"He asked me to pray afterward":

Exploring Cheryl Zondi's mediated court testimony as a narrative of clergy sexual abuse

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Declaration

I declare that *"He asked me to pray afterward": Exploring Cheryl Zondi's mediated court testimony as a narrative of clergy sexual abuse* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Ashleigh Petersen

Date: 08 November 2021

Signed:

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Dedication

To my parents, the late Robert Garret Petersen and Georgina Jannus Petersen,

for raising me to believe that anything was possible.

Mother, anything good that has come to my life has been because of your example, guidance, love, and prayers.

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I'll be quiet when we can say *sexual assault* and they stop screaming *liar*

-Rupi Kaur

Abstract

South Africa has one of the highest rape statistics in the world, and there are increasing reports of women who have been violated and abused in religious institutions, specifically by clergy. Research on clergy sexual abuse has been limited to research methods that rely on court transcripts or interviews and focus group discussions. Studies that seek to understand social and religious attitudes about sexual abuse often rely on surveys and other conventional forms of research. Drawing on the court testimony of Cheryl Zondi, who was sexually abused by her pastor, Timothy Omotoso, this study aimed to explore how social media provides a site for exploring the ways in which patriarchal religious understandings of gender and power are supported or challenged through a narrative of sexual abuse. The posting of Zondi's testimony on YouTube, a social media and video-sharing site, presented an alternative way of producing and presenting narratives. The comment section created a platform to debate and discuss religion and belief systems in a context where these discussions about a court case would have been restricted to scholars of the law, and by extension, scholars of religion.

The findings indicate that social media users had various ways of engaging with Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse. Their engagement with her narrative derived from influences, teachings, and norms instilled in individuals by social, political, educational and religious institutions. While some social media users vilified Zondi, and supported Omotoso, the majority of social media users, surprisingly, challenged or rejected patriarchal religious sexual and gender norms and supported Zondi. The dissertation provides crucial insights regarding patriarchal religious norms relating to gender and sexuality that are essential for researchers interested in how individuals engage with sexual and faith-based norms.
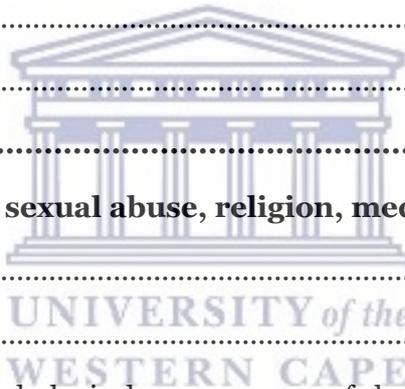
Key terms: Cheryl Zondi, clergy sexual abuse, religion and social media, gender and power, YouTube
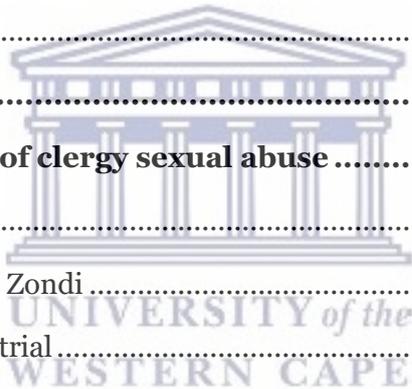
Table of Contents

Chapter One

Introduction
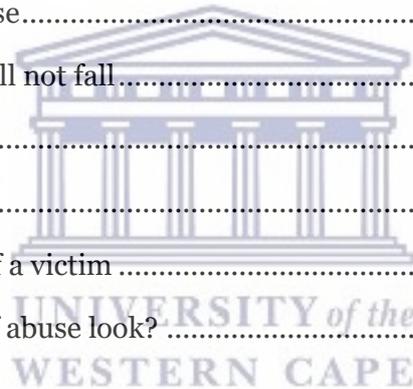
1.1. Background and context of the study

Comparatively, South Africa has one of the highest rape statistics in the world. Between 2019 and 2020, South Africa's crime statistics reported 53 293 cases of sexual offences, with 42 289 reported cases being that of rape (Africa Check, 2020). These are only statistics of the reported cases. Accordingly, women are taught from a young age to "modify their behaviour and adjust all aspects of their life" to avoid getting raped (Gqola, 2015:73). Unfortunately, most of these years of preparation and coaching are in vain. South Africa's reality is that not only are the streets dangerous places for women, but their homes and even places such as religious institutions are sites for violation, and the perpetrators are neighbours, relatives, educational and religious leaders.

The rape trial of Timothy Omotoso, a senior pastor in the *Jesus Dominion International Church*, is one case in point. In 2018, Omotoso's rape trial was made public on various social media sites, including YouTube. Omotoso and his two co-accusers face ninety-seven charges, including rape, human trafficking, and racketeering, after more than thirty young women disclosed their experiences of clergy sexual abuse by Omotoso (Mkhize, 2017; Koen, 2019). At the centre of this trial was a young Black Christian woman named Cheryl Zondi. eNews Channel Africa (eNCA) posted Zondi's entire video testimony on YouTube. In addition to broadcast media, YouTube provided the means for the public to watch and engage with the court proceedings. In response to her testimony, social media user comments displayed several polemical discourses supporting and challenging normative religious understandings of gender and power.

Unlike broadcast media, which only allows the public to receive information from journalists and news reporters; social media offers a more dialogical space - users can discuss, debate, and share their views and experiences of Zondi's narrative. Social media, arguably, commissions the public to become a part of the court proceedings. Her testimony provided crucial insights into the tactics and approaches used by clergy members to manipulate and abuse women. Hence, the posting of her testimony online provides a critical theoretical and methodological opportunity to understand the specificities of the ways that religion and media

are implicated in issues of gender and power in this context. These intersections are the focus of this study.

1.2. Preliminary literature review

Studies on narratives of clergy sexual abuse within South Africa are still very few, though the body of literature is growing. An exploratory study like this will contribute to the growing body of literature that addresses how social media can be used as a site to mediate experiences, create narratives and debate patriarchal religious understandings of gender and power in the context of a case of clergy sexual abuse.

1.2.1. Clergy sexual abuse

Marie Fortune (2013:15) describes clergy sexual abuse as "male ministers, priests, prophets, or religious leaders who make sexual advances or propositions to persons in the congregation." Jason Fogler, Jillian Shipherd, Erin Rowe, Jennifer Jensen, and Stephanie Clarke (2008:303) understand clergy-perpetrated sexual abuse as inappropriate sexual advances by a clergy person. Several scholars offer explanations for clergy sexual abuse (Birchard, 2000; Kennedy, 2003; Robison, 2004; van Wormer and Berns, 2004; Ferro, 2005; Flynn, 2008; Fogler *et al.*, 2008; Garland and Argueta, 2010). Their research reveals various perceptions from the abuse being understood as an affair to the offending clergy diagnosed with a personality disorder.

For example, studies conducted by Thaddeus Birchard (2000), Margaret Kennedy (2003), and Diana Garland and Christen Argueta (2010) drew on an extensive range of sources to assess the causes, frequencies, and reasoning behind clergy sexual abuse. Other studies conducted by Katherine van Wormer and Lois Berns (2004), Kathryn Flynn (2008), and Fogler, Shipherd, Rowe, Jensen, and Clarke (2008) examined trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, and its effects on women who were abused by clergy. Through a qualitative exploration of narratives from semi-structured interviews, Flynn (2008) found that women sexually abused by clergy experienced symptoms associated with complex post-traumatic stress disorder. Fogler *et al.* (2008) used an empirically informed model consisting of three themes to capture the complexities and nuances of clergy-perpetrated sexual abuse. Studies conducted by Blue (1993), Birchard (2004), and Pretorius (2007) suggest that personality disorder is a leading

cause of perpetuating the abuse. While Brewster (1996), Cooper-White (2012), and Fortune (2013) might agree with the studies above, they assert that power dynamics are essential to consider when characterising the clergy member's actions as a result of mental illness. In other words, these scholars argue that the abuse is rooted in power difference and control rather than mental illness or sexual desire. Power difference is a central theme of this dissertation, not least of all because the issue of power emerged at several points throughout Zondi's testimony and within the comments made by social media users. As mentioned above, YouTube enabled the public to watch and engage with the court proceedings. Therefore, the following section gives a brief overview of the intersections of religion, media, and gender.

1.2.2. Religion, media, and gender

Previously there was a scarcity of scholarship addressing gender in religion and media studies. However, a visible increase in the scholarship addressing the gender-blind spot can be detected (Dipio, 2009; Lövheim, 2013; Scharnick-Udemans, 2017). Mia Lövheim, a leading scholar of religion and gender, addresses the gender-blind spot in the collection *Media, Religion, and Gender: Key Issues and New Challenges* (2013). This collection is the most prominent text in the field of gender in religion and media. Unfortunately, none of the contributors of the collection is African or African women.

Recently, a special volume of essays in the *African Journal of Gender and Religion* (2019) focused on the intersections of religion, media, and gender in Africa. Six of the seven contributors were from Africa. As a result, this special issue expanded the literature on gender in religion and media from an African context, and this thesis seeks to contribute to this growing body of work on the continent.

1.3. Summary of the research problem

Research on clergy sexual abuse has been limited to research methods that rely on court transcripts or interviews and focus group discussions. Studies that seek to understand social and religious attitudes about sexual abuse often rely on surveys and other conventional forms of research. This study aims to explore how social media provides a site for exploring the ways in which patriarchal religious understandings of gender and power are supported or challenged through a narrative of sexual abuse. The posting of Zondi's testimony on YouTube, a social media and video-sharing site, presents an alternative way of producing and presenting

narratives. The comment section creates a platform to debate and discuss religion and belief systems in a context where these discussions about a court case would have been restricted to scholars of the law, and by extension, scholars of religion. The data set from the comments section contain important debates regarding patriarchal religious norms relating to gender and sexuality that are essential for researchers interested in how individuals engage with sexual and faith-based norms.

In large part, the primary findings of scholarship on clergy sexual abuse focuses on the causes, frequency and effects of clergy sexual abuse. As mentioned above, the experiences of sexual abuse are mainly explored through the lived experiences of survivors and perpetrators through conventional research methods. Narratives of clergy sexual abuse told through social media lacks prominence in the scholarship. This study, seeks to examine Zondi's mediated lived experience. By examining Zondi's testimony, this research explores how various factors, such as patriarchal norms, manipulation, and spiritual abuse, can be explored via social media platforms. Furthermore, the research provides essential insights into how social media is becoming a popular site for setting the agenda to discuss previously sensitive and private matters, as well as for producing and presenting narratives. While religion and media research are increasingly using gender as an analytical category with religion and media research, the underrepresentation of African women's lived experiences remains a concern. African women's voices and gendered experiences have been minimal in media scholarship. Examinations of the narratives and public engagement on social media are able to address the dearth in scholarship. Therefore, this study contributes to expanding the existing canon of religion, media, and gender studies.

1.4. Research questions and objectives

The central research question seeks to explore how social media users support and challenge patriarchal religious understandings of gender and power in the context of a case of clergy sexual abuse. Three sub-questions help to probe the data to provide insight into the central research question. The sub-questions are:

1. What is Cheryl Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse?

2. How do social media users engage with Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse?

3. Why do social media users engage with Zondi's narrative in the way that they do?

The research objectives are:

1. To describe Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse.

2. To examine how social media users engage with Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse.

3. To analyse why social media users engage with Zondi's narrative in the way that they do.

1.5. Theoretical and methodological framing

Michelle Lazar (2014:180) asserts that globally, women "continue to live with patriarchy and sexism, even in societies where legislation against overt forms of sexism, gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, and physical violence against women are commonplace." This dissertation employed a feminist theoretical and methodological framework. Feminist epistemology focuses on novel and alternative knowledge production methods and critiques normative academic sources and knowledge systems. Feminist scholarship is interested in alternative forms of research and knowledge production. By doing so, feminist scholars seek to eliminate the power imbalance between the researcher and the research 'subject' to promote social justice by including the voices and experiences of women. More so, feminism does not only consider what is said but how it is said. It also questions who produces knowledge and who is the receiver of the knowledge.

The feminist theoretical frameworks that guide this research are feminist framings of clergy sexual abuse and African feminist theology. Feminist framing of sexual abuse offers an alternative way of studying sexual abuse in that it is interested in the victim of abuse and her experience (Motsei, 2007; Allnock and Barnes, 2011; Gqola, 2015). It is concerned with the statistics of sexual abuse and what perpetuates it, and how it intersects with religious and social institutions and their teachings.

African feminist theology is a specific branch of feminism that critically studies the relationship between religious beliefs, cultural norms and gendered oppression. As a theoretical framework, it examines how Christian doctrine and biblical texts have been used to control, oppress and assign particular norms to women. Therefore, an African feminist theological framing provides an essential lens for a case such as this in the South African context.

1.6. YouTube and the commentary as a site of research

"YouTube is a video-sharing service where users can watch, like, share, comment, and upload videos" (Arikkök, 2021:15). Subscribers can use YouTube for various reasons; a few include amateur videos, vlogs, advertising, and campaigning, among other things (Strangelove, 2010; Burgess and Green, 2013). However, in this dissertation, I have investigated how YouTube is used for engagement and community building, specifically how important topics are debated and discussed within the online communities that participate in discussions via the comments section. YouTube's comment space provides an online platform for diverse voices and debates. Within the research design chapter, I have conceptualised YouTube and the commentary as research and knowledge production sites.

