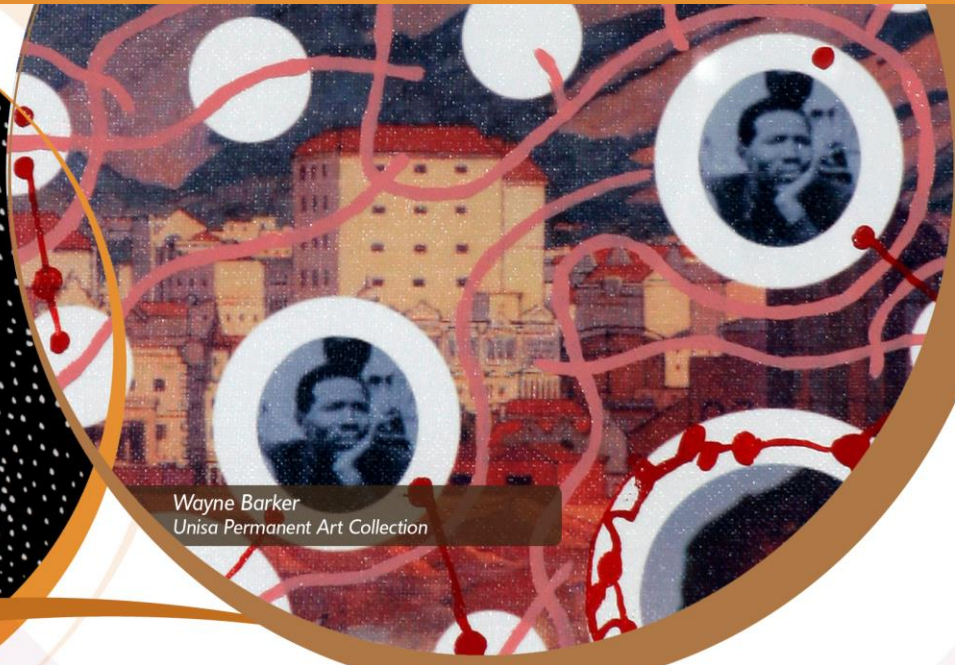


# ***“I had to explain the situation again and again to her”*: An exploration of the healthcare-seeking experiences of raped men in South Africa**



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Unisa Permanent Art Collection



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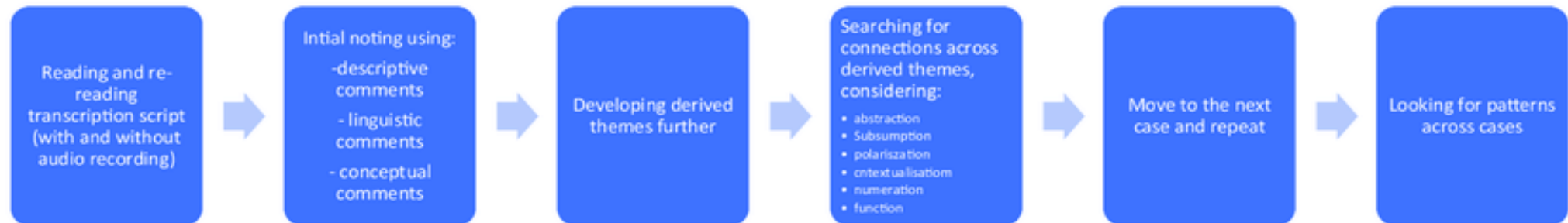
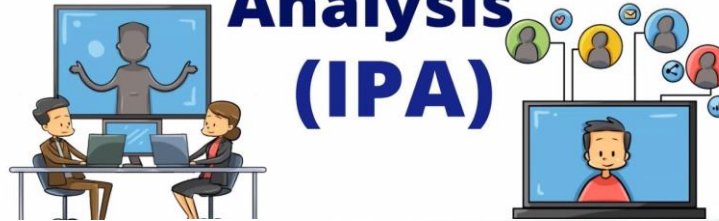
# Introduction

- Rape is a social, economic, and public health problem affecting the world today, and South Africa continues to be labeled as the rape capital of the world due to its alarming statistics on this scourge.
- Although it is largely reported as a phenomenon that affects mostly women and children, there is plenty of evidence in both high-income and low-income countries that this scourge severely affects men as well.
- In South Africa recently, the Criminal (Sexual Offences) Act of 2007 also makes provisions for the recognition of rape victimization of men by other men or women.
- However, the subject of rape victimization of men has not yet been given serious attention by many scholars, media, and politicians.
- There is a dearth of literature on healthcare-seeking experiences of raped men.
- This study sought to explore, analyze and interpret the healthcare-seeking experiences of raped men.

