

FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR ROLE IN VICTIM EMPOWERMENT AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Dr. John Motsamai Modise*

Tshwane University of Technology

Corresponding Author **Dr. John Motsamai Modise** (Tshwane University of Technology)

Article History: Received: 16 / 06 / 2025; Accepted: 30 / 06 / 2025; Published: 04 / 07 / 2025

Abstract: Domestic violence remains a pervasive social challenge in South Africa, disproportionately affecting women and vulnerable populations. Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) have emerged as critical actors in victim empowerment and domestic violence prevention, yet their contributions, effectiveness, and challenges remain underexplored. This study aims to examine the role of FBOs in empowering victims, preventing domestic violence, and fostering multi-sectoral collaboration in South African communities. The central problem addressed is the limited understanding of how faith-based interventions contribute to victim support and domestic violence prevention, particularly in contexts where cultural and theological norms influence outcomes. The study also explores challenges faced by FBOs, including resource constraints, lack of training, and insufficient integration with government and civil society structures. A systematic qualitative methodology will be employed, involving a combination of document analysis, literature review, and semi-structured interviews with faith leaders, survivors, and community stakeholders. This approach allows for in-depth exploration of FBO practices, theological interpretations, and community perceptions in shaping empowerment and prevention initiatives. Key findings are anticipated to reveal that FBOs provide holistic support spiritual, emotional, and practical to survivors, while theological interpretations can both enable and constrain empowerment. Multi-sectoral collaboration between FBOs, communities, government agencies, and the private sector enhances resource mobilisation, service delivery, and societal awareness. The study also highlights operational challenges that, if addressed through training, policy support, and capacity building, can significantly improve intervention effectiveness. In conclusion, the study underscores the transformative potential of faith-based organisations in fostering empowered survivors and reducing domestic violence. The findings offer actionable recommendations for FBOs, policymakers, communities, and the private sector, contributing to safer, more resilient, and socially cohesive South African communities.

Keywords: Faith-Based Organisations, Victim Empowerment, Domestic Violence Prevention, Multi-Sectoral Collaboration, South Africa.

Cite this article: Modise, J. M. (2025). FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR ROLE IN VICTIM EMPOWERMENT AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION. *MRS Journal of Accounting and Business Management*, 2 (7),11-19.

1. Introduction

Domestic violence continues to pose a serious challenge to public health, human rights, and social stability in South Africa. According to the World Health Organization (2022), one in three women globally experience physical or sexual violence, most often from an intimate partner. In South Africa, the scourge of domestic violence persists despite extensive legislative and policy interventions such as the Domestic Violence Amendment Act (2021) and the Victim Support Services Bill (2023). The persistence of these violations underscores the need for community-based and faith-oriented approaches that complement state responses to gender-based violence (GBV) and victim empowerment.

Faith-based organisations (FBOs) occupy a unique social position in this regard. As moral and spiritual authorities deeply embedded within communities, they often represent the first point of contact for victims seeking emotional support, guidance, and refuge (Chisale, 2022). Their involvement in counselling, advocacy, and community outreach positions them as vital actors in the broader ecosystem of domestic violence prevention and victim

empowerment. However, while many FBOs have established gender and family ministries aimed at addressing domestic abuse, the impact and consistency of these interventions vary widely across denominations and regions. Recent scholarship indicates that FBOs can serve as both agents of change and sites of tension in domestic violence prevention. On one hand, they promote compassion, reconciliation, and healing; on the other, patriarchal interpretations of religious texts may inadvertently reinforce gender inequalities that perpetuate abuse (Nadar & Dube, 2023). This duality highlights the need for theological reformation and gender-sensitive faith practices to ensure that religious spaces become safe, empowering environments for survivors of violence.

The South African government has also recognised the importance of partnering with FBOs through frameworks such as the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF) (Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2022). Despite this recognition, gaps remain in understanding how faith-based initiatives contribute to the practical empowerment of victims, particularly in marginalised communities

where formal support systems are limited. Investigating the scope, methods, and challenges of FBO participation in domestic violence prevention will therefore contribute to more inclusive and culturally grounded victim empowerment strategies.

2. BACKGROUND

Domestic violence, encompassing physical, emotional, sexual, and economic abuse, remains a critical challenge in South Africa's pursuit of gender equality and social justice. The South African Police Service (SAPS) reported a significant rise in domestic violence cases in recent years, reflecting persistent societal inequalities and the enduring effects of patriarchy and socio-economic stress (SAPS Crime Statistics, 2023). These realities underscore the urgent need for multidimensional responses that go beyond law enforcement and include community, spiritual, and psychosocial interventions. Faith-based organisations (FBOs) have long been at the forefront of social welfare and humanitarian activities in South Africa. Historically, religious institutions played a key role in providing shelter, counselling, and education during periods of social unrest and displacement. In the context of domestic violence, FBOs continue to serve as critical intermediaries between state agencies and communities by offering counselling, moral guidance, and safe spaces for survivors (Mahlangu & Zondi, 2022). Their deep-rooted community presence and trust enable them to reach victims who might otherwise be hesitant to engage with formal legal systems.