In this dissertation, I demonstrated that the video testimony of Zondi streamed via YouTube can be conceptualised as a narrative of clergy sexual abuse. Moreover, multiple narratives can be created from some of the comments made by social media users, about the phenomenon of clergy sexual abuse. I explored how utilising social media is significant in understanding how social media users react, engage, and support or challenge patriarchal norms, in this case of clergy sexual abuse.

1.7. Internet research ethics

The Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) guidelines 2019 (Internet Research Ethics 3.0) "is a collaborative document written primarily for researchers, students, or technical developers who face ethical concerns or are generally interested in Internet Research Ethics (IRE)" (franzke, Bechmann, Zimmer, Ess, and the Association of Internet Researchers (2020:2). The guidelines are committed to ensuring that researchers conduct research on and about the Internet ethically and professionally. Like any other research in the social sciences and humanities, internet research involves human participants. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure the dignity and integrity of the participants. Feminist research ethics draws on an Ethics of Care in ensuring that while "caring for our bodies, communities, and research subjects, we are acting ethically" (franzke, 2020:65). As a result, feminist IRE thinks about data and "its communication informed by direct experience by committing to action associated with intersectional feminist thought" (franzke, 2020:68).

1.8. Chapter outline

This chapter provided the background and context of the study. In the preliminary literature review, I situated my research within broader discussions of sexual abuse in South Africa. I examined the scholarship of gender in the study of religion and media. I discussed a summary of the research problem, followed by the questions which guided this research. The chapter provided a brief overview of the dissertation's theoretical and methodological framings that explains why feminist framings best suit this research. After that, I discussed YouTube and the commentary as a site for research and the Internet Research Ethics as a tool for being to be mindful of the potential consequences of using social media in research.

Chapter two provides an overview of the literature focusing on how previous studies framed clergy sexual abuse, the recurrence and psychological consequences of clergy sexual abuse, and the clergy sexual abuser. I identified that in the scholarship of religion and media, gender was still a blind-spot. Feminist scholars have recently started to interrogate and address this gap. Finally, I discussed how social media is used as a vehicle to discuss and debate Zondi's narratives of clergy sexual abuse. Using this space to engage in topics like narratives of sexual abuse enables a broader audience to participate, share their opinion and personal experience, and create awareness and commit to executing social justice.

In chapter three, I described the theoretical tools that equipped me to address the gaps within the literature. More significantly, I explained the theoretical frameworks that ground my research in established ideas and showed my research rationale. This chapter started with a reflection on feminist framings of sexual abuse and how sexual abuse is reported and studied in South Africa. I moved on to African feminist theology and discussed the relationship between Christianity and patriarchy. I described how Christian religious teachings about gender fundamentally shape believers' ideas about what constitutes acceptable sexual conduct for both men and women, clergy and congregants. This study is feminist in its orientation and is located at the intersection of social media and sexual abuse; therefore, the frameworks explained how a feminist approach had shaped the theoretical and conceptual framework through which I later filtered the analysis.

In chapter four, I was centrally concerned with using social media as a site of knowledge production. This chapter describes the processes of data production and collection undertaken throughout this project. I provided a detailed reflection on the conceptualisation of this data.

Furthermore, I offered an in-depth description of narrative inquiry and feminist critical discourse analysis. I then explained narrative inquiry and feminist discourse analysis methodologies, enabling a more nuanced and robust explanation of the analysis sample. Finally, a critical reflection on the ethical considerations of internet-based research, particularly within the context of the topic of sexual abuse and religion, was offered.

Chapter five is the first findings chapter. The purpose of this chapter was to use feminist narrative inquiry to create a thick description of Zondi's experience of clergy sexual abuse. First, I introduced all the characters which contributed to Zondi's narrative. The remainder of the chapter gave an in-depth, detailed account of Zondi's narrative, from entering the *Jesus Dominion International Church* to successfully escaping from the church.

The content of chapters six and seven comprised the rest of the findings. These chapters presented insights into how social media users engaged with Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse and why they engaged the way they did. Four broad themes became evident during data analysis, which helped me understand to what extent social media users support, challenge, or remain neutral about patriarchal religious norms. These themes also explained why they supported or challenged these norms. In these chapters, I brought together literature and theory to explore the politics embedded in social media users' experiences.

To conclude the dissertation, I reflected on the purpose of this research and discussed the feminist methodological contributions. After that, I presented a summary of the study, focusing on how online communities engaged with patriarchal religious understandings of gender and power and YouTube, narratives, and public engagement.

Chapter Two

Literature review: clergy sexual abuse, religion, media

2.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a critical overview of how previous studies framed clergy sexual abuse, the recurrence and psychological consequences of clergy sexual abuse, and the clergy sexual abuser. Thereafter, I aim to identify and examine the literature on religion, media, and gender and how it has been studied. Finally, the chapter seeks to understand how social media has been used to engage with narratives of clergy sexual abuse.

As intimated earlier, while there is little focus in the African context on clergy sexual abuse, this topic has been dealt with within international literature. Although much of the research in this area traditionally focused on the Catholic church and the abuse of young boys by clergy, there is now a continually expanding body of research focused on the abuse of women by male clergy. In fact, several studies investigating clergy sexual abuse claim that women are more likely to get sexually harassed in the church than in the workplace (Nason-Clark, 2002; Birchard, 2004; Ferro, 2005; Flynn, 2008; Easton, Leone-Shehaan and O'Leary, 2016). These conclusions suggest that this may be an important area of focus for feminist scholars of religion and theology to probe. Several existing studies on clergy sexual abuse indicate that religious leaders across denominations use church doctrine and biblical scripture to justify and sustain women's violations in their parish. For scholars working on contemporary Christian issues, the topic of clergy sexual abuse raises critical and urgent questions about the continued power of patriarchal norms and teachings about gender. There are several sites where such gender norms are perpetuated and challenged. In this study, I argue that social media provides a critical platform that can provide researchers with rich data to examine the phenomenon of sexual abuse and the religious patriarchal and gendered norms that maintain, encourage, and justify the practice.

As mentioned in chapter one, the rape trial of pastor Timothy Omotoso, and the entire testimony of the complainant Cheryl Zondi, was posted on a social media video-sharing platform, YouTube. By sharing Zondi's video testimony on YouTube by eNews Channel Africa (eNCA), YouTube's comment section provided social media users with a platform for participatory online engagement to share their opinions about Zondi's testimony. Hence, this

case offers at least two reasons to consider YouTube as a space for producing critical data for scholarly engagement. Firstly, YouTube made the Omotoso rape trial available to a much wider public. For example, the general public did not have such 'open access' to the Jacob Zuma rape trial in 2007 and 2008. Without availability and accessibility to social media platforms, the limited engagement the public could have had with this trial was from second-hand accounts via journalists in the media or if researchers sought court transcripts for research purposes. In this way, social media offers an alternative space for producing and circulating narratives of clergy sexual abuse. Social media users can express their opinions in formats beyond the traditional opinion-editorials or analysis and comment pieces that journalists conventionally publish via mainstream media coverage. Secondly, the comment section on YouTube provides a dialogical space for social media users to engage and organise 'communities of practice' (Uldam and Askanius, 2013; Burgess and Green, 2013; Murthy and Sharma, 2019).

This chapter commences by investigating how clergy sexual abuse was studied and the lenses through which such studies have been undertaken. The chapter then delves into the literature that examines the mediatisation of the study of religion and gender. The last section considers the current literature on social media as a platform to generate narratives of sexual abuse.
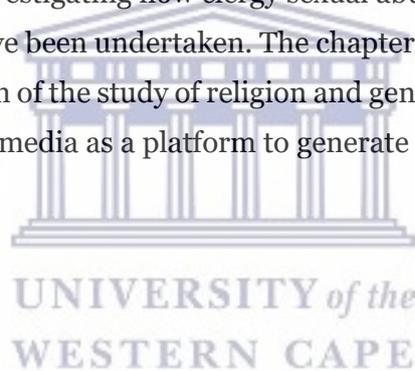
2.2. Clergy sexual abuse

Scholars indicate various definitions of the term clergy sexual abuse, with many scholars refuting the conceptualisation of abuse as 'misconduct'. Marie Fortune, a pioneer in the field of religion and domestic violence and leading national expert in the United States on sexual exploitation by religious leaders, places "strong emphasis on correctly identifying abuse as a grave violation of a clergyman's professional boundaries" (Fortune, 1995:30). Similarly, Kathryn Flynn (2008:217) suggests that "naming the violence of sexual abuse remains crucial to stopping it. Violence is violence, no matter what form it takes". Tiffany Page, Anna Bull, and Emma Chapman (2019:1311) assert that the term 'sexual misconduct' is used when "a range of power-based behaviours, including sexual harassment, assault, grooming, or sexual coercion, is viewed as a lesser offence." Sexual misconduct, described colloquially, is 'a slap on the wrist' offence. In this regard, Fortune's conceptualisation of clergy sexual abuse as male ministers, priests, prophets, or religious leaders who "make sexual advances or propositions to persons in the congregation," is helpful (Fortune, 2013:15). Clergy sexual abuse is not just a physical act but includes any inappropriate behaviour or speech that violates and offends the congregant. It occurs as soon as the clergy member oversteps his professional boundaries and

initiates inappropriate advances beyond his call of duty. The inappropriate behaviour by clergy members is a physical violation and affects victims emotionally and psychologically.

2.2.1. The recurrence and psychological consequences of clergy sexual abuse

In addition to research that attempts to conceptualise and theorise clergy sexual abuse, another body of work examines trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, and its effects on women who experienced clergy sexual abuse.

These studies of clergy sexual abuse can be found in the disciplines of psychology, pastoral counselling, law, and gender studies, among others. They mainly utilise interviews and surveys as research methods. Jeffery Ferro, for example, is an American scholar who wrote a series of books about various crimes, including clergy sexual abuse. In his book *Sexual Misconduct and the Clergy* (2005), he writes about 'clergy sexual misconduct' from the discipline of law while at the same time, providing detailed accounts of various facets of clergy sexual abuse, its historical context, and the scope of the problem. Ferro also examined the human and financial cost of clergy sexual abuse and reviewed legislation and lawsuits relating to clergy sexual abuse. He found that the six major religious faiths in the United States: The Roman Catholic Church, the Episcopal Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, Reform Judaism, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., and the United Methodist Church, each have a church policy to address clergy sexual abuse (Ferro, 2005:78). When a case of clergy sexual abuse is reported in any of these churches, the investigations are done by the Bishop, Rabbi, or a church council, and trials are done internally. This process provides specific protections for the alleged perpetrator (Ferro, 2005:79).

In separate studies, Thaddeus Birchard (2000), Margaret Kennedy (2003), and Diana Garland and Christen Argueta (2010) drew on an extensive range of sources to assess the causes, frequencies, and reasoning behind clergy sexual abuse. Thaddeus Birchard (2000) conducted his study of 'clergy sexual misconduct' in counselling psychology, using a methodological format known as 'Framework.' Framework as a methodology is 'social policy orientated'. Birchard used it to explore "the persistent requirement in social policy fields to understand complex behaviours, needs, systems and cultures" (Birchard, 2000:129). Birchard (2000:130) points out that researchers designed this methodology to identify the form and nature of what exists in the field, examine causes and consequences, and contribute towards strategic responses for therapeutic and pastoral interventions. He compiled his data based on personal

experiences as a priest and therapist and through interviews, focus groups, and a two-part survey.

Margaret Kennedy (2003) conducted her research from a feminist pastoral theology perspective. The central focus of her study was to analyse the stories of sexually abused adults by clergy. In her analysis, Kennedy drew on voluntary interviews with one hundred women and three men who contacted the *Minister and Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors* in London. Her interest was not only in the women's narratives of being the victim/survivor but also in the offender's stories. Her study found, among other things, that "sexual exploitation occurs when women seek help from priests and ministers and that clergy sexual abuse begins when they are involved in some form of counselling of the parishioner" (Kennedy, 2003:227). Kennedy also found various offences ranging from criminal violations of sexual assault to more subtle exploitation (Kennedy, 2003:227). Kennedy (2003:227), therefore, asserts that exploring the concepts of 'vulnerability' and 'consent' is essential to clarify the nature of clergy sexual abuse.

In their study, Diana Garland and Christen Argueta (2010) telephonically interviewed forty-six adults who experienced a sexual encounter or relationship with a religious leader. Garland and Argueta (2010), working from the discipline of counselling psychology, investigated the phenomenon of 'clergy sexual misconduct' and the systemic social conditions that allow 'clergy sexual misconduct' to occur. Through the interview process, Garland and Argueta (2010) identified five common themes that describe the social characteristics of the contexts in which clergy sexual abuse occurs. The first is a *lack of personal or community response to situations that 'normally' call for action*. "The victims indicated that they had felt uncertain about what was happening in their relationships with their religious leaders" (Garland and Argueta, 2010:10). Their strong trust in the leader overpowered their perceptions of the situation. The second is a *culture of niceness*, which refers to the cultural norm that expects people, more specifically women, to be 'nice' to others. Garland and Argueta (2010:15) report in their findings that being 'nice' means "overlooking or ignoring the behaviour of others that are known to be 'socially inappropriate' rather than naming the behaviour and risking embarrassment, angering, or hurting the offender." The third theme is the *lack of accountability*. The victims mentioned that religious leaders have no one to whom they account for their professional time. The leaders could continuously contact congregants, visit their houses, and take them out without anyone asking questions about the leader spending time alone with a female congregant (Garland and Argueta, 2010:16).