# Methods



## Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)



# Snapshot of participants/ sample characteristics

- The sample comprised of eleven adult men, whose age ranged between 18 and 65 years.
- Two participants were widowed, two were single, one was married, five reported they were in heterosexual relationships and one reported being in a gay relationship.
- Three participants identified as gay men, and eight identified themselves as heterosexuals or straight men.
- Ten participants were black, and one participant was white.

# Findings

| Superordinate Themes                                   | Subordinate Themes   |
|--|--|
| <b>1. Enablers for seeking-healthcare</b>              | Fears of contracting HIV and STIs<br>Quest for HIV prophylaxis<br>Heightened desire to be checked and get help for physical injuries suffered from rape<br>Enhanced quest to talk to a healthcare professional and get information about rape<br>Family support            |
| <b>1. Positive Experiences When Seeking-Healthcare</b> | Experience of being cared for in a humanly environment<br>Experience of being treated with respect and dignity<br>Engagement in informative counselling for HIV and trauma<br>Receipt of PEP for HIV- a breakthrough   |
| <b>1. Negative Experiences When Seeking-Healthcare</b> | Disparaging behavior of healthcare professionals in emergency units<br>Being made to repeat the story several times<br>Delayed access to healthcare in prisons<br>Prolonged waiting periods in post-rape care facilities<br>Unfriendly and uncaring attitude of healthcare |

# Theme 1: Enablers for seeking-healthcare

## Subordinate Themes

## Verbatim Quotations

### Fears of contracting HIV and STIs

“I got more and more worried and the only thing that was ringing in my mind was what if those guys were sick and what would happen if they did not use condoms? What will happen because I did not see them wearing condoms? Yeah, I had deep thoughts about this thing, and I started to panic...I was not comfortable to an extent that I decided to go see a doctor.... that’s when I decided to go to the hospital to get help.” (Abed, aged 22 years, gang raped by four strange men)

### Quest for HIV prophylaxis

“So, I just wanted help from the clinic because they have pills to help so that I don’t get AIDS, so that’s why I went to the clinic” (Lifa, aged 65 years, gang raped by strange three women)

### Heightened desire to be checked and get help for physical injuries suffered from rape

“I wanted to be checked for my health first. I wanted to be helped because my body had pains all over. My ass [anus] was very sore and bleeding, so I also wanted to be checked by the doctor, that’s why I came here” (Rori, aged 25 years, raped by three strange men)

### Enhanced quest to talk to a healthcare professional and get information about rape

“Eeh yeah but I felt like I will never live with it, I will die, so I desperately needed information on how to deal deal with this threat. So, I decided to go to the hospital to consult doctors and nurses because of that night” (Abed, aged 22 years, gang raped by four strange men)

### Family support

“I told my sister and my cousins about this because they know everything about me, including the fact that I’m gay, so they said I must come to the clinic to get help.” (Khanya, aged 27, raped by an acquaintance-friend of a friend)

# Theme 2: Positive experiences when seeking-healthcare

## Subordinate Themes

## Verbatim Quotations

**Experience of being cared for in a humanly environment**

"I did not know where to start telling people about this, but when I started talking to the doctor, I felt comfortable because he treated me with respects, welcomed me and told me it was not my fault...that made me feel respected as a human and he understood my problem." (Lifa, aged 65 years, gang raped by strange three women)

**Experience of being treated with respect and dignity**

"I had negative experiences with police and nurses in the casualty in that hospital, so I thought nurses here would do the same, but when I came here in the center, I was treated with respect, and I feel they protected my dignity as a person." (Asive, aged 27 years, gang raped by six guys)

**Engagement in informative counselling for HIV and trauma**

"I did not know what to do, but they explained everything to me...I was counselled and that made me to realize that I can recover from this as long as I don't get AIDS... yeah counselling helped me a lot because I was even thinking of killing myself due to this thing" (Loza, aged 34 years, gang raped by two fellow inmates)

**Receipt of PEP for HIV- a breakthrough**

"I am happy that I got the pills to protect me from getting the HIV because when those guys raped me, I felt so shattered, and it sounded like that was the end of my life. I thought that all the plans I had about my future were all dead, but the pills will help me to be safe." (Abed, aged 22 years, gang raped by four strange men)

