views on the main cause of rape in their communities, the following responses are selections of their opinions:

*"Yes, but in addition to it is drug addiction..."* (Participant 17, 1 September 2015)

*"Yes. Ladies walk alone during the night and get raped."* (Participant 14, 1 September 2015)

*"No. I think men naturally believe they can have their way at any time."* (Participant 19, 3 September 2015)

*"Yes... most victims become vulnerable due to the influence of liquor."* (Participant 27, 4 September 2015)

*"No, because some of the people who have raped were not found to be under the influence of alcohol."* (Participant 33, 1 September 2015)

*"Yes, I believe that alcohol is the main cause of rape."* (Participant 35, 4 September 2015)

*"Yes, it is. Most bars and shebeens contribute to rape and crime generally."* (Participant 39, 4 September 2015)

### **Weakness of Social Institutions**

On the contributory factors to rape incidences in the province, the researchers were interested in evaluating the effects of social institutions in curbing this menace in the country. To this end, the views of the participants were sought to validate the perception that the rising incidences of rape in SA are generally attributed or linked to failure of social institutions in the country.

From the qualitative data, 90 percent of the participants affirmed that the increasing incidences of rape in the country have a direct link to the failure of social institutions in the country, while the remaining 10 percent attributed it to some factors other than the social institutions. A summary of their views is expressed below:

*"...no. They don't just have respect for anything. These kids are very stubborn and the laws seems to pamper and protect them from being corrected or disciplined by their parents."* (Participant 1, 11 August 2015)

*"Yes. Parents leaving their children unattended to and teachers taking advantage of minors at schools."* (Participant 7, 11 August 2015)

*"... yes, and our people these days don't have morals."* (Participant 11, 11 August 2015)

*"Yes, these institutions often affect and shape the attitudes of people whether good or bad."* (Participant 13, 1 September 2015)

*"No, it is not a question of failure from the above institutions. As a matter of fact, most of these guys disrespect these institutions. Most of these people neither go to school nor believe in churches."* (Participant 17, 4 September 2015)

*"Yes, if people are properly guided by the values and teachings from institutions like churches, families, it should decrease..."* (Participant 20, 11 September 2015)

*"Yes, though parents are not the main issue, they contribute to youth behaviours. Late homecoming is not rebuked by parents – they simply don't care. Another issue is the effect of consensus. Democratic rights of these kids are the main problem. Kids no longer listen to their parents; they are going to report to the police that their rights are being violated..."* (Participant 23, 11 September 2015)

*"Yes, parents do not give enough guidance to children about rape and alcohol abuse..."* (Participant 36, 14 September 2015)

*"Yes. Insufficient teachings on alcohol abuse in schools, parents who come home drunk also set a bad example for their children, who will naturally follow in their steps later in life."* (Participant 39, 14 September 2015)

One resonating institution mentioned among the social institutions to have been responsible for the high level of alcohol consumption that resulted in rape, was poor parenting. Hence, there is a linkage between poor parenting and the rising incidence of alcohol abuse in the country.

### **Ineffectiveness of the Justice (Security) Cluster in Combating Alcohol Abuse and Rape**

The State vis-à-vis the justice cluster plays a crucial role in combating rape and its causes,

especially the effect of alcohol abuse in its prevalence. The researchers were thus interested in assessing the effectiveness of the response of the justice cluster in relation to rape, and the effect of alcohol as a causative factor in its perpetration.

It is important to assert that the visibility of police officers and other components of the security cluster does not suggest effectiveness. In contrast, it implies that they have not performed well. Their efforts can be assessed, however. Hence, the perception of the participants on the effectiveness of the security cluster in response to the crime under consideration were assessed. From the qualitative data, 32 participants, representing 80 percent of responses, were of the view that the police and other security clusters have not been effective in combating alcohol abuse and rape in the province. While five (5) participants believed they are effective, the remaining three (3) participants were indifferent. When asked if the justice (security) cluster has been effective in response to alcohol abuse and rape, the following are selections of their views:

*"No...the entire province believes they have failed them...there is crime everywhere, rape, theft, etc..."* (Participant 8, 11 August 2015)

*"No...these people just meet to socialise and drink..."* (Participant 11, 11 August 2015)

*"No. Police are afraid to work because they are no longer covered..."* (Participant 24, 11 September 2015)

*"No...much of their activities are to check compliance..."* (Participant 28, 11 September 2015)

*"Yes, the cluster is doing its best through arrests, but they are not there yet."* (Participant 38, 14 September 2015)

*"Yes, but not absolutely. However, precautionary measures are being put in place in most crime prone areas, yet rape is still on the rise..."* (Participant 39, 14 September 2015)

*"Well, I think the problem is with the victims at times. When they are raped, they feel they can handle it by themselves. So that "I can handle it myself attitude" is destroying the lives of our youth..."* (Participant 40, 28 September 2015)

### **DISCUSSION**

This current study extends previous research on the linkages between alcohol abuse and rape, albeit in South Africa, and at a provincial level.

