

Male Involvement in Primary Preventive Interventions of Sexual Violence in University Residences: A Qualitative Descriptive Study

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Abstract:

Sexual violence remains a critical public health and human rights concern globally, with university residences representing complex social environments where vulnerability, power, and peer dynamics intersect. Within higher education institutions, prevention interventions have increasingly been implemented, however, engagement among male students, particularly in residence contexts, remains inconsistent and limited. This highlights a persistent gap in understanding how male students perceive and respond to such initiatives.

This study explores male university students' perceptions of sexual violence prevention interventions, with a focus on their awareness, engagement, and the factors influencing their willingness or reluctance to participate. Guided by Jean Watson's Theory of Human Caring, the study adopts a qualitative descriptive design to foreground relational and ethical dimensions of engagement. Data will be generated through semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions with male students aged 18–25 residing in University of Cape Town residences. Data will be analysed using Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis.

The study examines how social, cultural, and relational factors, such as constructions of masculinity, peer norms, and perceptions of intervention design, influence male students' engagement with prevention programmes. It further explores how integrating caring values, including empathy, respect, and relational accountability, may foster more meaningful and sustained participation.

By positioning male students as active partners in prevention, this study contributes to the development of more inclusive, contextually responsive, and human-centred sexual violence prevention strategies within higher education. The findings are expected to inform gender-transformative approaches and strengthen institutional efforts to address gender-based violence, particularly within the South African university context.

Keywords:

Gender-based violence, sexual violence prevention, male students, university residences, qualitative research.