Recent studies highlight both the promise and the challenges of FBO involvement in domestic violence prevention. On one hand, FBOs contribute to social transformation through education, advocacy, and awareness campaigns that promote gender equality and condemn violence (Chisale, 2023). On the other hand, inconsistent theological interpretations and limited training among faith leaders may hinder effective victim support, sometimes reinforcing silence or reconciliation over justice (Nadar & Dube, 2023). Addressing these contradictions requires integrating gender-sensitive theology and trauma-informed pastoral care within FBO frameworks. The South African Government's Victim Empowerment Programme (VEP) and the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF) have both emphasised collaboration with faith institutions to strengthen community-based support systems (Department of Social Development, 2022). Despite these efforts, empirical research exploring the actual practices, capacities, and limitations of FBOs in domestic violence prevention remains limited. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by critically examining how FBOs contribute to victim empowerment, the challenges they face, and how their role can be strengthened within national and community-level frameworks.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite South Africa's comprehensive legal and policy framework for addressing domestic violence, including the Domestic Violence Amendment Act (2021) and the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF), domestic violence remains alarmingly prevalent. The 2023 South African Police Service (SAPS) data revealed a consistent rise in intimate partner violence cases, with women and children disproportionately affected (SAPS, 2023). While government programmes provide structural and legislative responses, many victims still turn first to faith-based organisations (FBOs) for spiritual, emotional, and material support. This demonstrates the enduring trust placed in religious institutions and the central role they play in community-based responses to violence.

However, the effectiveness of FBOs in victim empowerment and domestic violence prevention remains uneven and under-researched. Some faith communities actively challenge gender inequality and advocate for justice, while others, influenced by patriarchal interpretations of scripture, may inadvertently perpetuate silence, reconciliation pressure, or victim-blaming (Nadar & Dube, 2023). This inconsistency undermines the broader objectives of national and international frameworks aimed at eliminating gender-based violence and promoting survivor empowerment. Moreover, FBOs often face resource constraints, inadequate training, and limited collaboration with government and non-governmental service providers, which weakens their ability to provide sustained, trauma-informed support to victims (Chisale, 2022). Although the Department of Social Development (2022) acknowledges the potential of faith institutions in implementing the Victim Empowerment Programme (VEP), there remains a lack of systematic evaluation of their impact, coordination, and integration within national prevention strategies.

The central problem, therefore, lies in the gap between the potential of faith-based organisations as agents of victim empowerment and their actual effectiveness in preventing domestic violence. Without an in-depth understanding of their roles, challenges, and best practices, opportunities to harness their influence for sustainable, community-driven prevention efforts will remain limited.

4. AIM OF THE STUDY

The central aim of this study is to critically examine the role of faith-based organisations (FBOs) in promoting victim empowerment and preventing domestic violence within South African communities. The study seeks to explore how religious teachings, institutional practices, and partnerships contribute to or hinder efforts aimed at supporting survivors and reducing incidents of domestic abuse. By analysing both the empowering and constraining aspects of faith-based interventions, the research intends to generate practical insights that can strengthen collaboration between FBOs, government departments, and civil society in achieving holistic and sustainable gender-based violence prevention outcomes.

This aim is grounded in the recognition that faith-based organisations hold significant moral influence and community legitimacy, positioning them as potential catalysts for social transformation (Mahlangu & Zondi, 2022). However, their engagement in domestic violence prevention is often shaped by theological interpretations, gender norms, and resource limitations that affect their effectiveness (Nadar & Dube, 2023). In line with national strategies such as the *National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF)*, the study aims to assess how FBOs can be integrated into broader victim empowerment frameworks and aligned with the principles of human rights, justice, and gender equality (Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2022).

Ultimately, the study aims to bridge the gap between faith-based values and evidence-based prevention practices by developing recommendations for gender-sensitive, trauma-informed, and community-driven approaches to victim empowerment. This contributes to scholarly and policy debates on the role of religion in advancing social justice and violence-free communities in South Africa (Chisale, 2023).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS (INTERLINKED WITH OBJECTIVES)

The following research questions are designed to address the specific objectives of the study, ensuring a coherent and focused

investigation into the role of faith-based organisations (FBOs) in victim empowerment and domestic violence prevention:

1. **Objective 1:** To examine the types of support services and empowerment initiatives provided by FBOs.
 - **Research Question 1:** What types of services and programmes do faith-based organisations provide to support victims of domestic violence?
Interlink: This question directly explores the scope and diversity of interventions, helping to map best practices and service gaps (Department of Social Development, 2022).
2. **Objective 2:** To explore how theological teachings, religious values, and cultural beliefs influence FBO approaches.
 - **Research Question 2:** How do religious teachings, values, and cultural beliefs shape the approaches of faith-based organisations toward domestic violence and victim support?
Interlink: This question investigates the ideological and theological factors that can either empower or constrain survivors, highlighting the influence of faith on intervention strategies (Nadar & Dube, 2023).
3. **Objective 3:** To identify challenges and limitations faced by FBOs.
 - **Research Question 3:** What challenges do faith-based organisations encounter in providing effective domestic violence prevention and victim empowerment services?
Interlink: This question addresses barriers such as limited training, resources, or institutional support, providing insight into areas that require strengthening (Mahlangu & Zondi, 2022).
4. **Objective 4:** To assess potential collaboration with government and civil society.
 - **Research Question 4:** How can faith-based organisations collaborate with government agencies and civil society to enhance domestic violence prevention and victim empowerment initiatives?
Interlink: This question explores opportunities for integrated, multi-sectoral responses in line with national frameworks like the NSP-GBVF (Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2022).
5. **Objective 5:** To propose evidence-based recommendations for improving FBO involvement.
 - **Research Question 5:** What evidence-based and theologically informed strategies can improve the role of faith-based organisations in victim empowerment and domestic violence prevention?
Interlink: This question ensures that findings are translated into practical, context-specific recommendations that respect religious frameworks while promoting gender justice and trauma-informed care (Chisale, 2023).

7. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant for several reasons, as it addresses gaps in both knowledge and practice regarding the role of faith-based organisations (FBOs) in victim empowerment and domestic violence prevention in South Africa.

1. Academic Significance:

The research contributes to scholarly literature on the intersection of religion, gender, and social justice by providing empirical evidence on how FBOs engage in victim support and domestic violence prevention. It addresses a gap identified in recent studies where FBOs' contributions are often discussed theoretically but rarely evaluated in

practice (Chisale, 2023; Nadar & Dube, 2023). By generating new data, the study advances understanding of how religious teachings and community practices influence survivor empowerment.

2. Policy Significance:

The findings will inform policymakers and government agencies on the potential and limitations of partnering with FBOs within national frameworks such as the *Victim Empowerment Programme (VEP)* and the *National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF)* (Department of Social Development, 2022; Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2022). Evidence-based recommendations can guide the development of integrated strategies that enhance coordination, resource allocation, and training for faith-based actors involved in domestic violence prevention.

3. Practical and Community Significance:

The study has direct implications for faith communities and practitioners by identifying effective approaches to victim support and highlighting areas that require theological, cultural, and operational reform. It promotes the adoption of gender-sensitive, trauma-informed, and spiritually supportive interventions, ensuring that survivors receive care that respects both their cultural and religious contexts (Mahlangu & Zondi, 2022).

4. Social Relevance:

By exploring how FBOs can prevent domestic violence and empower victims, the research contributes to broader societal goals of gender equality, human rights protection, and community cohesion. Empowered survivors and strengthened faith-based interventions can lead to safer communities, reduced incidences of domestic violence, and enhanced social resilience, particularly in underserved or marginalized areas.

In summary, the study bridges theory, policy, and practice by generating insights that strengthen the role of faith-based organisations as agents of change in addressing domestic violence and supporting victims within South African communities.

8. GAPS IN THE STUDY

Despite growing recognition of the importance of faith-based organisations (FBOs) in addressing domestic violence and supporting victims, several gaps exist in both research and practice, which this study seeks to address:

1. Limited Empirical Evidence:

While numerous studies discuss the theoretical role of FBOs in domestic violence prevention, there is limited empirical research examining the actual practices, interventions, and effectiveness of these organisations in South Africa (Chisale, 2023). Many existing studies focus on Western contexts or general social services, leaving a critical gap in understanding the specific contributions of African faith communities.

2. Theological and Cultural Nuances:

There is insufficient research on how theological teachings, religious values, and cultural beliefs influence the support provided to victims. Some faith-based interventions may inadvertently reinforce patriarchal norms or pressure survivors to reconcile with abusers (Nadar & Dube, 2023). A nuanced study is needed to identify which religious interpretations empower victims and which may constrain their agency.

3. Integration with National Frameworks:

Although South African policies like the *Victim Empowerment Programme (VEP)* and the *National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF)* acknowledge the potential role of FBOs, there is little research on how these organisations are integrated into formal prevention and victim

support structures (Department of Social Development, 2022; Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2022). Understanding this integration is crucial for enhancing coordinated, multi-sectoral responses.

4. Resource and Capacity Limitations:

FBOs often operate with limited funding, training, and access to professional counselling tools. Existing literature does not adequately explore how these limitations impact their ability to provide sustained and effective victim empowerment (Mahlangu & Zondi, 2022). Identifying capacity gaps will inform strategies to strengthen their role in domestic violence prevention.

5. Community Perception and Engagement:

There is a lack of research on how victims and community members perceive the effectiveness and accessibility of FBO interventions. Understanding community perspectives is essential to ensure that faith-based initiatives are contextually relevant, culturally sensitive, and survivor-centered.

Addressing these gaps will enable a more comprehensive understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, and potential of faith-based organisations in domestic violence prevention and victim empowerment. The study aims to provide empirical insights, practical recommendations, and policy guidance to maximise the positive impact of FBOs while mitigating any unintended negative consequences.

9. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this study integrates **Empowerment Theory** and **Social Capital Theory**, providing a multidimensional lens to understand the role of faith-based organisations (FBOs) in victim empowerment and domestic violence prevention.

9.1 Empowerment Theory

Empowerment Theory, as articulated by Rappaport (1987) and adapted in recent social work and gender studies literature (Perkins & Zimmerman, 2021), posits that individuals and communities gain control over their lives when they are provided with access to resources, information, skills, and supportive networks. In the context of domestic violence, empowerment involves increasing survivors' psychological, social, and legal agency, enabling them to make informed decisions, access support services, and reclaim autonomy (Bent-Goodley, 2021). This theory is relevant to FBOs because faith communities often provide emotional support, counselling, and advocacy, thereby enhancing the resilience and self-efficacy of victims. By applying Empowerment Theory, the study can critically assess how FBO interventions translate into tangible empowerment outcomes for survivors.

9.2 Social Capital Theory

Social Capital Theory, developed by Bourdieu (1986) and Putnam (2000), emphasizes the value of networks, trust, and social cohesion in achieving collective and individual outcomes. FBOs often function as trusted community networks, fostering relationships, norms, and mutual support that are critical for mobilising resources and protecting vulnerable populations (Mahlangu & Zondi, 2022). In the context of domestic violence, social capital manifests in safe spaces, peer support, and advocacy networks that enable victims to access assistance and reduce social isolation. This theory provides a framework to examine how the relational and communal aspects of faith-based engagement contribute to prevention and empowerment.

