War on women: Pentecostal congregations strengthening agency and resilience to fight against gender-based violence

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Abstract

South African men have declared war on women, a statement expressing the fight against gender-based violence (GBV). Some argue that such a statement is unfair towards men who still respect the right to health and safety of women in society, while others argue that the roots of this war find their basis in disaster patriarchy. Disaster patriarchy is a process whereby men exploit a crisis to reassert control and dominance, erase women's rights, women lose their safety, economic power, autonomy, and education and are pushed to the frontlines unprotected. The question is, what does the term "war" have to do with the fight against GBV; how does it find its roots in patriarchy; what can be done to bring this war to an end; and what are the practical theological tools needed to fight and end this war? The study is done from a Classical Pentecostal perspective, focusing specifically on the position of the Apostolic Faith Mission on war, their deliberations on patriarchy and GBV, and what role Pentecostal congregations can play to end this war. The study offers an analysis of patriarchy that serves as a basis for the war on women, engagement with the national GBV plan and its implementation by religious actors, especially Pentecostal congregations, and proposes a humanizing pneumatological approach that recognizes the human rights of those affected by the war and how to strengthen their agency and resilience. The study follows a comparative literature approach and is done using an interdisciplinary lens, consulting literature from the fields of theology, sociology, law and philosophy.

Keywords

1. Introduction

Incidents of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) that stalked South Africa during Covid-19 have been described by the president of South Africa as a declaration of war on women (Seleka 2020; Buqa 2022:2). The situation escalated during the lockdowns enforced by the government during the COVID-19 pandemic, a reality not just in South Africa, but experienced by women all over the world (Buqa 2022:1; Ensler 2021). Nyambuya, Shumba, Gopal and Wade (2022:48, 49) report that anecdotal evidence suggests that GBV including domestic violence cases increased in South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic. More than 120 00 cases were reported in the first three weeks of the national lockdown in 2020. Mkhize and Sibisi (2022:157) agree that lockdowns or social distancing restrictions required people to stay at home and it caused great concerns for women who reside with violent partners. They state that survivors of GBV were stuck at home with potential and actual perpetrators of GBV, with no option of movement to report such incidences" (Mkhize & Sibisi, 2022:162).

During the second Presidential GBV summit[1] held from 1–2 November 2022 at the Gallagher Estate, Midrand, President Ramaphosa reiterated his concern about the rapes and killings of elderly women, the mothers and grandmothers that are supposed to be respected and treated with dignity. He described it as a deeply disturbing story, the story of a nation at war with itself. Ramaphosa expressed the "need to re-weave the social fabric, so we become a society that is nurturing, caring, respectful and in which the human rights of all are protected." Statistics released by the South African Police Services (SAPS) from July–September 2022 indicate that 897 women were murdered, and over 13 000 cases of domestic violence and 9500 rape cases were reported (Besent 2022). These statistics received commentary from the Cooperative Governance Minister, Dr Nkosasana Dlamini-Zuma, calling on men to be integral agents of change, to be protectors and providers, because "even in times of war, women and children were not supposed to be harmed" (Besent 2022). The unsafe situation that has

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1   .Presidential GBV Summit, Speech from President Cyril Ramaphosa. [Online]. Available: https://www.gov.za/speeches/president–cyril–ramaphosa–second–presidential–summit–gender–based–violence–and–femicide–1

dawned upon women and children is an indictment on our moral standing as a nation and indicates a departure from our African value of ubuntu.

The article interrogates three main questions, how congregations can understand the relationship between GBV as a war against women and patriarchy; what the practical theological sources and tools are that congregations have to "re-weave the social fabric" of society; and how Pentecostal congregations, that are regarded as part of the problem of gender-based violence, can contribute to ending this war waged against women. The researcher writes from a Classical Pentecostal perspective, focusing on some sources in the Pentecostal Movement and the Apostolic Faith Mission on GBV and War. The study aims to establish that (Pentecostal) congregations have some practical theological sources and tools that can strengthen the agency and resilience of women.