The fourth theme is *overlapping and multiple roles*. More than half of Garland and Argueta's (2010) interviewees indicated they were in a formal counselling relationship with the religious

leader. Several others mentioned that religious leaders often take on the role of their spiritual director, friend, confidante, and family-like figure. As a result, the congregant meets with the leader alone and regularly receives professional advice and guidance. However, in most cases, "instead of the congregant asking for help, the religious leader volunteered to provide the congregant with counselling" (Garland and Argueta, 2010:17). The final theme they identified is *trust in the sanctuary*. Interviewees recalled that the religious leaders "gained closeness that led to sexual activity by using knowledge gained from their confessions as a way to breach what would have been their ability to protect themselves" Garland and Argueta, 2010:20). The religious leader assumes "an expectation of emotional closeness after sharing deeply personal issues or a shared secret" (Garland and Argueta, 2010:20). This emotional closeness gave the leaders additional power as the keeper of the victim's secrets.

In their analysis, a significant recurring concept was 'grooming.' Garland and Argueta used the notion of grooming to describe the clergy member's behaviour that functions to develop a close relationship with the victim. "Grooming includes expressions of admiration and concern, affectionate gestures and touching, talking about a shared project, and sharing personal information" (Garland and Argueta, 2010:2). The grooming may be "gradual and subtle, desensitising the congregant to increasingly inappropriate behaviour while rewarding her to tolerate that behaviour" (Garland and Argueta, 2010:2). Overall, the studies cited above propose that the clergy members approached their victims in vulnerable positions, making it difficult for the women to recognise the violation immediately.

Expanding on the research conducted by Birchard (2000), Kennedy (2003), and Garland and Argueta (2010), Linda Hansen Robison (2004) drew on a systematic pastoral care model that posits an imbalance of power as a leading cause of clergy sexual abuse. "When a hierarchical relationship exists, whether perceived or real, the potential for the abuse of power is present, and it is the responsibility of the one seen in 'authority' to be aware of this dynamic in the network of care that she or he provides" (Robison, 2004:396). Specifically, the clergy's responsibility is to examine the power imbalance and be accountable not to overstep boundaries. When clergy members do breach their limits, the damaging effects might last longer than the physical encounter.

Beyond the framework of situatedness that provides optimum opportunity for clergy sexual abuse, other studies using feminist perspectives have examined trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, and its effects on women (van Wormer and Berns, 2004; Flynn, 2008; Fogler *et al.*, 2008). In their study, which explored the impact of clergy sexual abuse on victimised girls and

young women, Katherine van Wormer and Lois Berns (2004) highlight the importance of a feminist method for such studies by foregrounding women's narratives. They assert: "…central to a feminist method is the search for a woman's story in her own voice" (van Wormer and Berns, 2004:57). They conducted in-depth, informal, and conversational-style interviews with women seeking help years after the abuse. In examining these women's narratives, van Wormer and Berns (2004) identified three major themes that describe the effects of clergy sexual abuse: the gravity of the violation, power dynamics, and impact on religious faith. *The gravity of the violation* refers to the key factor's women felt during their abuse, combined with the feelings of disillusionment. "The women felt disillusioned by the incidents', and they all found that their faith in God had been at least, temporarily shattered" (van Wormer and Berns, 2004:58). The second theme, *power dynamics*, describes the sexualised relationship between professional and client, which violates "professional ethics because of the imbalance in power that inhibits the recipient from saying no" (van Wormer and Berns, 2004:60). Understood this way, sexual contact with parishioners is considered off-limits and exploitative regardless of age, van Wormer and Berns (2004:60) assert. The final theme is the *impact on religious faith*. van Wormer and Berns (2004) found that the women who priests sexually abused were adversely affected in their relationship with God. "Several women expressed confusion and ambivalence about God's existence, while others described God as cruel, hostile, angry, and filled with revenge" (van Wormer and Berns, 2004:62).
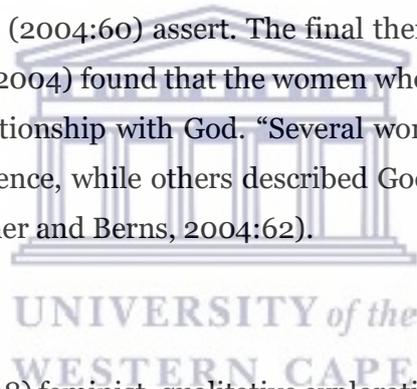
Similarly, Kathryn Flynn's (2008) feminist, qualitative exploration of the narratives of twenty-five women who experienced clergy sexual abuse showed how women experienced symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress disorder and complex post-traumatic stress disorder. The study provided an analysis of trauma and found that "post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and Complex PTSD are the leading diagnoses of women who experienced clergy-perpetrated sexual abuse" (Flynn, 2008:235). In her analysis of the interview data, Flynn (2008) identified the following five factors related to clergy abuse.

The *antithetical nature of the experience* describes several women's experiences of how the clergyman initiated the relationship. Most women indicated that the clergyman groomed them over time (Flynn, 2008:230). The second factor Flynn identified is *being hooked*. The majority of the participants described feeling captured in the abuse situation. The congregation led by the pastor "was the employer of many women, which enhanced the feeling of being trapped." They felt that the abuser used "mind control tactics to promote their compliance and dependency" (Flynn, 2008:231). Flynn refers to the third factor as *misidentifying the abuse*. She describes how some women harshly blamed themselves for the abuse. These women

expressed "feelings of intense guilt, shame, and personal responsibility. They reported that some pastors went to great lengths to convince women that it was a mutual relationship between two consenting adults" (Flynn, 2008:231). The fourth factor is *silence and denial*, which describe women's treatment when reporting clergy sexual abuse. Many women said they experienced revictimisation when trying to disclose the exploitative sexual relationship. "Others often met their disclosures with disbelief and even overtly blamed the victim" (Flynn, 2008:232). The final factor relating to clergy sexual abuse is *relational spirituality*. A few participants described "a shift from a transcendent understanding of God as a powerful force ruling the universe to a primarily relationally grounded God" (Flynn, 2008:234). Some women experienced a change in their spirituality and how they view the institutional church and its beliefs. By foregrounding the women's lived experiences of clergy sexual abuse, Flynn (2008:218) maintains that she is giving "a voice to women who experienced abuse by the clergy."

Jason Fogler, Jillian Shipherd, Erin Rowe, Jennifer Jensen, and Stephanie Clarke (2008) also investigated the psychological consequences of clergy-perpetrated sexual abuse. Fogler *et al.* (2008) used an empirically informed model consisting of three themes to capture the complexities and nuances of clergy-perpetrated sexual abuse. The themes included are the relationship between perpetrators and survivors, the relationship between survivors and communities, and the relationship between clergy and congregation. Their research predominately focused on survivors' statements, paying particular attention to the long-term negative consequences that clergy sexual abuse has on women. Thus, Fogler *et al.* (2008:302) conceptualise clergy-perpetrated sexual abuse as "the convergence of interactive processes between the clergy-perpetrator, the parishioner-survivor, and the religious community."

2.2.2. The clergy sexual abuser

Clergy sexual abuse is "a public issue of justice because it arises from an abuse of power by the offending clergy member" (Ferro, 2005:5). Specifically, clergy sexual abuse is considered an abuse of power rather than an exclusively sexual issue. Raymond Suttner (2009) suggests that the phenomenon of sexual abuse is exercising power against the will of another. "The notion of unequal power may be exercised to access that person's body in one of a range of manners" (Suttner, 2009:223). Clergy possess the highest authority in a clergy-congregant relationship. Thus, clergy sexual abuse is the exploitation of the congregant. These clergy members lead a

'double life' (Birchard, 2000:127). It is as if they have a set of values for themselves and another for everyone else. Studies such as those by Ken Blue (1993), Thaddeus Birchard (2004) and Stephan Pretorius (2007) explored characteristics of the clergy sexual abuser. Other studies like Pamela Cooper-White (2012), Arlene Brewster (1996), and Marie Fortune (2013), for instance, examined the abuser's characteristics from a feminist perspective and considered power as a factor that sustains the mental illness, which was alluded to in previous studies.

Scholars have made several contributions to understand why clergy would sexually abuse their congregants. Numerous scholars suggested that personality disorder is a leading cause of perpetuating the abuse. Ken Blue (1993:12) observed, "ironically and sadly certain persons, who are accorded respect and honour in society by virtue of their role as religious leaders and models of spiritual authority, inflict spiritual wounds." Clergy sexual abusers base their "religious authority on the Bible, and they see themselves as shepherds with a sacred trust" (Blue, 1992:12). Theologian Stephan Pretorius (2007:273) suggests that "these leaders claim divine sanction for their seemingly controversial proclamations and actions." Mental illness is in personality and lifestyle, and internal body chemistry asserts Birchard (2004). Clergy members who have this mental illness tend to need admiration, a tendency towards grandiosity, and at the same time, a tendency to feel inferior, Birchard suggests. Therefore, "narcissistic damage is the core issue behind all forms of addiction" (Birchard, 2004:83).

In contrast, Blue (1993) identified clergy sexual abusers as insecure or narcissistic abusers. He found that "the insecure abuser is the more common type who feels insignificant and seeks significance by gaining dominion over others" (Blue, 1993:109). Inner doubts and fears commonly plague this type of abuser. "Abusers, who are very insecure, fear failure, and have poor impulse control, may be very dangerous" (Blue,1993:109). The narcissistic abuser is the heroic, grandiose, or messianic narcissist obsessed by a desire to be someone great or do something unprecedented for God. "To carry out their fantasy, they need the cooperation of others and access to their belongings and money. Narcissistic abusers tend to devalue others to maintain their exaggerated sense of self-importance. These abusers are potentially dangerous because they need their followers to applaud their vision and justify their actions" (Blue, 1993:110). The scholars mentioned above suggest that mental illness is the leading cause in perpetuating clergy sexual abuse.

Arlene Brewster (1996:354) found that narcissistic personality disorders were dominant in the clergy who sexually abused women. "Clergy with personality disorders are seen as the most likely to engage in repeated patterns of sexual misconduct and have the poorest prognosis for change. These persons demonstrate a continual need for admiration and have a lack of empathy for the needs of others" (Brewster, 1996:354). She maintains that: "the narcissistic clergyman who engages in multiple affairs is usually seeking power, and contains his sense of vulnerability or powerlessness through seduction" (Brewster, 1996:355). Clergy suffering from personality disorders are very appealing to congregations because "they are often highly intelligent, forceful, and adept at telling people what they want to hear" (Brewster, 1996:355). When the abuse is exposed, it may cause a split in the congregation because "a skilled narcissistic clergy member will have numerous devoted admirers," both women and men (Brewster, 1996:355).

Pamela Cooper-White (2012) maintains that one should consider internal factors as an outcome of clergy sexual abuse. Cooper-White (2012:160) describes wounded clergy as clergy members who suffer from chronic depression and a dependency on compulsive personalities, such as narcissism and borderline personality, to sociopathy and psychosis. These mental disorders impair the clergy member's professional judgement, which puts him at risk for crossing boundaries and engaging in sexual relations with a parishioner. Wounded clergy have no empathy, which causes him to seek the gratification of his own needs first, regardless of the cost of others (Cooper-White, 2012:160). She suggests that: "the narcissistic clergy's craving for recognition combines explosively with the power of the clergy role and a social climate of masculine privilege" (Cooper-White, 2012:161). Thus, wounded clergy display manipulative behaviour and may tend to use others.

Marie Fortune's (2013) reason for clergy sexual abuse is slightly different than the other scholars. Fortune (2013) describes some of the conduct as wandering. "A religious leader who wanders and violates sexual boundaries is often ill-trained, insensitive, and uses poor judgment, with complete disregard for the impact of the congregation" (Fortune, 2013:15). However, by calling wanderers to account and given training and supervision, wanderers may return to responsible ministry (Fortune, 2013:15). Thus, it can be concluded that the foundation of clergy sexual abuse is an abuse of power and not sex. Jacqueline M. Wheatcroft, Graham F. Wagstaff, and Annmarie Moran (2009:267) support this statement in their research. They confirm prior research, drawing on their interviews with rapists, that rape is about power, not sex.

2.2.3. Spiritual abuse

David Johnson, a pastor, and Jeff van Vonderen, a counsellor and author, published *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse* (1990) and extensively discussed the phrase 'spiritual abuse.' According to Kathryn Keller (2016:57), the concept was not as recognised in the academy but it was a prevalent topic in "numerous blogs upon which countless individuals express their pain at the hands of religious institutions." When defining spiritual abuse, there is a consensus among David Ward (2011), Desiree Segura-April (2016), Keshet Starr (2017), and Jacqueline Gray, Kathryn LaBore, and Paula Carter (2018). They define spiritual abuse as the misuse of power, authority, or trust by any person in a spiritual power position or through controlling, coercing, manipulating, or dominating spiritual development. This misuse of authority can be understood in two ways: individual sources within a religious or denominational hierarchy and a sacred text's power. It is an abuse that damages an individual's core or the mistreatment of a person who needs help, support, or greater spiritual empowerment, with the result of weakening, undermining, or decreasing that person's spiritual charge (Ward, 2011; Segura-April, 2016; Starr, 2017; Gray, LaBore, and Carter, 2018). Keller (2016:9) points out that the divine status reserved for a higher power is often projected onto the human religious leader, making sexual violation all the more devastating, as if the divine itself perpetrated the breach. Consequently, clergy sexual abuse might have detrimental consequences as the perpetrator robs the victim of the opportunity for healthy spiritual development throughout their lifespan.