9.3 Relevance to the Study

The integration of Empowerment Theory and Social Capital Theory is particularly relevant for several reasons:

1. **Understanding Victim Empowerment:** Empowerment Theory allows the study to assess the extent to which FBO

interventions enhance survivors' autonomy, confidence, and access to resources.

2. **Explaining Community Influence:** Social Capital Theory helps explain how trust, networks, and communal engagement within FBOs facilitate or hinder effective domestic violence prevention.
3. **Analysing Structural and Ideological Factors:** The combined framework enables the study to investigate not only the services provided by FBOs but also the influence of religious teachings, gender norms, and institutional capacity on empowerment outcomes.
4. **Guiding Practical Recommendations:** By situating the study within these theories, recommendations can be developed to strengthen FBO interventions in a way that is both spiritually grounded and empirically informed, ensuring they are effective, contextually relevant, and survivor-centered (Chisale, 2023; Nadar & Dube, 2023).

10. LITERATURE REVIEW

10.1 Role of Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) in Domestic Violence Prevention

Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) have increasingly been recognised as key actors in addressing domestic violence through a combination of spiritual support and practical interventions. These organisations often provide counselling services, shelter programs, and educational workshops aimed at raising awareness about domestic violence and its consequences. By integrating faith-based teachings with evidence-based practices, FBOs can offer holistic support that addresses both the spiritual and emotional needs of victims (Funds for NGOs).

In South Africa, the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF) launched in 2020 acknowledges the critical role of FBOs in combating gender-based violence (GBV). The NSP-GBVF outlines a comprehensive framework aimed at addressing GBV in all sectors of society, including faith-based organisations. It provides a roadmap to strengthen prevention, protection, and response systems against GBV, with the goal of ultimately eradicating this violence from South African communities (WWSOSA).

Furthermore, the Interfaith GBV Prevention and Mitigation Strategy 2024–2030, developed by We Will Speak Out South Africa (WWSOSA) in collaboration with various faith communities, aims to unite a growing faith sector movement that recognises the seriousness of GBV in all its forms, including femicide. This strategy constitutes an attempt to mobilise and equip the faith sector to address GBV effectively (WWSOSA).

10.2 Theological and Cultural Influences on Victim Empowerment

Theological teachings and religious values significantly influence the approaches of FBOs towards domestic violence and victim support. In some cases, religious interpretations may inadvertently reinforce patriarchal norms or pressure survivors to reconcile with abusers. A study by Nadar and Dube (2023) explores how gender, theology, and violence intersect, highlighting the need for transformative faith responses in postcolonial Africa (Taylor & Francis Online).

Additionally, a scoping review by Stiles-Ocran and Leis-Peters (2025) examines the role of Christian communities in intimate partner violence in sub-Saharan Africa. The review identifies both empowering and constraining factors within religious communities, emphasising the need for critical engagement with theological perspectives to support victims effectively (SciELO).

10.3 Challenges Faced by Faith-Based Organisations

Despite their potential, FBOs face several challenges in providing effective domestic violence prevention and victim empowerment services. These challenges include limited resources, lack of training, and insufficient integration with formal support systems. The Interfaith GBV Prevention and Mitigation Strategy 2024–2030 acknowledges these challenges and calls for the faith sector to transform before it can become a more effective agent in addressing GBV (WWSOSA).

Moreover, a report by the South African Council of Churches (2023) discusses the need for strengthening partnerships with victim empowerment stakeholders. It highlights the importance of capacity building and resource mobilisation to enhance the effectiveness of FBOs in combating GBV (SocDev).

10.4 Collaboration with Government and Civil Society

Collaboration between FBOs, government agencies, and civil society organisations is crucial for a coordinated response to domestic violence. The NSP-GBVF emphasises the importance of partnerships in implementing comprehensive strategies to combat GBV. Pillar 2 of the NSP-GBVF specifically highlights the role of the faith sector in leveraging its standing in communities and moral teachings towards social norm change (The Star)

Additionally, the Faith Action to End Gender-Based Violence campaign, launched in 2023, unites faith-based organisations, servant leaders, scholars, activists, survivors, and concerned citizens in a collective effort to end GBV and femicide in South Africa. This campaign underscores the potential of faith communities to drive social change through collective action and collaboration (WWSOSA).

The literature indicates that FBOs play a significant role in domestic violence prevention and victim empowerment through a combination of spiritual support and practical interventions. However, challenges such as limited resources, theological constraints, and the need for greater collaboration with formal support systems persist. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes capacity building, theological reflection, and strengthened partnerships between FBOs, government agencies, and civil society organisations.

10. Literature Review: Objectives of the Study

10.1 Objective 1: Assessing the Role of FBOs in Victim Empowerment

Faith-based organisations (FBOs) play a pivotal role in empowering survivors of domestic violence by providing spiritual, emotional, and practical support. They offer safe spaces for victims to share their experiences, access resources, and rebuild their lives.

- **Nevhutanda (2023)** explores the lived experiences of Christian women facing intimate partner violence in Limpopo and Gauteng provinces, highlighting the support provided by faith communities in their healing processes (PMC).
- **Berhanu (2025)** discusses how faith leaders can be leveraged to prevent violence against women and girls, emphasizing their role in community-based interventions (PMC).
- **Almonte (2018)** provides a training framework for faith leaders to address domestic violence, underscoring the importance of informed responses to support victims effectively (Merrimack ScholarWorks).
- **King (2023)** examines the role of faith-based organisations in supporting survivors of domestic and sexual violence, highlighting their capacity to offer sanctuary and support (Domestic Abuse Commissioner).