2. War on Women

In this section, the relation between the concept of war and gender-based violence is explored. Let us first consider what the term means in the context of initiatives to fight for women's rights. After that we will relate the two terms and how they became part of South African public discourse. The term, "War on Women" refers to the fight against some Republican policies on anti-abortion and opposition to equal rights in the United States of America, attributed to the defence of feminism by Andrea Dworkin (1989) and Susan Faludi (1991). This plight was further strengthened by feminist themes like abortion rights, rape and misogyny included in the music by the hardcore punk band, War on Women.[2]

The war on women is a global problem, affecting communities at a global and local level, which requires a glocal, intersectional and interdisciplinary approach in order to win this fight at both levels. During the war between Russia and Ukraine there are reports[3] that gender-based violence increased in Ukraine. Some of the alarming cases that are on the increase is

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2   War On Woman. [Online]. Available: https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_on_Women

3   United Nations Women, Press Release: New UN policy paper shows the devastating impacts of the Ukraine war on women and girls, 22 September 2022. [Online]. Available: https://www.unwomen.org/en/newsstories

transactional sex for food and survival, sexual exploitation and trafficking, and child marriages. Gender-Based Violence is defined by several international agencies, the World Health Organisation (HO), the United Nations Council for Human Rights (UNCHR), and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) as a human rights violation.

Mpatheni and Mlamla (2022:60) define it as the physical, sexual, emotional, verbal and/or psychological violence against a person of a different gender that manifests as economic abuse, intimidation, harassment, and stalking, occurring in family and community relations. It is deeply rooted in gender inequality and is described as one of the most prevalent human rights violations in society (Mpatheni and Mlamla 2022:61). Segalo and Fine (2020:2) describe gender-based violence as a "curious, relentless and brutally consistent dynamic of human existence". Gender-based violence has many serious consequences for women's health, including for example homicides, suicides, AIDS-related deaths, physical injuries, chronic pain syndrome, gastrointestinal disorders, pregnancy complications, miscarriage and low-birth weight of children (Enaifoghe et al. 2021:118).

Magezi and Manzanga (2019) reports how GBV, a huge concern in many African countries, is perpetuated by institutions such as the home, state, church, and communities. The increase in GBV cases can be ascribed to stereotyped differences that exist in gender form, which lead to an overemphasis on male dominance that ignores and underestimates women's power and active roles (Magezi & Manzanga 2019:3). Language use, customs, belief systems and gender inequality are regarded some of the sociocultural factors that exacerbate gender abuse (Buqa 2022:2). Enaifoghe et al. (2021:118) agree that GBV is a systemic gender inequality that disempowers women, girls, and other minority groups, and stifle their voices to speak for themselves. It has an impact on everyone, irrespective of geographical location, sociocultural, socioeconomic background, race, religion, sexuality, gender orientation or affiliation.

As a complex phenomenon, GBV operates at different levels, with some of them being the interplay between personal, situational, and socio-cultural factors. Heise (1998:263) states that "a complete understanding of gender abuse may require acknowledging factors operating on multiple levels" and presents an ecological framework that will assist with conceptualising

the etiology of gender-based violence. In her socio-ecological framework, Heise (1998:264) use Belsky's framework on the ethology of child abuse and neglect that consists of four levels of analysis with the innermost circle representing an individual's personal history; the micro-system that represents the immediate context of abuse; the ecosystem which encompasses formal and informal institutions and structures; and the macro-system that represents the general views and attitudes from culture. It is described as a very helpful approach to rationalise and integrate findings from different disciplines, expressed through the interdisciplinary and intersectional engagement of this article with GBV.

South Africa has a long history of violence, attributed to the legacy of colonialism and apartheid, which is also regarded as a root cause for GBV, but Buqa (2022:5) argues that it does not justify men's actions towards women and children. Segalo (2015:76) confirms that the apartheid regime contributed immensely to in the emasculation of black men and that the remnants of these can still be felt today. GBV in South Africa is driven by multiple social drivers like radicalised poverty, unemployment, income inequality, patriarchal notions of masculinity, access to fire-arms, alcohol abuse and weak law enforcement (Segalo 2015:78). Enaifoghe et al. (2021:124) agree that the apartheid legacy still has an effect on the sociocultural driver of violence against woman. Black African families were broken due to absent fathers because of the migrant system, and homes were headed by women and single parents. It further maintains the subordinate position allocated to women and the control of men over women (Enaifoghe et al. 2021:128).