Segura-April (2016:178) suggests that "spiritual abuse is much like psychological or emotional abuse, which usually does not produce visible harm," making the abuse challenging to prove. Similar to domestic violence literature, the research on clergy sexual abuse illuminates a need to better understand the spiritual components of abuse perpetrated by a trusted religious leader (Keller, 2016:62). Therefore, Starr (2017:41) claims that having a term like spiritual abuse to describe a situation "is extremely helpful to victims, since it provides them with language to describe their uniquely challenging experience." Fortune (2013:16) notes that religious leaders are compelling and can easily manipulate their victims. The manipulation is not only psychological but also spiritual.

In some cases, clergy perpetrators manipulate the congregant into believing that God singled them out for a special relationship with the clergy member. Some clergy perpetrators convince their congregants that God has ordained their relationship, that it was God's will that brought them together, or that prayer led the clergy member to the victim (Fortune, 2013:17). Clergy

members even offer material rewards and spiritual rewards of 'going to heaven.' As a result, clergy members exploit the congregant's will, as the congregants fear punishment for denying God (Fogler *et al.*, 2008:309). Johnson and Van Vonderen (1991) suggest three main factors that lay the foundation for spiritual abuse: mindset, motive, and method. Firstly, *mindset*: "people have little or no capacity to discern the word of God for themselves. Subsequently, congregants view spiritual leaders as having the last say on God's words meaning and purpose and diligently obey the rules" (Johnson and Van Vonderen, 1991:82). Secondly, *the motive* is to bring about religious performance to meet the leaders' needs to prove their theology. Lastly, *the 'proof texting' method* bolsters or substantiates the leader's agenda or teaching (Johnson and Van Vonderen, 1991:82-83). Spiritual abuse is maintained when the clergy member asserts and abuses his position as the highest authority in the clergy-congregant relationship.

In any counsellor-patient or clergy-congregant dynamic, it is evident that the professional has the higher authority and respect in a counselling context. Kennedy (2003:27) suggests a prevailing 'common sense' discourse claiming equal status between congregants and priests. Discourses such as these support the idea that sexual relationships between priests and parishioners are 'affairs.' Kennedy (2003) cautions that with the power imbalance between clergy and congregant, one must be suspicious of the possibility of a clergy-congregant relationship being consensual. Kennedy (2003:27) points out that congregants seeking help are subordinate where the clergy person holds considerable power, status, education, and respect. Therefore, Kennedy argues that sexual relationships between clergy and congregants should be seen as clergy sexual abuse and a violation of the professional role and power. Kennedy (2003:20) emphasises that we should reconsider the way we perceive sexual assault. Rape, touching, groping, and intercourse with a clergy professional in his role as pastor of a woman seeking his help is not an 'affair,' Kennedy insists. Therefore, in a pastoral setting, 'affairs' should be rejected, favouring the notion of 'sexual exploitation', especially when one considers the power differentials.

Fogler *et al.* (2008:308) further call attention to the fact that some clergy frame the sexual experience "as being good for you or otherwise consistent with pastoral guidance and counselling." Kennedy (2003:28) found that both the perpetrator and sometimes the victim consider that being an adult woman is an indicator of consent. The clergy member does not perceive his actions as severe nor as a sexual violation. In Kennedy's study, she reports that women were told: "It is not abuse; you are an adult" (Kennedy, 2003:28). Fortune (2013) also maintains that to consent to sexual activity fully, an individual must have a choice, and the relationship must be one of mutuality and equality. Hence, "meaningful consent requires the

absence of fear or even the subtlest coercion" (Fortune, 2013:19). She explained that when clergy members engage in sexual contact with a congregant, it breaches trust and misuses authority and power. "This power can easily be misused, as is the case when a member of the clergy uses his power intentionally or unintentionally to initiate or pursue sexual contact with a congregant or client" (Fortune, 2013:18). Gary Schoener (2013) used a historical approach in his research tracing the problem of clergy sexual abuse over some time and found that clergy sexual exploitation was an age-old problem. The prosecution took place in ecclesiastical courts under canon law. As a result, clergy sexual abuse was never sufficiently dealt with and made its way into contemporary times (Schoener, 2013:4). In his research, Schoener used a few popular examples of narratives of sexual exploitation. In each of the incidences mentioned, the clergy members vilified and blamed the victims for being the cause of "inappropriate sex" (Schoener, 2013:5). In all of the cases illustrated by Schoener (2013), the careers of the clergy members were not significantly affected, they escaped public disgrace, and they were acquitted of their crimes.
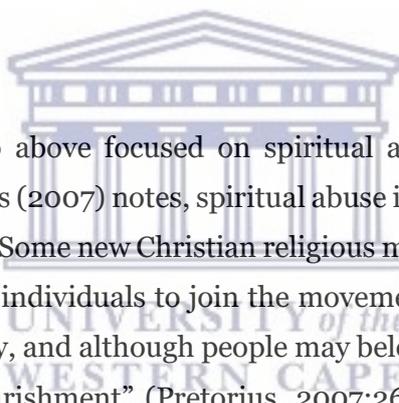
While the research referred to above focused on spiritual abuse that surfaces in various religious communities, Pretorius (2007) notes, spiritual abuse is increasingly prevalent in new Christian religious movements. Some new Christian religious movements offer enticements to persuade spiritually vulnerable individuals to join the movement. These movements provide options for a utopian spirituality, and although people may belong to a church, "they may still lack spiritual or emotional nourishment" (Pretorius, 2007:265). A detailed examination of what makes people vulnerable to the trap of spiritual abuse showed that the most committed believers are often the most susceptible to abusive systems (Pretorius 2007). In his examination, Pretorius (2007) identified eight key components that lure vulnerable women to the trap of spiritual abuse.

The first is *a lack of acceptance in the home and church*, which may drive people to over-perform in a religious organisation or task that meets the spiritual abuser's demands. The second component is *shame-based motivation*. "Shame-based motivation stems from a particular sin or a weakness that produces religious performance" (Pretorius, 2007:265). In other words, the individual believes that they are flawed and, therefore, unworthy of love or belonging.

Thirdly, *a deeper level of spirituality is needed*, as some people are dissatisfied in their churches. "They experience a desire for a deeper level of spirituality. The eagerness to give up everything for Jesus attracts them to new Christian religious movements" (Pretorius,

2007:265). The fourth component is *disillusionment with the world order*. Some may be discouraged by the decay of this world. "Congregants see the corruption, violence, and disrespect for human life as signs of spiritual decay and a turning away from God's commandments" (Pretorius, 2007:265). The fifth component is *the need for security*. In these uncertain times, some people fear for their lives. Some of the new Christian religious movements present a haven for physical safety and emotional security. The sixth component is *self-doubt about their ability and self-worth*. They follow the belief that "spiritual success is a do-it-yourself project. All individuals must take care of their sins and work out their holiness" (Pretorius, 2007:266). The final component is *a need to control painful inner reality*. "The new Christian religious movements established a need to control sad inner reality through their rigid religious belief system" (Pretorius, 2007:266). These eight components indicate that new Christian religious movements have a strategy to recruit new members into the spiritually abusive systems.

Pretorius (2007:274) suggests that spiritual abusers are "dogmatic, self-confident, arrogant and demand to be the spiritual focal point in the lives of their followers." Spiritual abusers demonstrate their arrogance by claiming to be more spiritually in tune with God than anyone else. They claim unique insight into scripture that no one else has (Pretorius, 2007:274). Congregants tend to avoid any questions or actions that will upset the clergy member. Keller (2016:71) highlights that "spiritual abuse is not yet a widely understood or accepted form of abuse, survivors themselves may lack understanding of the abuse they have experienced in their religious group." Secrecy and silence frequently accompany spiritual abuse as it inflicts severe wounds on a person's psyche that impact an individual's entire life. Spiritual abuse has a devastating effect on people. According to David Henke (2006:3), "the wound is so deep that the wounded person cannot even trust a legitimate spiritual authority again in many cases." Keller (2016:71) identifies that this lasting impact remains particularly difficult to overcome, given the sense of powerlessness many survivors experienced.

Zondi was, unfortunately, one of several women who was violated in the church by her religious leader. Omotoso groomed Zondi by gaining her trust, engaging in inappropriate conversations and inviting her to his bedroom. Once she completely trusted him, he used his position of power to abuse her sexually. Throughout her testimony, Zondi described her experiences of powerlessness while residing in the mission house and being abused by Omotoso. The literature above demonstrates that most sexual abuse cases are an abuse of power and not sex. Zondi's testimony seems to resonate with those claims. It was evident in her testimony that sexual abuse was primarily informed by the abuse of power, for example,

Omotoso controlled their activities, interactions, meals, and sleep. The abuse consequently led to Zondi suffering long-term trauma and psychological effects. Her experience of clergy sexual abuse is a significant narrative that aligns with the ways in which clergy sexual abuse has been conceptualised in the literature. It raises critical questions about the continued power of patriarchal norms and teachings about gender and enables discussions around such issues. As already indicated, the YouTube videos and the comments by social media users about this case form the main focus of this dissertation. The following section will explore the growth and development of studies that examine the intersections of religion, media, and gender.

2.3. Religion, media, and gender

There is a considerable amount of published literature on religion and media. These studies are crucial for understanding how media work as agents of religious change and provide essential insights into the mediatisation of religion and its impact on culture and society (Morgan, 2008; Fox, 2009; Engelke, 2010; Hirschkind, 2011; Lövheim and Lynch, 2011; Einselohr, 2012; Hjarvard, 2012; Scannell, 2016).

Hjarvard (2008:4) argued that "contemporary religion is increasingly mediated through secular, autonomous media institutions and is shaped according to the logistics of those media." Building on this point, Mia Lövheim and Gordon Lynch (2011) surveyed the literature around the mediatisation of religion. They found that Hjarvard's approach to mediatisation generally entails transforming three aspects of religion. "First, the media becomes the primary source of information about religious issues in society. Second, the media are the producers and distributors of religious information and experiences. Third, through their position in society, media become social and cultural environments that take over many of the functions of institutionalised religions such as providing moral and spiritual guidance and a sense of community" (Lövheim and Lynch 2011:113). In other words, the mediatisation of religion enables an understanding of how media work as agents of religious change (Lövheim and Lynch, 2011). Religious change is an essential aspect in the study of religion and media, as the media shapes and influences social and cultural change.

Heidi A. Campbell and Giulia Evolvi (2020:5) assert that digital religion studies investigate how "online and offline religious spaces and practices have become bridged, blended, and blurred as religious groups and practitioners seek to integrate their religious lives with technology use within different aspects of digital culture". The intersectional history between

digital technologies and religious studies can best be described in the analogy of waves. There are four waves of digital religion research.

The first wave of research mostly describes the emergent phenomenon of digital religion. In this phase, the first online religious communities and religious-related Internet exchange was examined by scholars (Campbell and Evolvi, 2020:6). During this wave, the notion of cyberspace as sacred space was proposed and scholars used the phenomenon 'cyber-religion'. According to Tsuria and Campbell (2022:3), cyber-religion provided a means to "explore and call into question how traditional assumptions about religion found in this new technological, mediated context".

During the second wave scholars started to conceptualize digital religion in a historical and social perspective. In this wave, the Internet was considered in more realistic terms and questions were raised about the implications and authenticity of digital practice (Campbell and Evolvi, 2020:6). Tsuria and Campbell (2022:3) maintain that the move emphasised the nature of digital environments as unique from offline spaces. Campbell and Evolvi (2022) propose that the third wave was characterized by increased theoretical attention to the interconnectedness of online and offline settings. While the first two waves mostly considered Internet-based religion as existing exclusively online, the third wave recognized the fixedness of the Internet in everyday life and its impact on nondigital venues (Campbell and Evolvi, 2020:7). Therefore, agreeing with this statement, Tsuria and Campbell (2022:4) states that it difficult to fully separate religion online from the offline, as people frequently "blended their online and offline social networks and interactions in ways that blurred their distinctions".

The current and fourth wave takes into account people's media practices in their everyday lives. "It continues to emphasize the connections between online and offline venues, while also paying attention to existential, ethical, and political aspects of digital religion, as well as issues of gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexuality" (Campbell and Evolvi, 2020:7). Exploring how religion utilises digital technology online is crucial for understanding how issues such as power, authority, agency, identity, and community are negotiated today (Tsuria and Campbell, 2022:6). This study is in line with the fourth wave of digital religion research, as it argues that social media provides a critical platform that can provide researchers with rich data to examine the phenomenon of sexual abuse and the religious patriarchal and gendered norms that maintain, encourage, and justify the practice. Furthermore, it examines how online communities engage with patriarchal religious understandings of gender and power in a case of clergy sexual abuse. This study also demonstrates the connections between online and offline venues as social media users utilise the online platform to debate and share their 'offline' opinions regarding important issues such as clergy sexual abuse. Some users used the

platform to share their own experiences of abuse, as well as used the space to comfort and encourage others. More so, Zondi's testimony was heard in a courtroom which is considered and offline space. However, by posting her testimony on social media, the testimony became accessible to be discussed and debated within an online platform.

Scholars of religion, media, and gender studies consider the media as a platform for activists to raise awareness and share knowledge about gender inequalities and other aspects related to gendered representations within various on and offline communities. According to Tonny Krijnen (2020:2), women are portrayed in stereotypical roles in mass media, ignored by mass media, or symbolically annihilated. More specifically, in society and religious institutions, women are still frequently represented in submissive positions compared to men. In their studies of gender and media, Mary Kosut (2012), Elna Boesak (2016), and Krijnen (2020) suggest that gender and media studies are parallel to feminist activism. Therefore, when studying gender and media, it is crucial to focus on how the media acts as an institution with pervasive power to shape and construct meaning, values, and complexities in society.