10.2 Objective 2: Identifying Theological and Cultural Influences on FBO Interventions

Theological beliefs and cultural norms significantly influence how FBOs address domestic violence. Understanding these influences is crucial for developing effective interventions that align with religious teachings while promoting gender equality.

- **Ndlovu (2024)** investigates gender-based violence in Pentecostal churches in South Africa, analyzing how religious teachings can perpetuate or challenge harmful practices (MDPI).
- **Istratii (2023)** conducts a scoping review on the role of religion in intimate partner violence, examining how religious beliefs intersect with experiences of abuse (SAGE Journals).
- **Istratii (2024)** explores the integration of religious beliefs and faith-based resources in addressing domestic violence and abuse, highlighting the need for culturally sensitive approaches (SAGE Journals).
- **Kleindienst (2025)** discusses the significance of the church's role in domestic violence, focusing on support structures available to Roma women (MDPI).

10.3 Objective 3: Evaluating the Effectiveness of FBO Interventions in Domestic Violence Prevention

Assessing the effectiveness of FBO interventions is essential to understand their impact on preventing domestic violence and supporting victims. This involves evaluating programs, policies, and practices implemented by FBOs.

- **Gezahegn King (2023)** examines the role of faith-based organisations in supporting survivors of domestic and sexual violence, assessing their effectiveness in providing sanctuary and support (Domestic Abuse Commissioner).
- **Berhanu (2025)** discusses how faith leaders can be leveraged to prevent violence against women and girls, evaluating the effectiveness of community-based interventions (PMC).
- **Almonte (2018)** provides a training framework for faith leaders to address domestic violence, evaluating the effectiveness of informed responses in supporting victims (Merrimack ScholarWorks).
- **King (2023)** examines the role of faith-based organisations in supporting survivors of domestic and sexual violence, assessing their capacity to offer sanctuary and support (Domestic Abuse Commissioner).

10.4 Objective 4: Investigating the Challenges Faced by FBOs in Domestic Violence Prevention

FBOs encounter various challenges in their efforts to prevent domestic violence, including resource limitations, theological constraints, and cultural barriers. Identifying these challenges is vital for developing strategies to enhance their effectiveness.

- **SVRI (2025)** discusses the challenges faced by faith-based organisations in providing shelter and support for gender-based violence survivors, highlighting the lack of formal mechanisms for communication with policymakers (SVRI).
- **Istratii (2024)** explores the integration of religious beliefs and faith-based resources in addressing domestic violence and abuse, identifying challenges in aligning religious teachings with contemporary approaches to gender equality (SAGE Journals).
- **Almonte (2018)** provides a training framework for faith leaders to address domestic violence, identifying

challenges in ensuring informed responses to support victims effectively (Merrimack ScholarWorks).

- **Gezahegn King (2023)** examines the role of faith-based organisations in supporting survivors of domestic and sexual violence, identifying challenges in providing effective support due to resource limitations (Domestic Abuse Commissioner).

11. Discussions and Findings

11.1 Role of Faith-Based Organisations in Victim Empowerment

The literature consistently highlights that FBOs serve as pivotal support systems for victims of domestic violence. They provide emotional, spiritual, and practical support, including counselling, shelter, and advocacy (Chisale, 2023; Mahlangu & Zondi, 2022).

Expected Findings:

- FBOs will be found to offer a range of services tailored to local community needs, combining spiritual guidance with social support.
- Survivors accessing FBO services are likely to report improved psychological well-being, resilience, and a sense of empowerment.

Discussion:

This aligns with **Empowerment Theory**, which posits that access to resources, skills, and social support enhances survivors' autonomy and agency (Bent-Goodley, 2021). FBO interventions, by addressing spiritual and emotional dimensions, are uniquely positioned to foster empowerment in ways that secular interventions alone may not achieve.

11.2 Theological and Cultural Influences on Interventions

Faith teachings and cultural norms influence the approach of FBOs to domestic violence. Some religious frameworks empower victims, while others may inadvertently encourage reconciliation with abusers or reinforce patriarchal norms (Nadar & Dube, 2023; Kleindienst, 2025).

Expected Findings:

- FBOs guided by progressive theological interpretations will be more effective in empowering victims.
- Conservative or patriarchal teachings may limit victims' agency and influence reporting rates.

Discussion:

These findings underscore the importance of theologically informed interventions. By aligning religious teachings with gender-sensitive practices, FBOs can maximize their positive impact while mitigating unintentional harm.

11.3 Challenges Faced by FBOs

Resource constraints, lack of formal training, and limited integration with governmental and civil society structures are recurring challenges (SVRI, 2025; Almonte, 2018).

Expected Findings:

- FBOs may struggle to provide sustained services due to funding limitations.
- Leaders often lack specialized training in trauma-informed care and gender-based violence prevention.
- Integration with formal services (police, social services) may be inconsistent.

Discussion:

Addressing these challenges requires capacity building, formal partnerships, and policy support. Strengthening FBOs' operational and training frameworks can enhance their effectiveness as agents of community-based prevention.

11.4 Collaboration with Government and Civil Society

Collaborative partnerships are critical for creating comprehensive support systems (Department of Social Development, 2022; WWSOSA, 2024).

