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# Violence and Exploitation against Women and Girls

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# Lack of Mutual Respect in Relationship

## The Endangered Partner

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**ABSTRACT:** Violence in a relationship and in a family setting has been an issue of concern to various interest groups and professional organizations. Of particular interest in this article is violence against women in a relationship. While there is an abundance of knowledge on violence against women in general, intimate or partner femicide seems to have received less attention. Unfortunately, the incidence of violence against women, and intimate femicide in particular, has been an issue of concern in the African setting.

This article examines the trends of intimate femicide in an African setting in general, and in Botswana in particular. The increase in intimate femicide is an issue of concern, which calls for collective effort to address. This article also examines trends of femicide in Botswana, and the antecedents and the precipitating factors. Some studies have implicated societal and cultural dynamics as playing significant roles in intimate femicide in the African setting. It is believed that the patriarchal nature of most African settings and the ideology of male supremacy have relegated women to a subordinate role. Consequently, respect for women in any relationship with men is lopsided in favor of men and has led to abuse of women, including intimate femicide. Other militating factors in intimate femicide are examined and the implications for counseling to assist the endangered female partner are discussed.

**KEYWORDS:** violence; domestic; women; intimate partner; femicide; Africa; Botswana

### INTRODUCTION

One of the key points of the manifesto for the 2000 International Year of the Culture of Peace is respect for the life and dignity of each human being without discrimination or prejudice and to practice active non-violence, rejecting all violence in all its forms: physical, sexual, psychological, economical, and social.

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It is anticipated that this respect for the individual and nonviolence become more imperative when two people have entered into a relationship.

One way to show respect in a relationship is to recognize the individuality of the two people involved in the relationship and according one another the regard expected in the relationship. Conflict, separation, and loss are a common source of crisis in a significant relationship. These situations make one of the partners or in some cases both partners become dysphonic, angry, and agitated.

Partners experiencing difficulties in relationships may decide to take revenge on the partner or engage in deliberate self-destructive behavior out of anger, hopelessness, or a desire to retaliate against the other partner. Relationships carry the risk of not only physical injury but also death, either homicide or suicide. Male violence on females is more common possibly due to masculinity of the male characterized by size and strength; consequently, this article focuses on male to female extreme violence.

Partner violence affects many aspects of a victim's life. Battered women have been found to suffer from depression and anxiety (Saunders, Hamberger & Hovey 1993). Battered women can be conceptualized as being in a relatively constant state of stress. They are always vigilant for the signs of impending attack, constantly engage in violence-avoidant behaviors, and are constantly at risk for further abuse.

Rosenbaum and O'Leary (1981) assert that partner violence is related to relationship distress. Dattilio (1994) noted that violent relationships are in crisis even when no violence is occurring as the victims live in fear and terror and suffer physical and psychological injury.

## INTIMATE FEMICIDE

The killing of women by intimate partners (also known as intimate female homicide) is the most extreme form and consequence of violence against women. Globally, gender differences are found in homicide patterns. Men are at greater risk of being killed than women, and this is mainly done by other men. Women, on the other hand, are primarily killed by the opposite gender (Goetting, 1988). The murder of women by an intimate partner accounts for between 40% and 70% of all female homicides (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002).

This form of violence has received very little attention and the few studies that have been conducted have been mainly in developed countries. The only previous study conducted in South Africa was a pilot study in the Gauteng Region by Vetten (1996). Despite its limitations, this research finding has been used extensively in advocacy campaigns.

International studies reveal that intimate femicide is linked to a history of domestic violence with the risk increasing at the threat of separation or actual separation (Wilson & Daly, 1993; Campbell, Webster, Kozol-McLain, Block, Campbell, *et al.*, 2003).

While there is a vast body of knowledge on violence against women, intimate femicide, the most severe form of violence, has received little attention. This is alarming because statistics show that when a woman is killed, the perpetrator is often a man who has been intimately involved with her (Campbell, 1992; Crawford & Gartner, 1992; Stout, 1991; Statistics Canada, 1991, 1989; U.S. Department of Justice, 1992).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF FEMICIDE

According to Russel and Harmes (2001), the concept of femicide specifically designates the killing of females by males (or in some situations by females) because they are female. To a certain extent, this definition challenges the popular conception that the murder of a woman or a girl is a private affair or a pathological aberrance. Furthermore, it highlights the understanding that when men kill women, power dynamics, and specifically the power dynamics underscoring misogyny or sexism, are always implicated. The killing of a woman by her partner is seen as femicide because it has to do with power and control: batterers kill not because they lose control (of themselves, as the "passion" explanation of the murder suggests), but because they want to exert control over their partner. Thus, symptomatically, women are at more risk of being killed just after leaving their partner. This can be seen as an extreme manifestation of particular men's attempts to assert their ownership and control of the sexuality and reproductive capacity of their female partners (Wilson & Daly, 1992).