Previously, in the study of religion and media few scholars addressed the topic of gender. However, in the past decade, there has been an increasing interest in addressing the gender-blind spot. For example, internationally, Mia Lövheim addresses the gender-blind spot in the collection *Media, Religion, and Gender: Key Issues and New Challenges* (2013). This collection is a compilation of authors working in religious studies, communication studies, cultural studies, religion and popular culture, education, and journalism. It offers its contribution from a feminist perspective. Lövheim (2013) argues for the relevance of focusing on gender for researchers working in media, religion, and culture. She suggests researchers can no longer ignore gender as a dimension of media representations if we want to understand the interplay between religion, media, and culture in late modern society (Lövheim, 2013:18).

Moving towards a continental perspective, Lee-Shae Scharnick-Udemans (2017) surveyed the literature that intersects religious studies, media studies, and cultural studies and highlights the lack of 'gender interest' in interdisciplinary work. She argued that there is no "extended study of religion, media, and gender from the Southern African context." Scharnick-Udemans (2017:151) argues that her claim does not refer to content or imply that no research in the triangulation of religion, media, and gender from the African context has taken place. Instead, the issue she raises is the same as the issue raised about gender – "this is not about 'adding Africa and stirring' – this is about a genuine decolonial approach to religion, media, and

gender in Africa" (Scharnick-Udemans, 2017:151). In this article, Scharnick-Udemans highlights the wide spread media coverage pertaining to the reaction of the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities reports by corrupt Prophets, compared to the abuse of women and young girls in this congregation. Therefore, emphasising the "lack of gender interest in the media" (Scharnick-Udemans, 2017:145). She argues if one wants to read beyond narratives of black African women as spiritual and sexual victims, it is crucial to interrogate how gender is constructed through and in the media (Scharnick-Udemans, 2017). According to these prescriptions, the representation of gender within research gives an understanding of gendered norms, power, and exploitation. Only once the discourses are recognised can one critique and deconstruct them.

A special volume of essays in the *African Journal of Gender and Religion* (2019) focused on the intersections of religion, media, and gender in Africa, Scharnick-Udemans and Rosalind I. J. Hackett (2019) traced how the mid-2000s introduced an influential yet growing body of literature committed to studying religion and media in Africa. They maintain that the growing scholarship provides valuable reflections on "the intersections of religion and media." It also provides reviews on "the rich and varied empirical and ethnographical insights to the production of new knowledge about religion, and religiosity on the continent" (Scharnick-Udemans and Hackett 2019:3). Studying religion through the media has opened the field to new research sites about novel topics, subjects, theories, and methods (Scharnick-Udemans and Hackett, 2019:3). The introduction to this special issue of the AJGR "illustrates the possibilities that gender perspectives, approaches, and theorising might contribute to the advancement of the field of religion and media in Africa…" (Scharnick-Udemans and Hackett, 2019:1). The collection of seven articles delivers on this vision and includes work from authors all over Africa. Collectively, the studies outline the relationships between religion, gender, and the media in various settings. The articles in this issue discuss women's representation and exclusion in the media and how they either support or contest patriarchal norms. Scharnick-Udemans and Hackett (2019:11) assert that this collection of articles "addresses how gender as lived experience, theoretical framework, and analytical device, is involved in several complex relationships with religion and media." Therefore, unlike the previously mentioned collections, this issue makes a concerted effort to address the gaps in scholarships about religion, gender, and media in Africa.

The past decade has seen a rapid development of gender as an analytical category of religion and media studies. These scholars argue that by including an in-depth focus on gender in the

study of religion and media, we can understand the formation of gender conceptions and dominating discourses in various contexts. More specifically, by understanding gender in the study of religion and media from a South African context, we can comprehend how other contexts study gender and how those external contexts might influence South African understandings. As a result, this dissertation will provide insights regarding how gender discourses operate and how gender stereotypes and unequal gender roles are perpetuated.

2.4. Social media and narratives of clergy sexual abuse

According to Fortune (2013:14), "the long-standing problem of sexual abuse of congregants by clergy and religious leaders has finally made its way into public consciousness, largely due to the persistence of the media." While this may have been the case with traditional media forms, social media has provided a different angle to explore this. Kathleen Searles (2018:3) points out that with social media, "the journalist is no longer the gatekeeper over information". Instead, social media users have equal authority online, as a journalist does in news media. Brian Smith, Staci Smith, Devin Knighton (2018), and Xinyan Zhao, Mengqi Zhan, and Chau-Wai Wong (2018) all assert that social media positions itself as a vehicle for driving dialogue and enables multiple voices to be heard. These diverse voices merge to co-construct narratives on social media. In the case of this dissertation, Cheryl Zondi's testimony was placed in the public domain of YouTube as her narrative of clergy sexual abuse. Her narrative becomes co-constructed in the sense that the "narrated effort is achieved through the capacity of social media to enable self-expression and simulate the sense of being there in the mediated environment" (Smith, Smith, and Knighton, 2018:562). The telling of these narratives allows social media users to interpret, respond to, and produce their own opinions for their community members to consume. As Zhao, Zhan, and Wong (2018:28) emphasise, "these publics play an intervening role in social media content propagation." Individuals may become "cognitively and emotionally absorbed" in the social media experience through social media engagement. This experience is often marked by "voluntary extra-role behaviours," including peer-to-peer interaction and dialogue (Smith, Smith, and Knighton, 2018:563). These social media users can now openly share their opinions and influence stories shared in mainstream media. For this reason, this dissertation aims to establish an alternative method for telling narratives of sexual abuse, suggesting that an area that remains underexplored is how social media produce and present narratives.

Fortune (2013) maintains that there is a history of nondisclosure to authorities and nonaction by religious institutions, except actions to protect clergy. The court testimony of Zondi and the public engagement of her testimony on social media are examples of how social media users challenge religious institutions' nondisclosure regarding sexual abuse. By placing Zondi's testimony on YouTube, the public is invited to use social media to interrogate how religious institutions approach particular situations. In addition to traditional religious communities and legal apparatuses, social media may be seen as spaces where religious institutions may be held accountable for clergy sexual abuse and the strategies used to sustain clergy sexual abuse. More than ever, social media also provides a platform for activists to create awareness and commit to execute social justice.

2.5. Conclusion

Based on the literature review above, it is clear that clergy sexual abuse has been researched mainly for its causes, frequency, and effects. The experiences of sexual abuse are primarily explored through the lived experiences of survivors and perpetrators through conventional research methods such as interviews, focus group discussions, and even surveys. Narratives of clergy sexual abuse told through social media lacks prominence in the scholarship. In this research, I address these gaps by exploring how various factors, such as patriarchal norms, manipulation, and spiritual abuse, can be explored via social media platforms. Apart from breaking the silence of abuse in religious institutions, the broadcasting of Zondi's testimony on social media provides an innovative site for research; particularly insofar as it allows a space for sharing, debating, and raising awareness about clergy sexual abuse and sharing narratives of sexual abuse.

Scholarship on religion and media have provided essential insights into how social media is becoming a popular site for setting the agenda to discuss previously sensitive and private matters. While gender is increasingly being used as an analytical category with religion and media research, the underrepresentation of African women's lived experiences remains a concern. African women's voices and gendered experiences have been minimal in media scholarship. Examinations of narratives on social media and public engagement with such narratives presented can fill the void. Therefore, this study contributes to expanding the existing canon of religion, media, and gender studies.

<div align="center">

Chapter Three

Concepts and theories: Feminist framing of sexual abuse and African feminist theology

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3.1. Introduction

This study is feminist in its orientation, drawing on feminist framings of sexual abuse and African feminist theology. This chapter will explain how a feminist approach shaped the theoretical and conceptual framework through which I will filter the subsequent analysis. This chapter starts with a discussion on feminist framings of sexual abuse. The discussion concludes that victims of sexual abuse have suffered ill-treatment for many years by the justice system, the public, and the media. There has been a continuous occurrence of secondary victimisation, which is interrogated within this framework.

The chapter continues with a reflection on African feminist theology. The examination starts with a brief explanation of the background of feminist theology and how this formed a foundation for African feminist theology. I will describe and discuss how Christian religious teachings about gender fundamentally shape believers' ideas about what constitutes acceptable behaviour for both men and women, clergy persons and congregants. This lens is used for exploring how religion and patriarchal norms are mediated, discussed and represented in the media and social media platforms.

A survey of the literature conducted on sexual abuse suggest that studies on sexual abuse has primarily been quantitative, as many scholars focus on the statistics of the crime and fail to include the victim's experience. By contrast, this study is qualitative in nature, as it provides an in-depth description of a woman's experience of sexual abuse. A key element of feminist perspectives is that it does not condemn the victims, by holding them responsible for being abused. Furthermore, through the utilisation of feminist framings of sexual abuse, I am able to interrogate who writes, debates, and researches sexual abuse, as well as how victims are perceived and how rape culture is perpetuated in both online and offline communities.

In this study, I chose to use African feminist theology, as a lens through which to examine the various aspects of Zondi's experiences. African feminist theology seeks to examine unique experiences derived from women's individual contexts, which includes Western Christianity,

contemporary socio-political contexts, and African religio-cultural traditions. It critically studies the relationship between religious beliefs, cultural norms and gendered oppression. As a theoretical framework, African feminist theology examines how Christian doctrine and biblical texts have been used to control, oppress and assign particular norms to women. By keeping this information in mind when analysing Zondi's testimony and interrogating users' comments, I am able to best understand the various elements that accompanies the physical act of abuse. Many of those elements manifested and were maintained due to societal, cultural and religious patriarchy. Zondi's abuse had distinctive elements from her diverse Christian South African upbringing which is evident throughout her testimony. Moreover, the way social media users engaged with Zondi's testimony is also a result of their various diverse Christian teachings. Therefore, this theoretical framework is considered valuable in this research to examine patriarchal teachings, injustice and oppression of women, and socially constructed ideas of gender in a Christian South African context.

3.2. Feminist framing of sexual abuse

Research done by feminist scholars emphasised that studies on sexual abuse tend to neglect the victims' experience, and others fail to recognise the perpetrator's actions (Motsei, 2007; Allnock and Barnes, 2011; Gqola, 2015). These constraints in the literature, therefore, suggest a need for a feminist framing of sexual abuse.

The significance of a feminist framing of sexual abuse is evident in how sexual abuse is framed and reported. When sexual abuse is written about in the media, the reports are statistical, contain half or inaccurate information due to under-reporting, and sexual abuse is treated like a perpetrator-less crime (Allnock and Barnes, 2011; Gqola, 2015). A feminist framing of sexual abuse offers an alternative way of reading and studying sexual abuse. It is interested in the victim of the abuse and her experiences. It is not only concerned with the statistics of sexual abuse but rather what perpetuates it, and how it intersects with religious and social institutions and its teachings. More specifically, a feminist framing of sexual abuse interrogates who writes and debates about sexual abuse and how they carry out such research.

Journalist, Prega Govender (2015), writing about the rape trial of former president Jacob Zuma, observed that rape complainants pay high prices throughout and after rape trials, from experiencing secondary victimisation by the court system; to whether they are 'credible victims.' Similar to how a victim's credibility is questioned, they are also asked whether they

took appropriate steps to 'avoid' sexual abuse. Pumla Dineo Gqola suggests that what transpired inside and outside the court in the Jacob Zuma rape trial was instructive of how the South African government deals with rape. This case was an example of "why rape survivors make certain choices, and the fraught ways in which the legal system responds to and treat rape complainants" (Gqola, 2015:101). Conceivably, what happened in the Zuma rape trial is replicated in the Omotoso trial.

Both of the accused had an additional power dimension. Zuma held a position of political power, and Omotoso held a position of leadership power in a church. In both trials, the courtroom was not the only arena in which the trial was heard. Zuma and the complainant, Kwezi, were tried by the crowds assembled outside the court, public debate, and other discussion and demonstration places (Suttner, 2009:227). Suttner (2009:227) indicates that the significance of these "multiple arenas for locating the allegation of rape was a series of manifestations which contradicted the spirit of gender equality." Kwezi was scrutinised and characterised in and outside the court and within the media. The scrutiny created an image of a person willing to have sex and therefore 'asked for it' (Motsei, 2007; Suttner, 2009). Zuma's influential power mobilised support in a way that an ordinary citizen could not have done, and his supporters publicly threatened and vilified Kwezi and questioned Kwezi's credibility. The theme of credibility is of crucial importance in courts where allegations of rape are heard. Gqola (2015:31) explains that credibility depends on how believable the speaker is: "To be believable, the speaker has to fall into a category that is viewed as possible-to-rape, it has to be someone that can be raped" (Gqola, 2015:31). The problem in looking for credibility, which Gqola (2015) addresses in her book, is also engaged with by South African columnist and author Haji Mohamed Dawjee (2018).

Dawjee suggests that there is a predetermined image that constitutes being a victim. She asks the following leading questions: "Are victims only the silent ones? Can victims only be underprivileged? Are victims worn and 'ugly' and do not conform to the norms of beauty - whatever those are in any case?" (Dawjee, 2018:1). Dawjee's provocative questions indicate that the idea of a perfect or credible victim is flawed and that victims come from all backgrounds and circumstances.