3. Disaster patriarchy and COVID-19

Ensler (2021) describes this war on women as an outbreak of "disaster patriarchy", whereby men exploit a crisis to reassert control and dominate over women, infringing their human rights. Intersectional interlocutors describe it as "radicalized disaster patriarchy, affecting women triply on a race, class and gender basis". Patriarchy reclaimed power over women that escalated into violence to women and at the same time posing as controller and protector. Ensler (2021) reports how the term "women are beaten up by men" was changed over time, from women battering to "domestic violence",

and from "intimate partner violence" to "intimate terrorism". The term "intimate terrorism" means that the lockdowns turned homes into torture chambers for women. Madigele and Baloyi (2022:2) confirm that homes became cages of violence in Botswana during the Covid-19 pandemic. The home front that was supposed to be the safest place for woman were turned into these cages of violence by men who became the most feared and untrusted persons to women, so much so that most woman lived in shelters to find a place of safety and love.

4.   Toxic vs transformative masculinities

GBV is fuelled by the hegemonic agenda of toxic masculinities that support patriarchy. Masculinity becomes toxic when it uses violence and dominance to harm others, especially women and children. It is continued when boys are raised with that same mindset of control and dominance. It leads to destructive social behaviours that become etched in the male psyche, like misogyny, homophobia, greed, and violent domination of woman (Madigele & Baloyi 2022:3). Gevers et al. (2013) submits that men who ascribe to hegemonic masculinities exhibit their manhood through physical strength, bravery, risk-taking and use of violence to dominate others and assert their status and positions in public and private spheres. It usually ends harmfully for women, children, and other men. Sometimes men compensate for the loss of power by dominating in one sphere (public sphere – work) in another sphere (private sphere – home). Segalo (2015:76) confirms that perpetual violence is linked to men's position in society, like being in a space that does not acknowledge their masculinity.

Masculinity also needs to be redefined because men are perceived to be the providers and protectors of the family, but they feel emasculated when they cannot fulfil these traditional roles (Buqa, 2022:5). The amount of toxicity produced by these challenges is not good for the social fabric of society; it needs transformative masculinities, which require collective action from men and women. The transformative masculinities approach is in line with an Afrocentric perspective of gender justice, which is inclusive, whereby men will have to let go of their dominance and the false sense of entitlement.

5. Cultural factors that impacts gender-based violence

Moreroa and Rapanyane (2021:1, 13) apply Afrocentricity to view the interlinkages between gender inequality and GBV, showing that discriminatory practices against women taunt their everyday livelihood. Gender inequality is enhanced by patriarchy, capitalism, misogyny, and religious abuse. The commercialisation of *lobola*, *Ukuthwala* and other traditional practices further subject women and creates inferior complexes within them and their relations with men (Moreroa & Rapanyane 2021:13). Gender norms like *lobola* in the African culture contribute to a cultural expectation that women can be bought, which Frieslaar and Masango (2021:1) regard as the basis for the blesser-blessee relationship. Frieslaar and Masango (2021:2) find a link between transactional sex and gender violence, intimate partner violence, manipulation, and abuse. On this, Nyambuya et al. (2022:47) comment that the exchange of money or gifts places women at risk of intimate partner violence and that the African tradition uncultured women into a "dependency syndrome" with men. The issue of provision or dependency further exacerbates women's abuse in relationships.

Ntshangase and Matabane (2022:197) dispute the fact that the African thought system used gender as a basis to discriminate against people. There was never room for sexism and gender inequality in the African traditions (meaning that the African continent has different cultures). Ntshangase and Matabane (2022:185) assert that imbalances are the result of the radical disruption brought about by colonization. They continue that "in the African normative history there has never been an age where women were reduced to a subhuman level and rendered less equal with men" (Ntshangase & Matabane 2022:190).

They provide some reasons that form the foundation for gender inequality, the deception and fault in arguments for natural duality; the greed and arrogance to think one gender is superior to another; the ignorance of one gender to the other that blocks harmonious duality; the non-contributions of one gender to existence while the other gives everything; and an immoral power play with plans to extinguish the inferior gender (Ntshangase & Matabane 2022:195). From the spiritual teachings of "Ma'at", Ntshangase and Matabane (2022:196) derive that nature is unbalanced when equal

respect and recognition are replaced with greed and arrogance, with one gender present and the other one absent. They state: "African philosophy has always been ungendered in a sense that everyone who lived as an African always welcomed the other person regardless of sex and gender". African normative teachings had no space for discrimination, in spiritual life or in general (Ntshangase & Matabane 2022:198).

Another group that is also hugely impacted by violence against women are a woman with disabilities, including sexual violence, socioeconomic exclusion, financial exploitation, emotional abuse, physical abuse, neglect, and deprivation of educational and financial needs, according to Muruzi and Gutura (2022:85). Some of the risk factors that increase their likelihood of abuse are non-closure of the violence and stereotypes aligned with their physical disabilities.