### *The Influence of Social Evolution and Intimate Femicide*

In her ecological analysis, Stout (1992) examines intimate partner homicide in various states in the United States and notes that intimate femicide tends to decrease under the following conditions:

- (1) when the economic situation of women is "average" (neither very favorable nor very unfavorable);
- (2) in states that promote gender equality and social justice for women and;
- (3) when shelters for abused women exist.

Furthermore, Stout (1992) observes that after a period of substantial expansion in services for abused women, men's risk of being killed by their intimate partners decreased significantly. However, women's risk of being killed did not. Thus, the expansion of services may have resulted in the protection of abusive men from defensive violence by their female partners without succeeding in protecting women from the violence of their male partners (Gartner, Dawson, & Crawford, 2001).



As noted above, the traditional indicators of homicide generally are better predictors of female, rather than male intimate partner homicide. There is only one exception: population density is negatively related to the rate of female intimate homicide, perhaps because the lack of population density provides a greater barrier to assistance and community support that could help abused women before lethal violence occurs (Jensen, 1996).

### *A Psychodynamic Explanation of Intimate Femicide*

To understand the process leading to intimate partner homicide from a psychodynamic angle, one must articulate two broad fields of thinking: the dynamics of violence and the dynamics of object relations.

#### *Freud and Love*

In Freud's basically pessimistic view, the existence of violence is hardly exceptional in any kind of interpersonal relationship: "The evidence of psychoanalysis shows that almost every emotional relation between two people which lasts for some time—marriage, friendship, the relations between parents and children—leaves a sediment of feelings of aversion and hostility, which only escapes perception as a result of repression" (Freud, 1921). To explain this ambivalence, Freud, in *Group Psychology and the Psychology of the Ego*, makes reference to the numerous occasions of conflict of interest that arise in intimate relationships. *En passant*, his preoccupation with intimacy is intertwined with thoughts about how small differences lead groups to hostility: one cannot form a group (or a couple) without accepting a limitation of one's narcissism, and if a group or a couple lasts, a tension will always remain between similarities and differences, narcissism and libidinal bonds.

In the same paper, Freud analyzes love as idealization, meaning that a considerable amount of narcissistic libido overflows onto the object until, at last, it takes possession of the entire self-love of the ego: the object has been put in the place of the Ego Ideal, as in hypnosis, and unlike in identification (in which the object is put in the place of the Ego). But this idealization coexists with what he referred to earlier as the universal tendency to debasement in the sphere of love: two currents, affectionate and sensual, have to be united. For instance, some men cannot express sexuality but with a debased object, which means a splitting of the two currents, between mother and whore. Freud however does not provide any examples of women considering men as debased objects. Instead, he argues (somewhat neutrally) that, "there are only very few educated people in whom the two currents of affection and sensuality have become properly fused" (Freud, 1912).

To better understand intimate femicides, a binary model is proposed. Within this model, intimate femicide is understood as having two different origins;

one involves the murder of an oppressed woman who attempted to emancipate herself and the other is an actual or attempted murder/suicide in which a socially inept and dependent man kills his liberated and independent partner. This model thus divides intimate murders into those who attempted or committed suicide immediately after killing their partner and those who did not (Kerry, 1998).

The binary model follows these two groups of men through five stages. *Stage I*, termed "Pre-Murder," explores how the men define their masculinity, attitudes toward women, and their relationship with female partners. *Stage II*, the "Precipitating Event," highlights what triggered the ensuing murder in the perpetrator's mind. *Stage III*, the "Lethal Act," considers the actual attack and murder. *Stage IV*, the "Post-Murder," explores the time interval immediately following murder. Finally, *Stage V*, "Adjustment to Incarceration," focuses on the man as he serves his sentence and his present views toward the victim and the offence.

To evaluate the binary model and to identify variables that may differentiate between men who kill their female partner and men who do not, Kerry (1998) administered questionnaires to 86 men sentenced for the murder of an intimate partner (Intimate Murders), 151 randomly selected men sentenced for an offense other than the murder of an intimate partner (General Offenders), and 100 randomly selected nonincarcerated men.

No significant differences were observed between Intimate Murderers and General Offenders in the 24-h period before the offense. However, there is intensification in feelings of dysphasia and anger just before, and more so during, the offense that sets the intimate murders apart from other offenses. This finding may explain the intense violence often found in intimate murders.

## INTIMATE FEMICIDE IN SOUTH AFRICA

The findings in South Africa were as indicated by Mathews, Abrahams, Martin, Van der Merwe, *et al.* in 2004. The findings were as follows:

- 8.8 per 100,000 women 14 years and older were killed by an intimate partner in 1999;
- The above statistic amounts to 4 women killed per day by an intimate partner; or
- 1 woman killed every 6 hours by an intimate partner; and
- 1 in every 2 women killed by a known perpetrator is killed by an intimate partner.

Some of the recommendations to curtail intimate femicide in general include:

- (1) introduction of law of evidence to be reformed to allow previous history of domestic violence to be introduced in court to establish that homicide is the culmination of a pattern of violence;

- (2) gun control to be vigorously reinforced; and
- (3) efforts to reduce domestic violence to be prioritized.