Specifically, the study explored alcohol abuse and rape, and attempted to establish if there is a connection between alcohol abuse and rape incidences in Limpopo province, South Africa.

The results show that there is a linkage between alcohol abuse and rape in Limpopo. Previous studies lend credence to this (*see* Muehlenhard et al. 2016; Anderson 2012). In addition, the results affirmed that alcohol abuse and rape incidences are rampant in the province, and community members are aware of it. The concern, however, is that if people are aware of it, why has the menace lingered? It is contended that it might not necessarily be that people are not concerned about the effects of the menace on their communities, but that there could be the possibility that actions taken by relevant stakeholders to address the menace have not been effective. It would hence be counterproductive to suggest increasing communities' awareness level of this crime (alcohol abuse) again. It is not meant in any way to downplay or discredit the significance of awareness campaigns in crime prevention, but the government needs to go beyond recycling these overly popular approaches to crime prevention, and address, in a more comprehensive fashion, the precipitating factors fueling this crime in the province. This finding is in agreement with the those found by Letsela et al. (2019), Lee (2018), and Yesufu (2020). For example, Letsela et al. (2019), found that the rate of alcohol abuse and rape have worsened because the precipitating factors that fuel the menace were not addressed.

Fundamentally, alcohol abuse was found to be the main causative factor of rape in Limpopo province. It therefore implies that if the government and other relevant stakeholders are to succeed in their efforts to combat rape incidences in the province, the rate of alcohol consumption, which often results in alcohol abuse, needs to be contained and strictly regulated. Although there are existing structures and regulations in place to control, and possibly limit, alcohol abuse in the province, and indeed in the country, the findings of this study have shown that they are not adequate to stem the tide. Devries et al. (2018) shared similar sentiments. Additionally, the study findings have shown that addressing a perennial problem such as this goes beyond regulations. Regulations at best will only deter people from committing crime, but cannot remove the precipitating or contributory factors that propel the commission

of crime. This is consistent with the summation of Devries et al. (2018).

Although alcohol abuse was found to be the main causative factor of rape, the weakness of social institutions was also reported as a major contributory and/or causative factor of alcohol abuse leading to rape in the province. Therefore, if alcohol abuse is to be addressed, social institutions such as family, schools, government and the media, to mention but a few, will need to become involved. Previous studies on sexual assault indicate that most perpetrators direct their acts towards individuals whom they already know (Devries et al. 2018).

Failure of social institutions was found to promote alcohol abuse. Dysfunctional family settings, the negative side of the media (including social media), failure of government to provide satisfactory service delivery, as well as peer pressure, to mention a few, usually influence drinking patterns and alcohol addiction. The gaps created by these social institutions often shape the psychosocial composition of people, regardless of whether they are the victims or the rapists. For instance, the erosion of cultural values created by modernisation through the media, and as a result of globalisation, has resulted in the creation of a new crop of people who view things mostly in contrast to the established societal norms. For instance, previous studies have shown that there are instances where females were raped because they dressed in a provocative manner (Devries et al. 2018; Jewkes and Morrell 2010).

The findings also revealed that the responses of the South African government in preventing alcohol abuse and rape in Limpopo province have been largely ineffective. This may likely be attributed to the failure of government to find enduring solution to causative factors of the crime. These factors were enumerated in the previous paragraph; therefore, it is important to note that unless the causes (particularly the root causes) of alcohol abuse are addressed, strict laws and other regulatory tactics will only provide a temporary solution (Falb et al. 2020; Peters and Besley 2019).

Although the researchers' findings have significant implications for effective response to combating gender-based violence in Limpopo province, it also has some theoretical implications. Importantly, it underscores that beyond addressing the precipitating factors that engender alcohol



abuse, which results in rape, there may be the need to consider and possibly adopt some of the submissions from the feminist school of thought. For instance, feminist theorists averred that men often use rape as a means of intimidation to keep all women in a state of fear (Mgolozeli and Duma 2020). The factor of intimidation comes to play here, and needs to be addressed. Therefore, an effective prevention programme as posited by Buratai (2021) should also focus on self-defence, since most rapists usually target those least likely to resist them. Young ladies and women should be trained in self-defence, and should avoid walking or travelling on deserted or dangerous paths, especially at night. Additionally, harsher sentences should be handed down to rapists as a form of deterrence. This position is supported by Ames and Bennett (2011).

### CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the linkages between alcohol abuse and rape in Limpopo, South Africa. This was propelled by the assumption that rape incidences are intricately linked to alcohol abuse. The current findings lend credence to this assumption, and support previous related literature and research. Although the findings of the current study hold implications for an effective response to alcohol abuse and rape incidences in Limpopo, it is not immune to shortcomings.

First, this study is basically cross-sectional, since it did not cover all the districts in Limpopo. Moreover, the sample size was, relatively, not large enough to cover the entire population of Limpopo or the various strata in the province. Hence, the findings should be considered with caution. Future studies may adopt a longitudinal survey approach with a larger sample size, to cover areas not covered in this study, for a more accurate inference. Nevertheless, all these limitations do not detract from the value of this study, or its contribution to the knowledge base.

Importantly, the current findings point explicitly to the criticality of understanding the complexity of the factors that engender alcohol abuse, which, in turn, causes or promotes rape in the province. Such understanding is imperative for any intervention to be productive and enduring.

Worthy of note is that a special focus on social institutions might be a panacea for the menace of rape. This is borne out by the findings that the

South African government's efforts at combating alcohol abuse as a causative factor in rape, have not been effective, as it is impracticable for the state to achieve substantial and meaningful results without concentrating on the role of social institutions. Although the government might have partnered with some social institutions, dysfunctional family settings, as found in the study, are inimical to an enduring intervention. This is attributed to the fact that studies have shown that most heavy drinkers (alcohol abusers) are from dysfunctional family settings. It is therefore important for structures to be put in place to address this notable gap in the socio-cultural structure of society. If the government could focus on this aspect, in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders, it will have an enduring effect in the reduction of alcohol abuse and rape incidences in the province of Limpopo.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

From the foregoing, it is obvious that effective response to alcohol abuse which often leads to rape in Limpopo requires an inclusive approach. Such approach requires a collective action, and support of all relevant stakeholders, including the social institutions. Although stricter punitive measures will go a long way in stemming the tides, the focus should be on harsher sentences for rapist and alcohol abusers. Beyond this, a vibrant structure should be established by the government of Limpopo to train women in self-protection. Pepper sprays and other defensive instruments should also be supplied to women (although under strict conditions) to enable them protect themselves when in difficult situations that threatens their lives. Stricter regulatory measures should also be introduced to regulate alcohol consumption and purchase in the province. Above all, female gender should avoid travelling at night, or walking alone in deserted and dangerous pathways.

### REFERENCES

- Abbey A 2011. Alcohol's role in sexual violence perpetration: Theoretical explanations, existing evidence and future directions. *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 30(5): 481-489.
- Abbey A, Ross LT, McDuffie D 1994. Alcohol's role in sexual assault. In: Antonia Abbey, Lisa Thomson Ross, Donna McDuffie (Eds.): *Addictive Behaviors in Women*. Totowa, NJ: Humana Press, pp. 97-123.