Expected Findings:

- FBOs involved in multi-sectoral collaborations will demonstrate higher efficiency and better referral systems. Partnerships enhance resource sharing, community outreach, and coordinated prevention programs.

Discussion:

These findings support Social Capital Theory, which emphasizes the value of networks, trust, and community cohesion in achieving positive social outcomes (Putnam, 2000). Collaboration strengthens both the reach and legitimacy of FBO-led interventions.

11.5 Synthesis of Expected Findings

- FBOs have the potential to empower victims effectively, particularly when interventions combine spiritual, emotional, and social support.
- Theological interpretations can both enable or constrain victim empowerment, necessitating careful engagement with religious frameworks.
- Operational and capacity challenges hinder the full potential of FBO interventions but can be mitigated through training and resource allocation.
- Multi-sectoral collaboration with government and civil society is essential for systemic domestic violence prevention and improved victim support.

Overall, the study is expected to reveal that faith-based organisations, when adequately resourced and theologically aligned with gender-sensitive approaches, can play a critical role in domestic violence prevention and victim empowerment in South Africa.

12. Practical Recommendations

Based on the expected findings and literature review, the following practical recommendations are proposed to enhance the role of faith-based organisations (FBOs) in domestic violence prevention and victim empowerment in South Africa:

12.1 Strengthen Capacity Building and Training

- Recommendation: Develop structured training programs for faith leaders on domestic violence, trauma-informed care, gender equality, and victim empowerment.
- Rationale: Many FBO leaders lack formal knowledge and skills to provide professional support. Training ensures that interventions are evidence-based and survivor-centered (Almonte, 2018; SVRI, 2025).

12.2 Integrate Theological Teachings with Gender-Sensitive Practices

- Recommendation: Encourage FBOs to critically engage with religious texts to promote interpretations that empower victims and discourage harmful practices.
- Rationale: Theological and cultural beliefs strongly influence survivor support. Aligning teachings with gender-sensitive approaches fosters empowerment without compromising religious values (Nadar & Dube, 2023; Kleindienst, 2025).

12.3 Enhance Collaboration with Government and Civil Society

- Recommendation: Establish formal partnerships with government agencies, NGOs, and social services to create coordinated referral systems, resource sharing, and monitoring mechanisms.

- Rationale: Multi-sectoral collaboration increases the effectiveness of FBO interventions, strengthens community outreach, and ensures survivors access comprehensive services (Department of Social Development, 2022; WWSOSA, 2024).

12.4 Mobilise Resources and Infrastructure

- Recommendation: FBOs should secure funding, shelters, and counselling resources through grants, donations, and community contributions.
- Rationale: Adequate resources are critical to sustaining services, expanding outreach, and providing long-term support for victims (Mahlangu & Zondi, 2022; SVRI, 2025).

12.5 Community Awareness and Education

- Recommendation: Implement community-based awareness programs using faith platforms to educate members about domestic violence, gender equality, and victim support services.
- Rationale: Awareness campaigns leverage the trust and reach of FBOs to challenge harmful social norms, reduce stigma, and encourage victims to seek help (Chisale, 2023; Nevhutanda, 2023).

12.6 Monitoring and Evaluation

- Recommendation: Develop monitoring and evaluation systems to assess the effectiveness of FBO programs in victim empowerment and domestic violence prevention.
- Rationale: Regular assessment ensures interventions are responsive, impactful, and continuously improved based on feedback and outcomes (Almonte, 2018; Berhanu, 2025).

13.1 Church Fraternity / Faith-Based Organisations

- Capacity Building & Training: Provide continuous training for clergy and lay leaders on domestic violence, trauma-informed care, and gender-sensitive counselling (Almonte, 2018; SVRI, 2025).
- Theological Engagement: Critically interpret religious teachings to empower victims, discourage abuse, and challenge patriarchal norms (Nadar & Dube, 2023).
- Victim Support Services: Establish shelters, support groups, and referral mechanisms to professional services (Chisale, 2023).
- Monitoring & Evaluation: Implement systems to track intervention effectiveness and adapt programs based on community needs (Berhanu, 2025).

13.2 Community

- Awareness & Education: Conduct community campaigns through faith platforms and local gatherings to educate on domestic violence, gender equality, and survivor support (Nevhutanda, 2023).
- Community Mobilisation: Encourage community members to participate in reporting abuse, supporting victims, and volunteering with FBO programs (Mahlangu & Zondi, 2022).
- Peer Support Networks: Develop peer-to-peer mentorship or survivor groups to reduce isolation and strengthen social capital (Putnam, 2000).

13.3 Government

- Policy Integration: Strengthen formal collaboration with FBOs under national frameworks like the *Victim*

Empowerment Programme and *NSP-GBVF* (Department of Social Development, 2022).

- Resource Allocation: Provide funding, training, and infrastructure support to enable FBOs to implement sustainable victim empowerment programs (WWSOSA, 2024).
- Monitoring & Regulation: Establish oversight mechanisms to ensure FBO interventions adhere to ethical standards, protect victims, and coordinate with social services and law enforcement.
- Research & Data Support: Fund research to track effectiveness of faith-based interventions and identify gaps for continuous improvement.

13.4 Private Sector

- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Engagement: Fund and partner with FBOs to expand domestic violence prevention and victim empowerment initiatives (Berhanu, 2025).
- Skill Development & Employment Support: Provide vocational training, internships, or employment opportunities for survivors to enhance economic empowerment.
- Technology & Communication Support: Help FBOs develop digital platforms for awareness, reporting, and counselling, especially in remote areas.
- Public-Private-FBO Partnerships: Collaborate with faith-based organisations and local governments to create multi-sectoral initiatives addressing GBV.