The Omotoso rape trial, similar to the Zuma rape trial, was heard and judged in multiple arenas, except in the case of Omotoso, an additional arena, social media, was also a key factor. Zondi was the focus of attention in the courtroom by the media, Omotoso's supporters, and social media users. By focusing on the multiple forces that shape how survivors, like Zondi,

are treated, one can begin to interrogate secondary victimisation and the normalisation of rape culture.

Jessalynn Keller, Kaitlynn Mendes and Jessica Ringrose (2018) assert that rape culture is manifested in several ways. "Rape culture inevitably involves rape and sexual assault; however, it is also defined by many other harmful practices" (Keller, Mendes and Ringrose, 2018:24). These practices include "rape jokes, sexual harassment, cat-calling, sexualised 'banter'; the routine policing of women's bodies, dress, appearance, and code of conduct; the re-direction of blame from the perpetrator in an assault to the victim; and impunity for perpetrators, despite their conduct or crimes" (Keller, Mendes and Ringrose, 2018:24). Carrie A. Rentschler (2014:67) suggests that instead of focusing explicitly on the perpetrator of sexual violence, rape culture should be identified through "cultural practices that reproduce and justify the perpetration of sexual violence." Rentschler (2014:67) indicate that rape culture could appear "through particular communicative acts such as cat-calls, scripts of street harassment, and rape jokes that can be interrupted through anti-rape communication." Women have increased agency to identify and interrogate rape culture, and much of this awareness is communicated in online spaces. Several feminist media studies scholars have recognised that the public frequently uses digital spaces to learn about and intervene in rape culture simultaneously (Rentschler, 2014; Fileborn, 2017; Mendes, Ringrose, and Keller, 2018; Keller, Mendes, and Ringrose, 2018).

The importance of the employment of a feminist framing of sexual abuse in this dissertation is highlighted through the experiences of rape survivors in the courtroom and society and how it is written about in the literature and on social media. Such a framing allows me to interrogate how powerful discourses within the justice system, communities, and social media platforms perpetuate the ill-treatment of victims of sexual abuse. Much research has shown that the ill-treatment and vilification of victims are harsher when the perpetrator is well-known or in a position of power (Motsei, 2007; Suttner, 2009; Pather, 2016). A feminist framework was, therefore, helpful in examining how social media users have normalised or questioned rape culture within the comments. A feminist framing of sexual abuse is concerned with experiences of sexual abuse as a whole and how it is dealt with in communities, courtrooms, and the media. Another framing that helps examine women's experiences of oppression in religion and the church is African feminist theology.

3.3. African feminist theology

The study of feminism focuses on women's experiences of exclusion and oppression and struggles for liberation. African feminist theology is a specific branch of feminism that critically studies the causes of women's oppression within lived experiences of patriarchal expressions of religion. Mercy Oduyoye (2001:480) suggests that an expansion occurred from doing theology based on experiences of "racism and classism in the socio-economic and political realms to include sexism anchored in religio-cultural perceptions." That is to say, African feminist theology articulates the sources of African women's oppression, which includes Western Christianity, contemporary socio-political contexts, and African religio-cultural traditions. Oduyoye (2001:17) asserts that African feminist theology is a "theology of relations that replaces hierarchies with mutuality."

Because of its historical roots in engaging patriarchal religious practices and norms, African feminist theology is a powerful theoretical tool for understanding why social media users engage with Zondi's narrative in the ways that they do. It is salient to examine the relationships between Christianity and patriarchy.
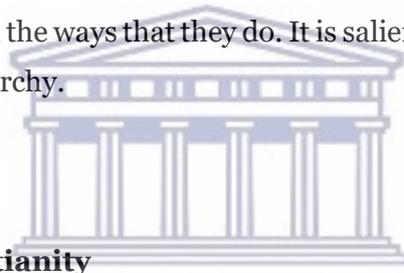
3.3.1. Patriarchy and Christianity

Feminist scholars claim that religion is a fundamental site for constructing gender and sexuality, and it plays a significant role in the inscription of social norms, practices, and values (Phiri, 1997; Rakoczy, 2004). Maureen Kambarami (2006:1) argues that religion "imprisons women leading to their subordination because of the patriarchal nature of society." Patriarchy is maintained in religion by teaching women's inferiority and through the preponderant use of male language for God, thus promoting the understanding that men are superior and women are inherently inferior to men. Susan Rakoczy (2004:30) maintains, "since patriarchal structures are and have been 'the way life is,' they have been considered to be ahistorical, eternal and for religious believers, sanctioned and ordained by God." Besides religion, various communal social encounters form an individual's worldview of their gendered identity.

Kambarami (2006:3) suggests that the family, as a social institution, "is a brewery for patriarchal practices by socialising the young to accept sexually differentiated roles." Women are socialised to acquire qualities, which fit them into a relationship of dependence on men. As a result, "women are forced to cooperate in their subjugation because women "have been psychologically shaped to internalise the idea of their own inferiority" (Rakoczy, 2004:30). Notwithstanding other factors contributing to unequal gender relations, Rakoczy (2004:30)

argues that "patriarchy is interwoven in the Christian tradition in distinct and pervasive ways." Many men, including pastors, elders, and husbands, utilise the Bible as a tool for women's oppression. Specific scriptures are used out of context and invoked to subjugate women. Churches often direct their teachings about modesty concerning behaviour and dress codes towards women. These norms are communicated to women in various ways through daily upbringing, intentional education, and unspoken expectations (Eriksen, 2016:263). When individuals deviate from the modesty teachings of the church, their religious communities may treat their choices with hostility.

Patriarchal attitudes are found within sacred texts like the Bible, and these have strengthened the foundation which men use to control women's sexuality. The creation accounts and Paul's letters are prime examples of this control (Kambarami, 2006:5). Dress codes further enforce the control of women's sexuality to prevent women from "provoking and damaging men's spirituality with lustful thoughts," as Crawl Evans and Robert J Balfour (2012:309) illustrate. Dress codes are linked with women's personalities and character. The onus of being modest is placed on women instead of teaching men to control their sexual urges. In addition, the 'immorality' of women's sexuality is a recurring theme within Christian philosophy and ethics. Charmaine Pereira and Jibrin Ibrahim's (2010:922) survey of the literature on social norms and inherent practices in religion and found that sex is associated with sin in traditional Christian philosophy, and women are discouraged from being sexual. Zohreh Sadatmoosavi (2013:4) and Renate Ysseldyk, Kimberly Matheson, and Hymie Anisman (2010:61) suggest these philosophies channels sex towards marriage and reproduction while vilifying sexual relations outside marriage. As a result, women's bodies are constructed as either reproductive tools or as sexually corrupting. A central concept within Christian perspectives about sexuality is chastity. It teaches abstinence from pre-marital sex, "the value of virginity until marriage, and fidelity to one's spouse in sexual activity" (Sadatmoosavi, 2013:4). These teachings on purity or vowed chastity are directed to women, and the majority of the unspoken rules constructed by Christianity disproportionately focus on women.

In the same way that different dress code prescriptions about modesty concerning sexuality exist within Christian teachings, social roles are also prescribed for women. Several studies have revealed that there are still many conservative Christian communities who believe in and practice normative, traditional gender roles with men as the head of the household and women submissive to their husbands, fathers, and elders (Takyi and Adda, 2002; Glass and Nath, 2006; Ysseldyk; Matheson and Anisman, 2010; Tranby and Zulkowski, 2012). Normative nuclear family values prescribe that men work, are the head of the household and at the same

time have leadership roles in the church. According to these prescriptions, Annelin Eriksen (2016:273) points out that "women are more likely to stay home, raise the children, do all the domestic work, and remain 'submissive' under men's guidance, both at home and church." Baffour Takyi and Isaac Adda (2002:181) argue that "religious values help sustain the existing gender relations as they provide the normative framework for their members' behaviour."

Besides religious indoctrination, society teaches men to be traditionally masculine. The religious teachings associate masculinity with strength, independence, assertiveness, and rationality. Scriptures are taken to be authoritative and teach women to be feminine, indicating passivity, dependence, and emotion (Takyi and Adda, 2002; Kambarami, 2006; Vega, 2019; Evans and Balfour, 2012). Jennifer Glass and Leda Nathu use the example of Titus 2:3 that exhort women "to be discreet, chaste keepers at home, obedient to their husbands" (Glass and Nath, 2006:612). Feminist theologians and biblical scholars have done a great deal of work in challenging these biblical and theological norms, recognising how devoted obedience to the scriptures and these norms perpetuates the abuse of women (Rakoczy, 2004; Glass and Nath, 2006; Kambarami, 2006; Berry, 2010; Kasomo and Maseno, 2011). African feminist theologians have focused in particular on culture in addition to the Bible and normative theology. In addition to challenging biblical norms, feminist theology seeks novel and alternative platforms to liberate and positively portray women. The media has become a popular site for feminist activism and awareness.

3.4. Conclusion

As illustrated throughout this chapter, this dissertation is feminist in its orientation and is guided by a feminist theoretical approach. To develop the research objectives, I have drawn on two feminist framings to filter my analysis: feminist framings of sexual abuse and African feminist theology. I applied these framings to how I read and engage both media form and content. This approach has organically merged to produce an African feminist approach to religion and media. These frameworks enabled me to think through my research from an alternative perspective, allowing me to move away from the normative ways in which studies on this topic are usually conducted.

Feminist framing of sexual abuse enabled me to interrogate how sexual abuse is studied, spoken and written about, thus allowing me to offer a more inclusive approach to investigating sexual abuse, considering the victim and her experience. African feminist theology provides

tools to identify how women have been marginalised and oppressed within the church and culture, by patriarchal norms. The prescribed norms apply unevenly to women, women's bodies, dress codes, and sexuality. Men are not expected to follow many of these rules and norms, and they are not held responsible for violating women while they were practising these norms. Overall this feminist framework enabled me to explore, debate, and contest essential issues such as sexism and gender stereotypes in the context of social media.

<center>**Chapter Four**</center>

<center>**Research methods and design**</center>

4.1. Introduction

The opinions of religious authorities and scholars of religion have long dominated the public domain on matters regarding religion (Abbink, 2011:272). However, the burgeoning interest in social media, its accessibility, and overall 'commonplace' character now mean that public comments on religion are no longer restricted to scholars or people with religious authority. We now have access to the ways in which popular culture characterises matters of religion – and more specifically for this dissertation, the ways in which religion and media intersect with subjects such as gender, power and sexuality. As such, social media can be positioned as a site for knowledge production and feminist methodological attention and theorisation (Bosch, 2011; Carter Olson, 2016; Fileborn, 2017, Miller, 2017; Scharnick-Udemans, 2017; Muslim, 2019).

Researchers have deployed various methods to extract qualitative data from social media on multiple topics. This study sought to extract data from social media on the specific subject of clergy sexual abuse. As already shown in chapter two, research on clergy sexual abuse has been characterised by a range of methods that attempt to describe, conceptualise and theorise clergy sexual abuse. The methods included utilising transcripts of court testimonies of survivors, perpetrators and experts. In addition, case study analysis, interviews, and focus group discussions have also been used. This study drew from YouTube and its comments section as data sources and applied a feminist critical discourse methodology to analyse the data. The main question that guided the data analysis was how do social media users support and challenge patriarchal religious understandings of gender and power in the context of a case of clergy sexual abuse?

The question involved two distinct yet overlapping organisational and analytical activities. The first task was to provide a detailed description of the narrative of clergy sexual abuse articulated by Zondi during her testimony at the trial. The second task was to examine, explore, understand and analyse how social media users engage with Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research design and methodological approach of the research. This chapter describes the processes of data production and collection undertaken throughout this project and a more detailed reflection on the conceptualisation of this data. Furthermore, I will describe the methods of narrative inquiry and feminist critical discourse analysis. The chapter explains how narrative inquiry and feminist critical discourse analysis methodologies enables a more nuanced and robust explanation of the analytical sample. Finally, a critical reflection on the ethical considerations of internet-based research, particularly within the context of the topic of sexual abuse and religion, will be offered.

4.2. Methodological approach

The central research purpose was to explore how social media users support and challenge patriarchal religious understandings of gender and power in the context of a case of clergy sexual abuse. Three sub-questions helped to probe the data and provide insight into the central research question. To answer the main critical research question, the research was guided by the following questions:

1. What is Cheryl Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse?

2. How do social media users engage with Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse?

3. Why do social media users engage with the narrative in the way that they do?

The research objectives are:

1. To describe Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse.

2. To examine how social media users engage with Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse.

3. To analyse why social media users engage with Zondi's narrative in the way that they do.

I used a qualitative research design to understand how individuals comprehend and engage with patriarchal religious norms. Gert-Jan Prosman, Sylvie Lo Fo, and Antoine Lagro-Janssen (2014:4) maintain that "qualitative research methods are superior when seeking in-depth understandings." Eliza Matsela Matsumunyane (2014:8) suggests that a qualitative research approach "seeks answers to questions that express how social experience is created and given meaning" by interrogating and deconstructing the data. Qualitative research designs are the

preferred methodological approach in feminist research (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2007; Burns and Chantler, 2011). Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Lina Leavy (2007:56) maintains that feminist approaches to methodology requires women to be placed at the centre of the research process. As a result, researchers can build knowledge from women's experiences, understand society through the lens of women's experiences, and use women's experiences as a map for social change (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2007). Diane Burns and Khatidja Chantler (2011) identify four critical qualitative research characteristics which make it pivotal to feminist researchers. The characteristics include "critical enquiry, grounding research in women's experience, reflexivity, and an ethics of care" (Burns and Chantler, 2011:71).