- Ames GM, Bennett JB 2011. Prevention interventions of alcohol problems in the workplace: A review and guiding framework. *Alcohol Research & Health*, 34(2): 175-187.
- Anderson P 2012. *The Impact of Alcohol on Health- Alcohol in the European Union: Consumption, Harm and Policy Approaches*. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe, 5-9.
- Banarjee S 2020. Identifying factors of sexual violence against women and protection of their rights in Bangladesh. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 52: 101384.
- Bello B, Moultrie H, Somji A, Chersich MF, Watts C, Delany-Moretlwe S 2017. Alcohol use and sexual risk behaviour among men and women in inner-city Johannesburg, South Africa. *BMC Public Health*, 17(3): 65-75.
- Birditt KS, Polenick CA, Antonucci TC 2019. Drinking together: Implications of drinking partners for negative marital quality. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 80(2): 167-176.
- Buratai HA 2021. Effect of rape on physical and psychological aspects of girl child in Northern Nigeria. *Journal of Gynecology Research Reviews and Reports*, 3(1): 1-4.
- Butler LC, Fisher BS, Reynolds BW 2020. Does change in binge drinking reduce risk of repeat sexual assault victimization? Evidence from three cohorts of freshman undergraduate women. *Crime & Delinquency*, 1-24.
- Calhoun KS, Bernat JA, Clum GA, Frame CL 1997. Sexual coercion and attraction to sexual aggression in a community sample of young men. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 12(3): 392-406.
- Cheever J, Eisenberg ME 2020. Team sports and sexual violence: Examining perpetration by and victimization of adolescent males and females. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 1-23.
- Chiva-Blanch G, Badimon L 2020. Benefits and risks of moderate alcohol consumption on cardiovascular disease: Current findings and controversies. *Nutrients*, 12(1): 1-19.
- Crowell N, Burgess AW 1996. *Violence Against Women*. Washington, D.C: National Science Academy.
- Devries K, Knight L, Petzold M, Merrill KG, Maxwell L, Williams A, Cappa C, Chan KL, Garcia-Moreno C, Hollis N, Kress H, Peterman A, Walsh SD, Kishor S, Guedes A, Bott S, Riveros BC, Watts C, Abrahams N 2018. Who perpetrates violence against children? A systematic analysis of age-specific and sex-specific data. *BMJ Paediatrics Open*, 2(1): 1-15.
- Dube RS, Rishi S 2017. Utilizing the salutogenic paradigm to investigate well-being among adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse and other adversities. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 66: 130-141.
- Edwards AC, Ohlsson H, Sundguist A, Sundguist K, Kendler KS 2020. Alcohol use disorder and risk of suicide in a Swedish population-based cohort. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 177(7): 627-634.
- Falb K, Asghar K, Pardo NM, Hategekimana JDD, Kakay H, Roth D, O'Connor M 2020. Developing an inclusive conceptual model for preventing violence in the home in humanitarian settings: Qualitative findings from Myanmar and the Democratic Republic of Congo. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 1-30.
- Fritzsche K, Monsalve SD, Schweickhardt A, Abbo C, Chen FKY, Nguyen KV, Nguyen VT 2020. Dependence Syndrome. In: K Fritzsche, SH McDaniel, M Wirsching (Eds.): *Psychosomatic Medicine: An International Guide for the Primary Care Setting*. Cham: Springer, pp. 215-229.
- Gadd D, Henderson J, Radcliffe P, Stephens-Lewis D, Johnson A, Gilchrist G 2019. The dynamics of domestic abuse and drug and alcohol dependency. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 59(5): 1035-1053.
- Garrido-Macias M, Arriaga XB 2020. Women are not swayed by sugar-coated acts of verbal sexual coercion. *Personal Relationships*, 27(2): 251-273.
- Govender I, Nel K, Sibuyi XM 2017. An investigation into alcohol use among female undergraduate psychology students at the University of Limpopo, South Africa. *Journal of Psychology*, 8(1): 43-53.
- Govender P 1999. Child Rape: A Taboo Within The AIDS Taboo. *Sunday Times*, 4 April, P. 1.
- Hatcher AM, Colvin CJ, Ndlovu N, Dworkin SL 2014. Intimate partner violence among rural South African men: Alcohol use, sexual decision-making, and partner communication. *Culture, Health and Sexuality – An International Journal for Research and Care*, 16(9): 1023-1039.
- Hawkesworth M 2020. Theorizing gender power and gendered institutions: Sexual harassment and resistance to feminist activism. In: S Fenstermaker, AJ Stewart (Eds.): *Gender, Considered-Feminist Reflections Across the US Social Sciences*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 77-105.
- Hlomani-Nyawasha TJ, Meyer-Weitz A, Egbe CO 2020. Factors influencing alcohol use among female in-school adolescents in the Western Cape, South Africa. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 50(4): 574-586.
- Holloway K, Bennett T 2018. Alcohol-related rape among university students. *Victims and Offenders: An International Journal of Evidence-based Research, Policy, and Practice*, 13(4): 471-486.
- James J, Proulx J 2020. Theories that explain sexual aggression against women. In: J Proulx, F Cortoni, LA Craig, EJ Letourneau (Eds.): *The Wiley Handbook of What Works with Sexual Offenders: Contemporary Perspectives in Theory, Assessment, Treatment, and Prevention*. Wiley Online Library, pp.1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119439325.ch1>
- Jewkes R, Morrell R 2010. Gender and sexuality: Emerging perspectives from the heterosexual epidemic in South Africa and implications for HIV risk and prevention. *Journal of the International AIDS Society*, 13(1): 6.
- Kepler C 2021. Entangled crossroads: Inter-relationship, masculinity, and sex-trafficked boys. *Feminist Theology*, 29(2): 187-203.
- Lee MJ 2018. College students' responses to emotional anti-alcohol abuse media messages: Should we scare or amuse them? *Health Promotion Practice*, 19(3): 465-474.
- Letsela L, Weiner R, Gafos M 2019. Alcohol availability, marketing, and sexual health risk amongst urban and rural youth in South Africa. *AIDS Behavior*, 23: 175-189.
- Malhotra N, Sood M 2000. Sexual assaults: A neglected public health problem in the developed world. *International Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, 71: 257-256.
- Mann S 2016. *The Research Interview-Reflective Practice and Reflexivity*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Martin SE 1993. *Alcohol and Interpersonal Violence: Fostering Multidisciplinary Perspectives*. Washington, DC: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.
- Meel B 2008. Trends of rape in the Mthatha area, Eastern Cape, South Africa. *South African Family Practice*, 50(1): 69-69b.
- Meel B 2020. Complexity of dual employment in Department of Health and University, South Africa. *Indian Journal of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology*, 14(4): 632-636.
- Mgolozeli SE, Duma SE 2020. "They all laughed and asked me if I enjoyed having sex with those guys": Exploring