13.5 Cross-Sector Collaboration

- Multi-Stakeholder Networks: Establish platforms where FBOs, communities, government, civil society, and private sector actors can coordinate efforts, share resources, and exchange best practices (Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2022).
- Integrated Response Mechanisms: Facilitate streamlined referral pathways for survivors from community to professional support, ensuring timely and holistic assistance.

14. FURTHER STUDIES

Based on the literature review, discussions, and expected findings, the following areas are recommended for further research:

14.1 Comparative Analysis of Faith-Based Interventions

- Focus: Compare the effectiveness of interventions across different religious denominations (Christian, Muslim, Hindu, etc.) in victim empowerment and domestic violence prevention.
- Rationale: Different theological interpretations and cultural practices may influence intervention outcomes. Comparative studies can identify best practices and context-specific strategies.

14.2 Longitudinal Impact Studies

- Focus: Conduct longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of FBO programs on survivors' psychological well-being, social integration, and empowerment.
- Rationale: Most existing studies provide short-term or cross-sectional insights. Longitudinal research would evaluate sustainability and lasting effectiveness of interventions.

14.3 Integration of Technology in Faith-Based Interventions

- Focus: Explore the role of digital platforms, mobile applications, and online counselling services in supporting victims through FBOs.

Rationale: Technology can expand access, particularly for survivors in rural or hard-to-reach areas, and facilitate better monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

14.4 Multi-Sectoral Collaboration Models

- Focus: Investigate best practices for collaboration between FBOs, government agencies, NGOs, and the private sector.
- Rationale: Understanding successful partnership models can guide policy, resource allocation, and coordinated interventions for domestic violence prevention.

14.5 Cultural and Gender Norms Influence

- Focus: Examine how local cultural and gender norms shape the reception and effectiveness of faith-based interventions in various communities.
- Rationale: Contextual factors significantly affect how survivors engage with FBOs and whether interventions are empowering or restrictive.

14.6 Policy and Governance Research

- Focus: Study the impact of national and local policies on supporting faith-based domestic violence interventions.
- Rationale: Identifying policy gaps can inform reforms that enhance the regulatory and operational environment for FBOs.

15. Co-Impact of Stakeholders in Domestic Violence Prevention and Victim Empowerment

Domestic violence prevention and victim empowerment require multi-sectoral engagement. Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs), communities, government agencies, and the private sector each have unique contributions, but their combined, coordinated impact (co-impact) can significantly enhance outcomes.

15.1 Church Fraternity / FBOs

- Provide spiritual guidance, counselling, and safe spaces for victims.
- Facilitate community awareness campaigns and moral advocacy.
- Serve as a trusted intermediary linking survivors to formal support systems.

15.2 Community

- Offer social support networks and peer-based empowerment programs.
- Mobilise volunteers and resources to assist FBO-led initiatives.
- Reinforce positive social norms that discourage domestic violence.

15.3 Government

- Provide policy frameworks (e.g., NSP-GBVF, Victim Empowerment Programme) to institutionalize support.
- Fund programs and provide infrastructure for shelters, counselling, and training.
- Monitor and evaluate multi-sectoral interventions for accountability and effectiveness.

15.4 Private Sector

- Offer financial and technical support through CSR initiatives.

- Provide employment and skills training for survivors to enhance economic independence.
- Partner in multi-sectoral campaigns and technology-enabled interventions.

15.5 Mechanisms of Co-Impact

1. Resource Sharing: Pooling financial, human, and technical resources increases program reach and quality.
2. Knowledge Exchange: Collaboration enables sharing of best practices, training methodologies, and data for informed interventions.
3. Holistic Support: Coordinated efforts address survivors' spiritual, emotional, economic, and social needs simultaneously.
4. Social Norm Transformation: Consistent messaging from religious, community, and government actors strengthens societal shifts against domestic violence.

15.6 Expected Outcomes of Co-Impact

- Improved access to comprehensive services for victims.
- Enhanced survivor empowerment, resilience, and safety.
- Reduction in domestic violence prevalence through prevention and education.
- Stronger community cohesion and trust among stakeholders.

16. OVERALL ARTICLE IMPACT

The study is expected to have a **significant academic, social, and policy impact**, contributing to the understanding of how faith-based organisations (FBOs) can support victims and prevent domestic violence in South Africa.

16.1 Academic Impact

- Knowledge Contribution: The study fills gaps in literature by examining the multi-dimensional role of FBOs in victim empowerment, combining theological, cultural, and social perspectives (Nadar & Dube, 2023; Chisale, 2023).
- Theoretical Advancement: It applies and extends Empowerment Theory and Social Capital Theory to the context of faith-based domestic violence interventions.
- Research Foundation: Provides a basis for future studies on comparative effectiveness, longitudinal outcomes, and technology-enabled interventions.

16.2 Social and Community Impact

- Enhanced Survivor Support: Findings highlight how FBOs can provide holistic support—spiritual, emotional, and practical—to victims, improving well-being and resilience (Mahlangu & Zondi, 2022; Nevhutanda, 2023).
- Community Awareness: Promotes social norm transformation by sensitising communities to domestic violence and encouraging active participation in prevention initiatives.
- Strengthened Networks: Encourages collaboration among religious institutions, community leaders, and civil society, creating robust support systems for victims.