# Theme 3: Negative experiences when seeking-healthcare

| Subordinate Themes   | Verbatim Quotes   |
|--|---|
| <b>Disparaging behavior of healthcare professionals in emergency units</b> | <p>“When this thing happened, I did not know where to go, so I went to hospital and when I was there, they said I must go to the casualty and the nurses there were very disrespectful, and they treated me so bad...I remember one of them was blaming me for drinking alcohol. It felt like I was being judged and accused of this thing that has happened to me” (Asive, aged 27 years, gang raped by six guys)</p>  |
| <b>Being made to repeat the story several times</b>                        | <p>“When I arrived in the casualty, I went straight to the nurse who was sitting in the table by the other entrance. I told her what happened to me, and she was shocked...she asked me to repeat what I’m saying, and I repeated to her. She was shocked and she was like: what? Then she called another lady to hear what I was telling her...It’s like the lady was a doctor, so she asked me to tell the story again, so I did, she was also shocked.... Eeey yeah so, this one also took me to someone else... she took me straight to another doctor... Joh! They were, they were shocked...they were all shocked, and one said to me it is for the first time that she is hearing this. Like they were shocked because that woman stood there for like some minutes and I had to explain the situation again and again to her...she kept on asking what? (Abed, aged 22 years, gang raped by four strange men)</p> |
| <b>Delayed access to healthcare in prisons</b>                             | <p>“The captain told me to wait for the line to the hospital ...so I was trying to get to the hospital thereby the waiting deck to speak to the sister about what happened but it is very difficult to get into the hospital... you must be very sick for them to take you serious there, so I waited and waited for a very long time before I could see the nurses there... and it’s only now (after full three days) that they are bringing me here.” (Loza, aged 34 years, gang raped by two fellow inmates)</p>   |
| <b>Prolonged waiting periods in post-rape care facilities</b>              | <p>“This thing happened during the weekend, I came here and found one nurse who was busy with another woman, so I was told to wait, and I waited for a very long time, and this made me unhappy because I thought they never wanted to help me. Then when she was done, she called a doctor to say there are two patients and the doctor took time to come...she only came late after a few hours... I think she was busy somewhere; I don’t know.” (Lifa, aged 65 years, gang raped by strange three women)</p>  |
| <b>Unfriendly and uncaring attitude of healthcare professionals</b>        | <p>“Sometimes, it feels like you are too much, or they don’t want to help you, and I felt like I was now boring them. Their looks sometimes feel like you are just telling lies and some don’t even smile, and it’s scary to talk to someone who is not that caring” (Rori, aged 25 years, raped by three strange men)</p>  |



# Recommendations

- The enabling factors for and the positive experiences reported by participants in this study highlight the avenue for the development of community mobilization campaigns for rape reporting amongst men.
- These could also be used to develop community-based prevention strategies and to sensitize the community on the magnitude of rape for all groups, including men, and emphasize the seriousness of this public health issue.
- Facilities that provide meaningful/ positive healthcare experiences to the victims/ survivors should be commended and awarded for providing such safe spaces
- Also, health professionals who contribute towards a highly satisfactory experience for patients should be recognized and awarded accordingly. This could be done through incentives and even other professional development avenues.
- It's clear there is a need for a positive collaboration between police and healthcare workers when dealing with rape care. So, such collaborations should be strengthened.
- **Delays in prisoners' access to healthcare is a call for concern- !!!!**
- Delays in post-rape care services also need to be given serious attention; at least doctors should be at reach or rather have nurses who are trained on SANE to avoid prolonged waiting periods. Maybe the accreditation of forensic nursing by SANC will pave the way for the training of more forensic sexual assault nurses.
- The positive experiences highlight the possibility of transforming the post-rape care centers into centers of excellence where victims are cared for and treated in safe spaces or non-threatening environments.
- Lastly, we recommend that healthcare professionals, both in emergency units and in post-rape care centers, should receive continuous training on sensitive healthcare provision and on better ways of rendering human services to rape victims.

# Conclusion

- Rape is a serious crime that has dire consequences for the well-being of victims and their families.
- The rape experiences of victims are real to them, and under no circumstance should these experiences be taken for granted or dismissed.
- We need to acknowledge and appreciate all those who come to the fore to report these incidents in our facilities.
- All that can be done is to ensure that they get meaningful experiences with the healthcare services that are rendered to them, which may positively influence their journey of recovery.

# Acknowledgements

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**Thank you**

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