6. Agency and resilience of women

6.1 Agency of women

Agency can be defined as the capacity to make decisions about one's life and to act on them to reach the desired outcomes, and it is also seen as a form of empowerment (Klugman, Hanmer, Twigg, Hasan, McCleary-Sills, and Santamaria 2014:1). Agency, which carries with it the full participation of women in all spheres of life, is connected to women finding their voice in order to make communities resilient when constraints and deprivations are removed (Klugman et al. 2014:2). The four central domains of women's agency are freedom from violence, control over their sexual and reproductive health, ownership and control over land and housing, and finding their voice and collective action. Social norms like gender-based violence can be a huge constraint in these domains, because it reinforces inequality and take decision-making out of the realm of control for women and girls, undermining their agency and voice.

Niemandt (2011:1) calls the space within which this dialogue about power and violence takes place a powerless space creating a discourse that opens up thinking and contributes to healing and justice. Space-creating dialogue as a powerless discourse adheres to the call of God's mission where all people work together for healing and justice in partnerships

of mutuality and respect. Niemandt (2011:2) addresses the ambiguity of power, of having the capacity and ability to shape the lives of people and communities but also to dominate or hurt people. Such an abuse of power is part of history, especially the kind where an Augustinian two-worlds view that distinguishes between the pious and non-pious became a justification in Christianity where "the image of two opposing worlds has increased violence by justifying theologically the destruction of the people named enemy" (Niemandt 2011:5). He uses Koyama's notion of a "conflicting dualism" to argue that such opposing views do not consider the complexity and ambiguity of human existence, being self-serving and having the potential to threaten the entire human existence.

Kabongo (2019:1) argues for a theology of place, especially in situations of poverty and marginalisation, where communities and individuals move from victimhood to transformation and agency. It helps them to move from a victim's mentality to become agents of hope and the church has a role to play to nurture and develop agency in ordinary people. Kabongo (2019:7) designates ordinary people as transformation agents when they observe principles of human dignity and worth, human rights, good social values and good individual and socio-political transformation. They engage with community needs and seek solutions to heal and build society up, viewing themselves as part of the social fabric of society and being true and tangible witnesses of the good news of the gospel. Restoring the prophetic ministry of the church will bring hope to public expression by offering an alternative to their present reality and see their history in the light of God's freedom and justice, and in that way, orchestrate change from within, restoring agency that will allow their lives to flourish (Kabongo 2019:8).

6.2 Resilience

Ungar (2021a:2) regards resilience as a multi-systemic tool that is extremely useful when one studies how complex systems function under stress. Using definitions from different fields, he comes up with the idea that resilience means that the need arises for human and non-human systems to account for the way in which they deal successfully with shocks and disturbances to thrive, despite exposure to adversity. It deals with the shift "from breakdown and disorder to recovery, adaptation or system-wide transformation before, during and after adversity" (Ungar 2021b:6).

A multi-systemic approach to resilience offers innovative ways to understand changes and to approach problems from a different paradigmatic and transdisciplinary way. Such an approach challenges a silo way of dealing with resilience, introducing a concept that works across systems and disciplines (Ungar 2021a:4). Resilience also reflects the capacity of multiple co-occurring systems to interact well together under stress. The resilience of one system can mean that other systems or scales are more resistant to problems and better able to recover, adapt or transform (Ungar 2021b:14). The better-integrated resilient systems are, the more they can benefit sustainably from one another's success. Faith communities or churches are part of other systems like the education, police, political, economic, etc., systems and suffer with the rest of the "ecosystem of violence" that makes women and children victims and survivors of gender-based violence. Brown (2021:771) indicates how models of multisystemic resilience be used to expand our understanding of solutions to complex human and environmental problems.

Unfortunately, in the book *Multisystemic Resilience*, the contributors do not explicitly write from a religious or theological perspective, except providing some notes on religion and resilience (Panter-Brick 2021:370; Wu & Ou 2021:383–384; Popham, McEwen & Pluess 2021:405). There are certain important principles in their engagement with the topic of resilience that is useful for our study about the role of congregations building resilience in victims and survivors of gender-based violence. Some of these principles are that resilience occurs in contexts of adversity; it is a process; trade-offs are available when a system experiences resilience; such systems are open, dynamic, and complex; they promote connectivity; demonstrate experimentation and learning; and include diversity, redundancy and participation (Ungar 2021b:18).