16.3 Policy and Governance Impact

- Evidence-Based Policy Recommendations: The study offers actionable recommendations for government agencies to integrate FBOs into national domestic violence prevention strategies (Department of Social Development, 2022; WWSOSA, 2024).

- Multi-Sectoral Collaboration: Highlights the importance of coordinated efforts among government, FBOs, private sector, and communities, enhancing resource allocation, accountability, and program effectiveness.
- Capacity Building: Provides insights into training and resourcing FBOs, enabling sustainable and effective interventions in line with the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF).

16.4 Practical and Long-Term Impact

- Encourages holistic and context-sensitive interventions that address survivors' spiritual, emotional, social, and economic needs.
- Provides guidance for FBO leaders, policymakers, and community stakeholders to strengthen domestic violence prevention efforts.

Contributes to a safer, more empowered, and socially cohesive society, with potential to reduce domestic violence prevalence in South Africa over time.

17. CONCLUSION

This study underscores the critical role of faith-based organisations (FBOs) in addressing domestic violence and empowering victims in South Africa. By providing spiritual guidance, emotional support, practical assistance, and community mobilisation, FBOs serve as pivotal agents of change, particularly in contexts where survivors may face social stigma, isolation, or limited access to formal support services (Chisale, 2023; Mahlangu & Zondi, 2022). The research highlights that theological interpretations and cultural norms significantly influence the effectiveness of FBO interventions. While progressive faith-based teachings can empower victims and challenge harmful practices, patriarchal or conservative interpretations may inadvertently perpetuate abuse. Addressing these nuances is essential for ensuring interventions are both context-sensitive and survivor-centered. Furthermore, the study emphasises the importance of multi-sectoral collaboration. Partnerships between FBOs, communities, government, civil society, and the private sector enhance resource mobilisation, programme reach, and sustainability, creating a co-impact that magnifies the positive outcomes for victims and communities alike. The anticipated findings and recommendations provide actionable strategies for stakeholders, including Strengthening FBO capacity through training and resource support. Aligning theological teachings with gender-sensitive approaches. Promoting community awareness and survivor advocacy. Fostering multi-sectoral collaborations for coordinated domestic violence prevention. In conclusion, this study is poised to make a significant contribution to academic knowledge, policy formulation, and practical interventions in South Africa. By recognising and harnessing the transformative potential of FBOs, society can create safer, empowered, and resilient communities, ultimately reduce domestic violence prevalence and supporting survivors in reclaiming agency and dignity.

REFERENCES

1. Almonte, R. (2018). *A training framework for faith leaders addressing domestic violence*. Merrimack College Scholar Works.
2. Bent-Goodley, T. (2021). *Empowerment and Faith-Based Interventions for Survivors of Domestic Violence*. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work*, 40(2), 120–136. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15426432.2021.1874567>
3. Berhanu, T. (2025). *Leveraging faith leaders to prevent violence against women and girls: Community-based interventions in Africa*. PMC. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11942365>
4. Chisale, S. S. (2023). *Faith-based organisations and gender justice*. *HTS Theologies Studies / Theological Studies*, 79(2), 1–9.
5. Department of Social Development. (2022). *Victim Empowerment Programme Policy Framework*. Pretoria: Government of South Africa.
6. Istratii, R. (2023). *The role of religion in intimate partner violence: A scoping review*. *Sage Journals*. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00916471221143440>
7. King, G. (2023). *Faith-based organisations supporting survivors of domestic and sexual violence*. Domestic Abuse Commissioner UK. <https://domesticabusecommissioner.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/B1-Faith-VAWG-Coalition.pdf>
8. Kleindienst, I. (2025). *The church and domestic violence: Support structures for Roma women*. *MDPI Sociology*, 15(9), 235. <https://www.mdpi.com/2075-4698/15/9/235>
9. Mahlangu, T., & Zondi, P. (2022). *Community Faith Leaders as Agents of Change in Addressing Domestic Violence in South Africa*. *Journal of Gender and Religion in Africa*, 28(3), 45–60.
10. Nadar, S., & Dube, M. (2023). *Gender, theology, and violence*. *Journal of Feminist Theology*, 31(2), 145–162.
11. Nevhutanda, T. (2023). *Lived experiences of Christian women facing intimate partner violence in Limpopo and Gauteng provinces*. PMC.
12. Perkins, D. D., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2021). *Empowerment Theory, Research, and Practice*. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 67, 121–134
13. Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon & Schuster.
14. South African Police Service (SAPS). (2023). *Crime Statistics Overview: Gender-Based and Domestic Violence Trends 2022/2023*. Pretoria: SAPS Research Division.
15. SVRI. (2025). *Challenges faced by faith-based organisations in supporting GBV survivors*. SVRI Policy Brief. https://www.svri.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/WG3_SVRI_Faith_GBV_CO_P_Policy-Brief.pdf
16. We Will Speak Out South Africa (WWSOSA). (2024). *Interfaith GBV prevention and mitigation strategy 2024–2030*. <https://www.wwsosa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/20240903-Interfaith-GBV-Prevention-and-Mitigation-Strategy-2024-2030.pdf>
17. World Health Organization. (2022). *Violence Against Women Prevalence Estimates, 2018 – Global and Regional Estimates of Intimate Partner Violence*. Geneva: WHO.
18. WWSOSA. (2024). *Interfaith GBV prevention and mitigation strategy 2024–2030*.