The dataset comprised primary data derived from Zondi's court testimony and the comments made by social media users below the video testimony on YouTube. Subscribers can use YouTube for various reasons. YouTube is a space where audio-visual materials generated for multiple purposes are shared on a public platform. This dissertation investigated how YouTube is a popular space for online engagement and community building, specifically how important social, political and cultural topics are debated and discussed within online communities. Jean Burgess and Joshua Green (2013:69) maintain that YouTube "functions as a communicative space and a community" instead of an "inert distribution platform for content produced in different contexts like television." YouTube communities introduce tactics to "attempt to navigate, shape and control the otherwise vast and chaotic array of content that exists in the network" (Burgess and Green, 2013:69). Dhiraj Murthy and Sanjay Sharma (2019:194) build on this definition by emphasising that YouTube is a community "which exemplifies online participatory media with its potential for creativity and civic exchange." They assert that YouTube is different to other social media sites, as it is "less cohesive and not centred on the individual profile page" (Murthy and Sharma, 2019:194). Although YouTube is primarily seen as a video-sharing site, users have a range of interactions and communications beyond the immediate and initial object of engagement. "Each video page has a space for responses via open-ended textual comments, which involve interactions between the uploader and viewers, in addition to reporting abuse or spam" (Murthy and Sharma, 2019:194).

Julie Uldam and Tina Askanius (2013:1191) affirm that in discussions about YouTube as a site of communication, "sceptics have often raised the questions of actual reach and [if] whether posting comments and debating online can be said to constitute public participation." The

comments below Zondi's video testimony is one example of the public turning to online platforms such as YouTube to voice their opinions on important topics. Thus, YouTube allows us to consider how many are watching and listening, who is participating and how they are participating. Murthy and Sharma (2019:219) suggest that "it can be difficult to judge the rationale and intentionality of YouTube users posting and responding, and to disentangle troll-like constructive or destructive, humorous or offensive and serious or banal commentary." In other words, it becomes challenging to discern serious comments from those that are not. However, Murthy and Sharma (2019:219) note that their analyses indicated that "there were instances of 'meaningful' conversations, despite hostility often being completely entangled." Michael Strangelove (2010:4) suggests that "within the YouTube community, one can observe racist, sexist, homophobic, and verbally violent debates over elections, religion, and armed conflicts," among other things. YouTube's comment space provides a platform for an online community with diverse voices and discussions. Moreover, community members use YouTube to redress wrongs and demand justice to persuade the global community of the righteousness of their cause.

The skepticism mentioned by Uldam and Askanius (2013) questions the validity of the YouTube comments. YouTube's comment section may be a space of unregulated hostility, yet, it remains an important place of public engagement that allows researchers to access the various debates and discussions engaged with by social media users (Murthy and Sharma, 2019). More specific to this research, the unfiltered comments provide insights into how social media users debate and interrogate the relationship between patriarchal religious norms and whether they support or challenge these norms.

4.3. Data collection

Gohar Khan and Sokha Vong (2014:630) note that "over six billion hours of video are watched each month on YouTube, and over 100 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute." Zondi's court testimony took place over three days. During this time, eNews Channel Africa (eNCA) posted numerous videos of the court proceedings and her testimony on YouTube. Although social media users can find the videos on a few different YouTube channels, they were primarily posted on YouTube by eNCA. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the research purpose is two-fold. Firstly, the dissertation aims to provide a thick description of Zondi's narrative and secondly to analyse the comments made below Zondi's video testimony by social media users. Thus, the data was collected in two parts.

The first section of data collection was to access Zondi's video testimony. Two criteria guided by the media format of video-sharing sites in general and YouTube, particularly, were followed when selecting this study's video samples for analysis. The first criteria included establishing videos that provided a complete version of the court proceedings over the three days Zondi testified. The second criterion for video selection was selecting videos that had the most user comments. The results obtained from these criteria were five videos of Zondi's court testimony. Four of the five videos contained user comments.

Once I made the selection, I downloaded the videos. After that, I transcribed the five videos of the three-day testimony. According to Julia Bailey (2008), transcription forms a core part of the qualitative project's data analysis process. "Transcription involves close observation of data through repeated careful listening and watching, a crucial first step in data analysis" (Bailey, 2008:129). Elizabeth Halcomb and Patricia Davidson (2006:40) point out that transcription has limitations, especially non-verbal communication. One advantage of engaging with the trial by both watching and listening to Zondi's testimony is that it eliminates the limitations presented by Halcomb and Davidson. Bailey (2008:128) maintains that "verbal and non-verbal interaction together shape communicative meaning." What is uttered and how it is said profoundly shape the importance of utterances. According to Michael Searcy, Steve Duck, and Peter Blanck (2005:43), the forced and definitional focus on persuasive credibility in a courtroom permits verbal and non-verbal utterances to be considered more viable than a typical conversation with intimates or strangers. In other words, "people try to make sense of others' non-verbal behaviour by attaching meaning to what they observe them doing. Consequently, these symbolic messages help the hearer interpret the speaker's intention, which indicates the importance of non-verbal communication in interpretation" (Besson, Graf, Hartung, Kropfhäusser, and Voisard, 2015:2). The opportunity to watch and engage with the trial from a verbal and non-verbal perspective allows the social media user to receive an overall account.

The second section of the data collection was the comments made by social media users below the four videos of Zondi's video testimony. The data were manually obtained by copying and pasting it into a Word document and renaming it according to the YouTube video. I later renamed the videos. The copied comments provided the raw data for this research. I then imported the comments into ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis software. The next step was to sort the comments and prepare them for analysis, and I decided that the best method to adopt for this investigation is media content analysis.

Harold Lasswell introduced media content analysis as a systematic method to study mass media initially to study propaganda (Macnamara, 2005:1). According to Jim Macnamara (2005:1), "media content analysis has been a primary research method for studying portrayals of violence, racism, and women in television programming and films." It is a non-intrusive research method that allows "examining a wide range of data over an extensive period to identify popular discourses and their possible meanings" (Macnamara, 2005:6). Macnamara (2005:6) proposes that researchers combine media content and media effects to understand the role of mass media in society and understand societal attitudes.

Macnamara (2005) and David Dallimore, Leah McLaughlin, Carol Williams, and Jane Noyes (2019) suggest that media study helps explain the age-old debate. 'Does media create public opinion, attitudes, perceptions, and culture, or does media reflect existing attitudes, perceptions, and culture?' Most researchers agree that, with limitations, social media does both. Bettina Zimmermann, Noah Aebi, Steffan Kolb, David Shaw, and Bernice Elger (2019:258) maintain that even though social media cannot lay claim to reflecting a comprehensive public sentiment, it nevertheless can reflect a climate of public opinion. Hence, I sought to construct an account of public opinion and beliefs related to Zondi's narrative using media content analysis in this dissertation. Media content analysis anticipates *a priori* design in a coding system. The coding system contains the list of variables "to be researched and provides researchers involved in the project with a consistent framework for conducting the research" (Macnamara, 2005:9). It indicates that compiling a codebook is the next step in organising the data. I generated the codes on ATLAS.ti, which enabled the arranging and managing of the data. The most suitable approach to start the coding process was conventional content analysis. Conventional content analysis was chosen for this project, as there are no systematic rules for analysing data, including open coding. "Open coding means that notes and headings are written in the text while reading it" (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008:110). The process includes "approaching the text and making notes of the first impressions, thoughts, and initial analysis. This process allows labels for codes to emerge that reflect more than one critical opinion" (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005:1279).

The initial data sample consisted of 903 comments deemed helpful for the analysis. I only included YouTube user comments in the study if they reflected or challenged normative understandings of gender and power. Some of the comments were not in English, and I enlisted the assistance of a translator. I am mindful of the difference between literal translations and deep meaning. Thus, my translator did not do a word-by-word translation. Instead, she translated the sentences to capture meaning in context rather than superficial

literal translations. Seven percentage of the comments chosen were not in English. The languages were Sotho, IsiXhosa, and IsiZulu.

At first, I based the coding scheme on what I hoped to convey in this project about how social media users engage with Zondi's testimony and the Omotoso trial. Nineteen codes emerged upon the first reading of the text. I proceeded to cluster the codes as they relate to one another, making the connection through words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs (Basit, 2003:114). I identified relationships between the codes, and they were subdivided and grouped into categories, resulting in the comments displayed in four broad codes.

Below I have illustrated the four codes and the sub-codes, which were grouped based on similar characteristics.

1. Zondi as a victim	2. Zondi as a survivor	3. Religion and sexual abuse	4. 'Credible' rape victim
Revictimised by the inhumane pervert lawyer	Womandla* *A vernacular term for celebrating women	God is with her; she will not fall	That is not an image of a victim
Social media users offer Zondi support	Zondi speaks up against her oppressor	Man of God	How should victims of abuse look?
The instillation of fear and trauma			

Together, these codes provide essential insights into how social media users engage with Zondi's narrative in the Omotoso trial. There are comments that either support or challenge a particular patriarchal norm in each category about the trial. However, I must note that in many comments, patriarchal norms may not have been directly referred to or engaged with. The employment of feminist critical discourse analysis to understand the social media users' comments enabled me to look beyond the obvious statements. Instead I examined subtle, and covert ways in which gendered assumptions and power asymmetries manifests within the comments (Lazar, 2014:182).

4.4. Data conceptualisation

Using the video testimony of a court case and the public comments below it, is a relatively avant-garde method of using social media as a knowledge production site. I spent much time thinking through various ways to extract data from social media. I sought to conceptualise the video testimony as Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse and the YouTube users' comments as public opinion regarding beliefs and practices.

4.5. Data analysis

As intimated in the previous chapter, I drew on feminist theories, research, and methods for the ways in which they provide tools to interrogate patriarchal norms and religious beliefs that oppress and disadvantage women. I used narrative inquiry to produce an account of Zondi's experience and feminist critical discourse analysis to understand why and how social media users engage and interact with Omotoso's trial in the ways that they do.

The following section discusses the analytical methods utilised to answer the central research question of this dissertation.
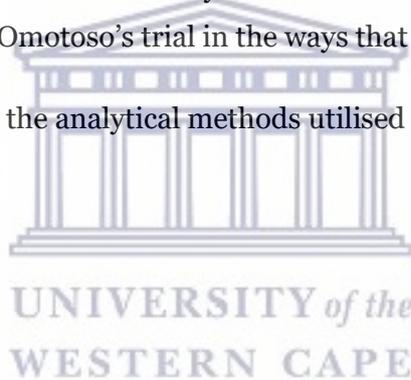
4.5.1. Narrative inquiry

Lauren Stephenson and Barbara Harold (2015:156) maintain that individuals engage in narrative theorising through storytelling, resulting in discoveries that further shape their professional identities, developing new or different stories. A narrative inquiry captures "personal and human dimensions of experience over time, and takes account of the relationship between individual experience and cultural context" (Stephenson and Harold 2015:155). Nicole Pitre, Kaysi Kushner, Kim Raine, and Kathy Hegadoren (2013:118) suggest that "narratives use storytelling to make sense of the past and to engage in social action through "speaking out to invite political mobilisation and change." Pitre *et al.* (2013:119) propose that a critical feminist approach to narrative inquiry is to examine the story's information, thus exploring what and how it is said within a story from a sociological perspective.

Pitre *et al.* (2013) contend that it would be "useful to analyse the content (the what) of the stories told to understand the forces and conditions that shape particular experiences and delineate the boundaries of individual or collective agency, voice, identity, and reflexivity"

(Pitre *et al.*, 2013:119). In other words, this approach provides in-depth engagement with individuals' experiences rather than retelling or describing their experiences.

Vera Caine, Pam Steeves, Jean Clandinin, Andrew Estefan, Janice Huber, and Shaun Murphy (2018) introduce narrative inquiry as a practice of social justice; by "exploring ways in which social justice issues can be re-framed and re-imagined, with attention to consequent action" (Caine *et al.*, 2018:133). Narrative inquiry is concerned with collecting and telling narratives about people's lives, capturing the experiences and meaning for the individual, and empowering them to tell their narrative in their authentic voice.

Narrative inquiry as a methodology offers an effective way of compiling the information presented by Zondi and generating a thick description of her experience through her depiction of past and present. Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin (1990:2) describe narrative inquiry in its simplest form as the "study of experience as a story." Jo Ollerenshaw and John Creswell (2002:329), Gillian Byrne (2017:37), and Gunilla Haydon and Pamela van der Riet (2017:86) agree that people tell stories about their life experiences to describe human knowledge regarding their expertise and action. Narrative inquiry is a way to understand and study that experience. "These stories provide the raw data for researchers to analyse as they retell the story based on narrative elements such as the problem, characters, setting, actions, and resolution" (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002:332).

The state and defence lawyer's questioning framed Zondi's description of her experience of clergy sexual abuse. I will employ narrative inquiry to achieve a thick description of Zondi's account of clergy sexual abuse. In retelling her narrative in this dissertation, I can organise her narrative in a chronological sequence. I can identify the story's critical elements: time, place, plot, and scene, as well as add rich details, "make causal links and identify themes to provide a fuller narrative" (Byrne, 2017:38 and Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002:332). I will therefore foreground Zondi's voice and experience via this account.