7.   Religious factors that impacts gender-based violence

Religious factors are also important because the support of patriarchy by some religious institutions further strengthens the grip of GBV on women (Buqa 2022:2). There are certain cultures that derive their patriarchal culture from the Bible, teaching that boys and men are supposed to be leaders, persons in authority, independent, strong, and aggressive. Women

and girls should be obedient, followers and dependent persons (Buqa 2022:34). Frieslaar and Masango (2021:6) support the idea that patriarchal structures of African cultures are reinforced by the patriarchy in the Bible.

The same mindset held by colonialists, namely that indigenous people have no agency, are ignorant and do not have the capacity to think and decide for themselves, should be rejected when it comes to the patriarchal mindset that women are inferior, cannot think for themselves and need male domination. Tertullian (155–220 AD), one of the early church leaders who lived in Carthage, Africa, a founder of Western theology, phrased the idea that women are "the devil's gateway" and that it is through Eve that sin came into the world. A statement which justifies the exclusion, marginalization and destruction of woman's dignity, talents and contributions in church and society (Wood 2017:8).

Karman (2022:1) tells the tales of the two Tamars in the Hebrew Bible and how they experienced domestic violence. These two tales recorded in Genesis 38 and 2 Samuel 13:1–22 respectively, tell the story of two women who not only suffered sexual violence at a physical level but also at a human rights level, where their basic human rights to a decent life were violated because of the unequal power relations based on gender. Karman (2022:4) reveals from the narratives of the two Tamars in the Bible how domestic violence at a structural level (both Tamars lived in a traditionally patriarchal culture with gender inequality and male domination over women, but who were supposed to protect them) and at a practical level (where at the paternal level one man – Judah – acknowledged guilt and the other – David – covered it up. At this practical level, paternal assertiveness is not enough; women will have to break the silence to fight for their violated rights (first Tamar) and voice it publicly (second Tamar). Families and communities should provide that space for women to speak with one voice against violence.

From these two tales it becomes evident that women are viewed as possessions to be used and bargained in ways that benefit men, which is further supported by the view that men are the head and women are secondary and subservient to them. This leads to the commoditisation and objectification of women, which beg for the dismantling of the values and structures of patriarchy (Frieslaar & Masango 2021:6, 7).

8. Practical theological sources and tools

Gender-based violence erodes the moral fibre of society and the church has a role to play in pastoral care and counselling (Madigele & Baloyi 2022:5). Le Roux and Valencia (2019:1) claim that churches can contribute to the coping ability and healing process of survivors of sexual violence. By leveraging their ability to influence community and individual beliefs and behaviours, churches can counter the intergenerational cycle of internally displaced persons. However, churches can also be a "double-edged sword" in not always being a supportive and safe space by promoting beliefs and behaviours that condone sexual violence and stigmatization (Le Roux & Valencia 20019: 2). Overall, religion and spirituality have the potential to be an important source and aid of coping for survivors of sexual violence (Le Roux & Valencia 2019:3).

Faith leaders revealed that their churches do not have resources to deal with sexual violence; they are not adequately trained and skilled to deal with it; and believe no one in their congregations is affected by sexual violence (Le Roux & Valencia, 2019:6–7). Le Roux and Valencia (2019:7) find that the gap between what churches and faith leaders can offer and the reasons why they are not involved should be filled because "a religious response could potentially offer survivors a unique framework and support structure for dealing with what has happened to them." There is a need for appropriate training of faith leaders to engage spiritually more effectively with survivors. Faith leaders can be social referents and influencers, turning their churches into safe and supportive spaces where members are challenged in their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour towards women.

Pastoral care and theological engagement with sexual violence should be combined to rediscover certain neglected scriptures and reinterpret certain harmful scriptures on violence and gender equality. Churches and faith leaders can also assist by leveraging their influence to end intergenerational inter-familial violence, make households safe spaces for women and children; help family members to re-establish trust in one another; and support parenting interventions for families.

Magezi and Manzanga (2019:5) view the public pastoral role of the church as a community development initiative that transforms communities on GBV issues. A public practical theological approach to GBV should firstly

accept the public as an audience to do practical theology; include everyday concerns and issues in its reflection; and facilitate a dialogue between theology and contemporary culture. This engagement with GBV as a public issue implies that congregations should be involved in interventions (Magezi & Manzanga 2019:6). A community-driven initiative by the congregation takes cognizance of the voice, faith, biblical hermeneutics, and practices related to GBV issues, resulting in community transformation and development. Initiatives may include church and community enrichment seminars; development of pastoral enhancement networks; encouraging a proper understanding of the church as a glocal driver of societal change; teaching and exampling respect for the image of God in humanity; having introspection and transformation within the church; promote and enhance spaces for women to interact and share experiences; and develop the capacity of clergy and laity to interpret the Bible properly.