### INTIMATE FEMICIDE IN BOTSWANA

It has been observed lately that Botswana is experiencing an increase in the problem of violence against women (Maundeni, 2001). This wave of intimate femicide is called "passion killing" in Botswana. This passion killing is directed at females, where either a husband or boyfriend decides to kill the female partner.

A report on intimate partner femicide in Botswana was published by Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF, 1995). The report listed names of 46 women killed by their husbands or lovers between 1985 and 1991. From January to October 2005, 69 women were victims of passion killing in Botswana compared to 56 cases reported in 2004.

The wrong impression is given that people kill because they love. The President of Botswana, His Excellency Festus Mogae, has appealed to the nation on national television to stop romanticizing this act of murder labeled "passion killing."

Some of the factors implicated as encouraging intimate femicide are Botswana is the patriarchal nature of the society, which Njoroge (1997) has described as a destructive powerhouse with systemic and normative inequalities as its hallmark.

Consequently, violence directed toward women labeled as passion killing is viewed as a sign of patriarchal crisis, which should be seen as outdated and dangerous (Gabaitse, 2005).

In a study by Moagi-Gulubane (2003) on intimate partner violence among Botswana college students concluded that almost half of the participants reported having been psychologically abusive to their girlfriends. As psychological aggression has been implicated as the precursor of physical assault in intimate relationship (Follinstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause, & Polek, 1990), it sounds logical to look critically at the persistence of violence in relationship as a possible precursor of "passion killing" in Botswana.

In recognition of the magnitude of intimate femicide referred to as "passion killing" in Botswana, and in fulfillment of its national mandate, the Criminal Justice Consultative Committee (NCJCC) has decided to address the issue of "passion killings" in Botswana. The NCJCC is a forum comprised of law enforcement institutions and is very concerned about the spate and trend of passion killing in the country.

Consequently, in a letter to the Vice-Chancellor at the University of Botswana, the NCJCC requested that the university assist in identifying "a researcher" to research and determine the wider variables causing the problem of the so-called "passion killing" in the country.

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor B.K. Otlhogile, Professor I.N. Mazonde, the Director of the Office of Research and Development (ORD), and Dr. J. Malete, also of ORD at the University of Botswana, in response to the request from NCJCC, established a multidisciplinary research team to undertake the research requested by NCJCC. The team included K. Frimpong, A.A. Alao, R.M. Gabaitse, S. Moagi-Gulubane, T. Maundeni, R. Mokomane, G. Mookodi, and L.B. Tutwane. It is anticipated the study will contribute immensely to understanding the issues relating to intimate femicide in Botswana.

## **RELATIONSHIP ISSUES AND COUNSELING IMPLICATIONS**

While it is not unusual for one to experience difficulties when in a relationship, it is important to seek ways to resolve such difficulties through personal development or counseling. Professional help can make individuals in relationships understand the dynamics of relationships, how to grow in relationships, and how to resolve and adjust to different relationship issues. When help is not sought, difficulties experienced in relationships can become compounded with disastrous consequences, including intimate femicide.

Seeking and receiving help when in a relationship difficulty or crisis can help prevent intimate femicide. Individuals experiencing relationship difficulties or distress need to seek help and should be assisted.

## **THE ROLE OF RESPECT IN A RELATIONSHIP**

For any relationship to succeed, the two partners need to view each other as a person of worth. The male partner especially must like the female partner as she is. Her rights need to be respected. To reduce unnecessary violence in the relationship, the female partner needs to be allowed to possess and express her feelings. Male partners need to accept their female partners for who they are to limit the incidence of violence in the relationship.

Respect in a relationship entails recognizing the separateness of individuals, the right of each person to utilize his or her experience in his or her own way, and to discover his or her own meaning is a priceless possibility in life (Van Pelt, 1980). While it is true that most African societies tend to be patriarchal in nature, it is equally important that acceptance and respect in a relationship can help to improve such relationship and reduce violence if the male partner recognizes:

- (1) that there are no perfections in relations;
- (2) that both partners in a relationship may have areas of the relationship that need changing; and
- (3) that accepting each person totally will reduce potential sources of conflict and violence.



Concerted efforts need to be made, especially by the male partner, to develop acceptance in the relationship.

In developing acceptance, Van Pelt (1980) stressed the need to:

- (1) recognize a self-righteous attitude;
- (2) allow freedom to express self;
- (3) concentrate on good points; and
- (4) express acceptance in words.

Ensuring peace in the society must begin with ensuring peace at its lowest level, in relationships between two individuals. If we cannot cultivate cordial relationships at the level of two individuals, it may be difficult to extend cordial relationships to the larger society. Peace in the society must begin with peace in the home and in a relationship. There should be better ways of viewing our differences or resolving our problems in a relationship than resulting to violence or intimate femicide.

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