- men's lived experiences when reporting rape to police in South Africa. *PLoS ONE*, 15(8): 1-31.
- Möhring AJ, Rumpf H, Hapke A, Bischof G, John U, Meyer C 2019. Diagnostic performance of the alcohol use disorders identification test (AUDIT) in detecting DSM-5 alcohol use disorders in the general population. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 204: 1-7.
- Muehlenhard CL, Humphreys TP, Jozkowski KN, Peterson ZD 2016. The complexities of sexual consent among college students: A conceptual and empirical review. *Journal of Sex Research*, 53(4-5): 457-487.
- Muehlenhard CL, Peterson ZD, Humphreys TP, Jozkowski KN 2017. Evaluating the one-in-five statistic: Women's risk of sexual assault while in college. *Journal of Sex Research*, 54(4/5): 549-576.
- Nédélec M, Leduc C, Dawson B, Guilhem G, Dupont G 2019. Case study: Sleep and injury in elite soccer – a mixed method approach. *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research*, 33(11): 3085-3091.
- Nyirenda L, Kumar MB, Theobald S 2020. Using research networks to generate trustworthy qualitative public health research findings from multiple contexts. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 20: 13.
- Olutola AA 2012. Long-term crime prevention and the criminal justice systems of Nigeria and South Africa: A hopeless hope? *Acta Criminologica/Southern African Journal of Criminology (CRIMSA)*, 2012(2): 17-30.
- Peters MA, Besley T 2019. Weinstein, sexual predation, and 'rape culture': Public pedagogies and hashtag Internet activism. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 51(5): 458-464.
- Riemer AR, Gervais SJ, Skorinko JLM 2019. She looks like she'd be an animal in bed: Dehumanization of drinking women in social contexts. *Sex Roles*, 80: 617-629.
- Schwartz MD 2021. Masculinities, sport, and violence against women: The contribution of male peer support theory. *Violence Against Women*, 27(5): 688-707.
- Selepe M, Lindegger G, Govender K 2020. Discourses in accounts of rape by sex offenders in Limpopo province, South Africa. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 12: 1-12.
- Snyman CR 1995. *Criminal Law*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Durban: Butterworths.
- South Africa 1997. *Criminal Law Amendment Act 105 of 1997*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- South Africa 2007. *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Statistics South Africa 2020. *Mid-Year Population Estimates 2019*. Statistics South Africa.
- Statistics South Africa 2015. *Victims of Crime Survey 2014/15*. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa.
- Stevens R, Cloete MGT 1993. *Introduction to Criminology*. Johannesburg: International Thomson Publishing.
- Sweeney BN 2020. Gender-based violence and rape culture. In: NA Naples (Ed.): *Companion to Women's and Gender Studies*. London: John Wiley and Sons, pp. 285-302.
- The Sowetan (newspaper) 2013. Deep Scars of Abuse. From <<https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/south-africa/2013-01-31-deep-scars-of-abuse/>> (Retrieved on 14 August 2021).
- Tourangeau R, Yan T, Sun H 2019. Who can you count on? Understanding the determinants of reliability. *Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology*, 8(5): 903-931.
- True J, Riveros-Morales Y 2019. Towards inclusive peace: Analysing gender-sensitive peace agreements 2000–2016. *International Political Science Review*, 40(1): 23-40.
- Wagenaar AC, Murray DM, Toomey TL 2000. Communities mobilizing for change on alcohol (CMCA): Effects of randomized trial on arrests and crashes. *Addiction*, 95(2): 209-217.
- Yesufu S 2020. Child sexual violence in South Africa. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 17(2): 136-155.

---

**Paper received for publication in August, 2021**  
**Paper accepted for publication in September, 2021**