Buqa (2022:6) proposes that we should first start with accepting women and children as also created in the image of God (*Imago Dei*). The effect of religion and culture on patriarchy further marred the image of God in them, justified by the wrong use of the Bible by women (who justifies their submission) and church leaders (who justify their abuse against women). Both women and men should transcend the violent culture embedded in patriarchy and hierarchy glocally (Buqa 2022:6). Magezi and Manzanga (2019:5) agree that part of the church's involvement as a strategic partner in multi-sectoral approaches to address GBV is to be critical of religious practices that emanate from wrongful biblical interpretation; address patriarchal and cultural practices that find its way into the church; stronger action against clergy and laity in the ranks of the church that are complicit in the abuse of women.

Niemandt (2011:5) provides some clues for theological reflection on violence that may help to create a powerless, space-creating discourse. He derives from a trinitarian understanding of the mission of the Spirit that the Christian mission has always been associated with the power of the Holy Spirit that is not compelled by human might but is a power of embrace. Niemandt (2011:5) states that "the transforming, embracing power of the Spirit invites people into the life of God through grace and acceptance, not fear and violence". In a powerless space, we do not have to coerce but embrace, a choice that we make to become vulnerable and

sensitive to the vulnerability of others (Niemandt 2011:6). The church is a community of the cross, sharing in God's reconciling purpose achieved on the cross, when God becomes weak and helpless through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It includes a preferential option for non-violence, to engage in a powerless, embracing, space-creating discourse that gives up the place of power and coercion for listening and learning from others.

Suderman (2011:1) proposes that the church, in response to subjective and systemic violence, should create and become a community of peace that works to restore and reconcile relationships. It requires from the church to let go of individualism to embody a community with a different form of being in the face of violence. Using Cavanaugh's appropriation of the Eucharist (that draws people together in true humanity of giving and self-emptying); Zizioulas' use of Baptism (where relations between members replicate the love relationship between the persons of the Trinity); and Anabaptism that is interested in adult baptism (creating a visible community of believers who are willing to follow the ethic of Jesus, demonstrated in the Bible and the early church), Suderman (2011) concludes that a restored and reconciled relationship with God and one another is possible in the context of violence. These three moments highlighted by Suderman illustrate that the church remains an alternative community, even when partners do not agree or understand; we believe that relationships can be restored and reconciled because we believe that the kingdom of God is already here, although it is not yet here.

The contributions from theologians in the broader ecumenical church, confirm why a united voice is needed from religion against GBV. The next section provides some insights on GBV from the Pentecostal perspective and the role that congregations have to fight against it.

9.　Pentecostal congregations – communities of peace

Being a community of peace and supporting a pacifist stance against war and violence are part of the tenets of early Pentecostalism. The stance of Pentecostals to war and violence is determined by their hermeneutics and Nel (2018:7) states that they take Jesus' call for peace seriously when they adhere to a hermeneutic of non-violence. Initially, Pentecostals were

against violence on the basis of their interpretation of the Bible, but over the years, as the context changed, their stance shifted (Nel, 2018:10).

A pacifist stance was initially part of the AFMSA position, so much so that they were exempted from military service but changed their stance in the 1940s against war and violence to be more acceptable to the powers that be (Nel, 2018:15, 17). Nel (2018:44) warns against a historicist reading or a dangerously literal interpretation of the Hebrew Bible where a violent culture is synonymous with manliness and violence against females constitutes a masculine identity. Nel (2017:39) regards the gradual move away from being a peaceful movement as the price Pentecostals have to pay for acceptability in certain evangelical and national terms, moving away from being the alternative community they were supposed to be. Such a community is a hospitium, a place of hospitality, where there is a sharing, welcoming, embracing, and all-inclusive communality (Nel 2018:54).

During discussions on the AFMSA position on war and violence, one of the comments was that the church cannot hide behind a pacifist stance as the theological position of the church to military engagement. Participants realised the fact that domestic violence is rife in South Africa, and that the church should consider an appropriate reaction to this challenge in our communities (D.E.L Discussion documents, AFMSA).

One of the reactions proposed is that the church should renounce any form of domestic violence of one person against another for any reason, including the violent beating of children. Another is that the church should renounce all participation in war and opt for peaceful methods locally and internationally, encouraging others to solve their conflicts by means of goodwill and understanding. A holistic spirituality will be helpful because it follows God's instruction to love one another, and even one's enemy, and to work towards change in a creative and integrated way (Council for Doctrine, Ethics and Liturgy Discussion documents, AFMSA)

Pentecostals changed their hermeneutical sense to revisit their stance on war and violence, especially the early AFMSA, to allow members to participate in military operations and later also to accommodate women. Gender-based violence has no geographical boundaries and is prevalent amongst all races, nationalities, economic, able/disabled and migrant, groups. From the literature analysis, it is clear that patriarchy and gender

inequality, together with cultural and religious norms, contribute to its existence. Pentecostal congregations are not exempted from the reality of gender-based violence in their private and public lives. What should their reactions be towards this war against women and what can they do to assist with the healing and delivering of justice to victims and survivors of GBV?

Pentecostal congregations can start creating space for complexity and ambiguity, resisting any stereotypes and norms that undermine women's agency and suppress their resilience. They can do that by joining efforts by government and non-government institutions that aim to restore the human rights of women; protect their self-worth and human dignity; and fight all dehumanizing practices, presented by cultural and religious traditions. Active involvement is required in interventions such as the ones listed above that work intersectionally, intergenerationally, and transformationally.

Pentecostals hold the idea that the Spirit fell on both men and women in Joel and Acts. Women received the same power of the Holy Spirit, the same authority, abilities, gifts, ministries, having the two tools they need to combat this war on women, the agency, and the resilience they possess within themselves. Both men and women should dismantle the patriarchal thought that women are helpless and powerless and need a male saviour to find their agency. It dismisses the idea that women should attend empowerment sessions as if they do not hold power over themselves. They should let go of the idea that women are forever victims of the actions of men; women can survive gender-based violence and abuse because they have agency in themselves.

Gender-based violence places a divide between men and women, turning them into enemies in an endless and senseless war where there is no winners and losers, but where our entire human existence is under threat. Pentecostal church leaders have not been innocent when it comes to violence against women and children. The case of Pastor Timothy Omotoso demonstrated this, where he was accused of abusing his office as a pastor when counselling young girls and women. Kgatle and Frahm-Arp (2021:2) report how the case received wide public attention and illustrates how victims of GBV at the hands of church leaders face added challenges and need a particular kind of pastoral care and counselling. Kgatle and

Frahm-Arp (2021:6) offer a framework of pastoral care to victims of sexual abuse by Christian leaders, assuring them that their abuse was not divinely inspired, is not biblical and is not acceptable. They also emphasized that the men of God who abuse them are part of a cult based on destructive patriarchal practices.

A Pentecostal response to GBV requires both an "outlook" and an "in-look", how they deal with GBV as it happens in society but also how it happens within their own circles as Spirit-filled believers. An integrated response is needed, that focus on both intervention and prevention, the next section provides some insights from practices that aims to combat GBV.

10. Combatting GBV requires intervention and prevention

Klugman et al. (2014:86) identifies four domains that need interventions, on the level of their *physical health*, victims need medical care, safe housing, food and clothing; regarding their *mental health*, they need therapeutic and trauma counselling, the building of their self-efficacy and self-confidence and reduction of internalized stigma; *legally*, they need literacy, advocacy and filling of key documents; and *economically* they need financial support, securing of land and property, employment and income generating activities. These listed services are short-term and delivered by civil society and professionals, but the primary aim is to help stabilise survivors so they can file a claim and pursue a case. The need for long-term interventions should also be addressed. Long-term and group-based interventions give evidence of skills that improve, symptoms of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder are reduced, and self-efficacy is increased.

Primary prevention strategies to fight GBV include building gender equality and promoting alternative, non-violent masculine identities and alternative, assertive femininities; challenging the widespread sociocultural attitudes and behaviours acceptive of violence; improving non-violent conflict resolution and constructive communication skills; cultivating respectful and equitable attitudes and ideas about interpersonal relationships and developing relationship building skills; reducing substance abuse; and implementing strict gun ownership, access and use (Gevers et al. 2014:16).

We need to create spaces for multiple converging and diverging stories to be told, the uncomfortable intersections that can bring true healing and reconciliation (Segalo 2015:78).

Evidence from primary prevention interventions indicates that adolescents and young adults need help to develop healthier prosocial identities, attitudes, and relationship-building skills; engage men and boys to build gender equitable masculinities; and promote positive parenting practices to prevent early childhood trauma (Gevers et al. 2014:18). Another effective strategy is the execution of local campaigns against GBV like One Man Can, Brothers for Life and Soul City (Gevers et al. 2013:18; Klugman et al. 2014:83).

Nyambuya et al. (2022:34) support the scaling up of gender-based violence campaigns at the community level and empowerment programmes for local and migrant communities. Refugee and asylum-seeking women are also some of the most neglected and vulnerable women. Due to xenophobia, migrant communities are facing difficulty in accessing their rights to safety, security, health, and dignity. Migrant women face a double burden of xenophobia and misogyny (Nyambuya et al. 2022:36).

Moreroa and Rapanyane (2021:13) recommend that governments should criminalise the commercialisation and abuse of African practices like *lobola* and *Ukuthwala*. Abuse of these African cultural practices submit women to men and leads to unfair treatment of women in the workplace. It further supports the use of religion to advance discrimination against women.

Violence against women can also be prevented when young people, male and female, are offered interventions such as building youth self-esteem; health education and empowerment; soft-skills programmes and building youth resilience (Chauke 2021:173). The prevalence of violence against black women, especially in townships and rural areas, is more prone to happen than to white women in South Africa (Chauke 2021:174). Segalo and Fine (2020:6) concur that black women are subject to the most extreme sexual and gender violence. They argue that we should be slow to put programmes in place to assist women, treating the symptoms instead of dealing with colonial legacies and how they play out in women's lives like patriarchy, capitalism, colonially and historical baggage (Segalo & Fine

2020:7). Covid-19 laid bare the triple relationship that women are erased/
invisibilised, owned/murderable, and exploitable.

Religious groups can offer resources in the fight against gender-based
violence, some of these are listed by Le Roux and Pertek (2022: 88–89) as
religious ideas, religious practices, religious organisations, and religious
experiences. As the study indicates, the content of religious beliefs can be
helpful in combatting the war against women, especially when it promotes
principles like gender equality, non-violence and the sanctity of human life,
respect for human rights, etc. People's religious beliefs have a direct impact
on their religious practices including their reading of scriptures, saying of
prayers, religious rituals, counselling, etc. Religious organisations can play
a role in how they provide support groups for victims, the status and role
of leaders can influence people's behaviours and attitudes to gender-based
violence. The religious experiences of survivors can be an important source
of response intervention, especially their prayers, dreams and visions can
be central to their recovery, resilience, and healing.

The socio-ecological model of Heise (1998) is helpful to understand the
interrelatedness of personal, cultural, institutional and societal factors that
constitutes GBV and that an integrated, interdisciplinary approach is the
best way to fight this dehumanizing reality for women and girls. Religious
groups have an important role to play, and Pentecostal congregations can
contribute immensely with their focus on the healing power of the Spirit
of love that is available today to both men and women. The emphasis in
Pentecostalism on the empowerment of both men and women through the
gifts of the Holy Spirit, support the idea of agency and resilience embedded
in women. Creating Pentecostal congregations as spaces for constructive
dialogue and centres of peace and healing can help with the prevention and
intervention responses to GBV.

11. Conclusion

The war against women is real locally and globally, rooted in patriarchy,
found in all cultures and religions, and exacerbated by socioeconomic
drivers that create an eco-system of violence. The socio-ecological model
of Heise provide a framework to understand the interrelated nature of the
fight against gender-based violence. Disaster patriarchy further increased

gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic and turned homes into intimate terrorism rooms, cages of abuse and femicide that require from us to engage with it intersectionally, multi-dimensionally and transdisciplinary. The Church and society were affected by it and have a role to play in finding sustainable interventions to fight this scourge of gender-based violence. Unlocking the agency of women and helping to build resilience in victims and survivors are everyone's business.

This war against women and vulnerable persons requires from us to use our agency and multisystemic resilience, trusting that this dream of a GBV and Femicide-less society is possible. Indeed, Pentecostals can say "send me", because they are a sent people, standing in the apostolic tradition of the ones sent with the message of good news. The good news that they are spreading is a message of peace or shalom – following the suggestion of a powerless space creating dialogue. As missional congregations and agents of change, they can help to "re-weave the social fabric of our society".

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