4.5.2. Feminist critical discourse analysis

According to Teun van Dijk (2015:352), critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of analytical research that "primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted; by text and talk in the social and political context." Van Dijk (2015) maintains that typical vocabularies in CDA will feature specific notions. "These notions include power, dominance, hegemony, ideology, class, gender, race, discrimination, interests, reproduction, institutions, social structure, or social order, besides the more familiar

discourse-analytical notions" Van Dijk, 2015:354). Accordingly, feminist critical discourse analysis aims to bring together critical discourse analysis and feminist scholarship to interrogate discourse perpetuating gendered social practices. Laura Parson (2016:102) argues that texts, policies, practices, and unwritten norms institutionalise gender and sexual discrimination. One needs to interrogate the sustenance of discrimination to understand why individuals express specific opinions. Lazar (2014:182) maintains that feminist critical discourse analysis examines the complex, overt and covert ways of gendered social order and gender assumptions.

The examination questions how specific communities and contexts are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and contested with regard to gendered social order and beliefs. The discourse focuses on social justice and transformation, intending to entrench gendered social arrangements and patriarchal structures and achieve social emancipation and transformation (Lazar, 2014:182). Therefore, feminist critical discourse analysis critiques power and ideologies that sustain hierarchical gender relations. Feminist critical discourse analysis resonates with feminist's maxim 'the personal is political' and works as a political struggle for social change, "forming communities of analytical resistance and activism" (Lazar, 2014:183). In other words, it is interested in accessing forms of discourse that can be empowering for women's participation in male-dominant spaces.

Lazar's (2014:183) conception of feminist critical discourse analysis is therefore helpful when she states that it is "fundamentally driven by critical feminist theory and practice developments, which aim to connect individual experiences with societal relations and translate private troubles into public issues."

4.5.3. Analysis of the YouTube comments

As mentioned above, I used two methods of analysis to answer the central research question. Each form of analysis was paired and applied to a section of data.

The first data set is Zondi's transcribed court testimony. The applied method of analysis for this data set is narrative inquiry. I wrote the descriptive narrative with Zondi's voice discernible at the forefront of her experience. Using narrative inquiry as a method of analysis allows me to 'disrupt the master narrative' of incidents of sexual abuse (Nadar, 2014). Therefore, I can offer a paradigm shift to stories that are less spoken about in society.

When compiling a thick description of Zondi's experience of sexual abuse, I found that employing narrative inquiry helps create a fuller account of Zondi's experience. Unlike a case study methodology, where one would conduct structured interviews and receive organised and concise answers; narrative inquiry allows the researcher to listen to the story, receive information about events, listen to how action might trigger another action and its implications, and connect the events. Narrative inquiry only requires a small sample and will produce significant data, as the response is a detailed account. Clandinin (2012) argues that narrative inquiry allows the researcher to walk alongside the participant, live with them and understand their experience. She emphasises that "much research is done on the topic, rather than with." While I could not gain access to Zondi or walk alongside her, I adapted Clandinin's method by walking alongside her testimony. I did that by replaying her testimony several times, paying close attention to her words, tone, and body gestures. I also watched and read the interviews of Zondi, where she shared her experience of clergy sexual abuse. In these interviews, Zondi occasionally disclosed information which she was not able to share in her testimony. Therefore, providing additional details of her experience of clergy sexual abuse.

The second data set is the collection of coded comments made below the four YouTube videos. This data set was treated according to media content analysis to identify, analyse, and interpret patterns of meaning from the verbatim comments. In doing so, I assigned codes to the comments, which later became themes. After that, I applied feminist critical discourse analysis to the relevant comments. There are two principal reasons why the employment of feminist critical discourse analysis is pivotal to this project: the first is its ability to use it as a tool to critique gendering privilege and inequality towards women. I used this analysis as an analytical tool when closely reading the comments made by social media users about the Omotoso trial. It enabled me to identify gender stereotypes, sexism, patriarchy, and discriminatory and prejudiced discourses within the comments. In addition, I was able to point out the language and keywords that promote gendered social order discourse. I learned how social media users understand patriarchal religious norms and support or challenge them by identifying and analysing these discourses and was further able to understand how and why these norms are maintained and offered an alternative perspective.

Secondly, feminist critical discourse analysis has activism qualities that are significant when dealing with clergy sexual abuse. It identifies sexist and objectifying discourse in the language which perpetuates violation against women and suggests using a language that promotes

emancipatory and resistance discourse. Many social media users used their comments to perform social activism to create social awareness. Therefore, I argue that the issues discussed in social media users' comments are not merely "preparing the way for action, but constitute action itself; raising critical awareness is activism" (Lazar, 2014:196). The social media public's critical social awareness and activism are related to raising awareness about sexual abuse, specifically sexual abuse in so-called safe spaces, by the people least expected. However, many individuals may argue that the comments made on social media are merely soundbites of their valid opinion and do not have real merit of the point that they are trying to make. The results of this research support the idea that social media does reflect public opinion and that users are more likely to reveal their realistic reactions and thoughts in the comments, as it has a degree of anonymity.

Lazar (2014:144) maintains that feminist critical discourse analysis focuses on "social justice and transformation of gender, and is a timely contribution to the growing body of feminist discourse literature… particularly in the field of gender and language where feminist critical discourse analysis has occupied a surprisingly marginal position." Instead of only employing critical discourse analysis, feminist critical discourse analysis is research from a feminist perspective and focuses specifically on interrogating discourse perpetuating gendered social practices.
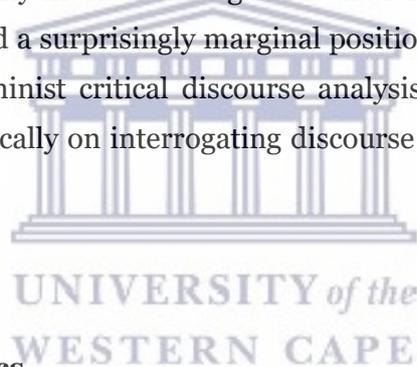
4.6. Internet research ethics

Annette Markham and Elizabeth Buchanan (2012:111) assert that "the internet is a social phenomenon, a tool, and a site for research." The internet has "opened up a wide range of new ways to examine human inter/actions in new contexts" and various disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches (Ess and the AoIR ethics working committee, 2002:2). The researcher's role or conceptualisation of the internet in a research project will determine the different epistemological, logistical, and ethical considerations (Markham and Buchanan, 2012:3). The AoIR guidelines 2019 (Internet Research Ethics 3.0) is a collaborative document that builds on the previous guidelines (IRE 1.0, 2002; IRE 2.0, 2012). According to aline shakti franzke, Anja Bechmann, Michael Zimmer, and Charles M. Ess (2020:2), Internet Research Ethics was written primarily for "researchers, students, or technical developers who face ethical concerns during their research or are generally interested in Internet Research Ethics." The AoIR is committed to ensuring that research on and about the Internet is conducted ethically and professionally.

This research did not require direct communication or interaction with individuals through observation, interviews, focus groups, or questionnaires. However, it does entail using the user's comments made on YouTube. According to franzke, Bechmann, Zimmer, Ess, and the Association of Internet Researchers (2020:23), IRE 3.0 provides a general structure for ethical analysis. It was "designed to help identify the ethically relevant issues and questions, supplemented with additional suggestions for how to begin to analyse and address these challenges related to ongoing socio-technical developments in the domain of internet research." They also encourage researchers to explore other guidelines, such as the Norwegian National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH) guidelines that emphasise developing 'sound judgement.' "Such judgment is core to our ethical decision making in the face of the difficult challenges we face as researchers, participants, oversight authorities and larger stakeholders" (franzke, Bechmann, Zimmer, Ess, and the Association of Internet Researchers, 2020:23). Both IRE 3.0 and the NESH guidelines are concerned with ensuring the human participants' dignity and integrity. Respecting the participants includes protecting their identity by way of anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent. franzke et al. (2020:10) maintain that "some researchers are trying to obtain first-degree informed consent, others are focusing on deleting names and other highly identifiable information from the dataset when storing and processing the data. Most commonly, researchers pseudonymised their data." In this project, I have deleted the names of the users to obtain a degree of anonymity. Although I took specific measures to protect the participant's confidentiality and anonymity by refraining from using their online names or personal information, I must ensure that their integrity is kept and political reproduction of inequalities is avoided when sharing their comments. To do so, I have further reflected on franzke's (2020) *Ethics of Care in the context of Feminist Internet Research Ethics*. For feminist ethicists, "the analytical category of gender plays an important role in the reflection on how to decide." The reflection "assesses the disagreements and agreements caused by the theoretical and practical question of what social, political, and economic consequences of being a woman" (franzke, 2020:65). Consequently, the Ethics of Care in feminist IRE considers "caring for our bodies, communities, and research subjects, we are acting ethically" (franzke, 2020:65). Right and wrong are balanced by reflecting on the context and thereby gaining knowledge.

One of the most significant concerns for Internet Research Ethics is whether the internet and social media data should be considered a private or a public space. Jacqueline Warrell and Michele Jacobsen (2014:26) maintain that "non-intrusive, minimal risk research conducted in public spaces is not subject to the same ethical considerations or the ethics review process as research conducted in private spaces." Leanne Townsend and Claire Wallace (2016:5) note

that "social media users have all agreed to a set of terms and conditions for each social media platform they use." These clauses often contained how third parties may access one's data within these terms and conditions, including researchers. "If users have agreed to the terms and conditions, their data can be considered public domain." However, when it comes to a password-protected private Facebook group, the data should be deemed confidential (Townsend and Wallace, 2016:5). Warrell and Jacobsen (2014:28) maintain that "if parts of the internet are viewed as a public domain, the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS2) does not mandate researchers using non-intrusive web-based research to obtain informed consent." The information posted on the web is "published in a public space, easily accessed by anyone, including researchers, and is open to being included in research data" (Warrell and Jacobsen, 2014:280). When using online data for research purposes, feminist ethicists believe that "digitised information that can be used to create profound insights about people's bodies, their habits and preferences, and their social relations" (franzke, 2020:68). As a result, feminist IRE thinks about "data and its communication informed by direct experience by committing to action" associated with intersectional feminist thought (franzke, 2020:68). Ess and the AoIR ethics working committee (2002) prescribes that as the researcher and the offline counterpart of the online research, it is my responsibility to raise critical risk and safety issues to the human participants.
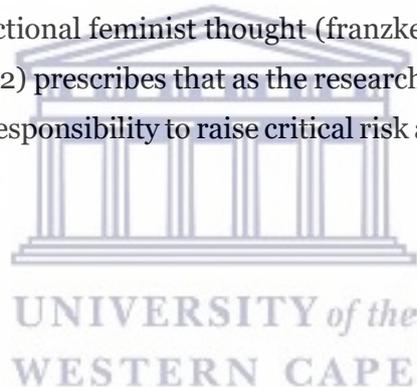
4.7. Conclusion

This chapter described and explained the methodological approach I adopted in the study. A qualitative research design was employed to understand Zondi's narrative and how social media users engage with her narrative. The data collection and data conceptualisation were discussed, and ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis software, played a significant role in sorting the data until I reached the four principal codes on which the findings are based. I showed why narrative inquiry and feminist critical discourse analysis are the most appropriate methods to analyse the data set. In the next chapter, I will describe in more detail how narrative inquiry works in conceptualising Cheryl Zondi's court testimony as her personal narrative of clergy sexual abuse. Since this dissertation is underpinned by feminist theory and methodology, feminist critical discourse analysis is suitable for interrogating discourse perpetuating gendered social inequity and practices.

<center>**Chapter Five**</center>

<center>**Cheryl Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse**</center>

5.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to use feminist narrative inquiry to create a thick description of Zondi's experience of clergy sexual abuse. Pitre *et al.* (2013:122) observe that a narrative enables the storytellers to "view themselves and interpret their agency within their world." Narratives may expose the "invisible, silenced, or taken-for-granted historical, structural, and ideological forces and conditions that lead to or perpetuate social injustices" (Pitre *et al.*, 2013:122). Disclosing an experience of clergy sexual abuse is traumatic, and society and the justice system often vilify the survivor when they share their experiences. Nazanin Andalibi, Olivia Haimson, Munmun De Choudhury, and Andrea Forte (2016:3) find that most rapes and sexual assaults occur before adulthood. Yet, it is common for individuals not to disclose their sexual abuse until they are adults, while some survivors might never disclose (Andalibi *et al.*, 2016:1).

Similarly, Cheryl Zondi also disclosed her experiences years after it took place. Zondi's detailed court testimony of her experience of sexual abuse by Omotoso became a compelling narrative in South Africa. It described behind-the-scenes details of sexual abuse within a church and the entire process from the grooming to the abuse itself. When clergy sexual abuse cases are reported, the media rarely reveal such particular details. Most notably, this testimony opened the pathway for many victims of abuse to share their experiences online. Zondi disclosed her experience of sexual abuse, despite South Africa's poor history with the treatment of victims and the known system of revictimisation. The support and activism on social media, as a result of her narrative disclosure, were remarkable. For this dissertation, I have conceptualised Zondi's court testimony as her narrative of clergy sexual abuse. Through the use of the multiple videos which constitute her testimony, I also had access to the reactions and discussions to her testimony by social media users. As a result, I made use of a wide range of user engagement.

In line with creating a thick description and analysis of Zondi's experience of clergy sexual abuse, I will first introduce the characters before extracting Zondi's full testimony as a narrative. The characters include the complainant, Cheryl Zondi, the accused Timothy

Omotoso, defence lawyer Peter Daubermann, state prosecutor Nceba Ntelwa, and Judge Mandela Makaula. The co-accused, Lusanda Sulani and Zukiswa, and Zondi's 'groomer', Fezeka Mboni. The remainder of the chapter gives an in-depth, detailed account of Zondi's narrative, starting from when she first entered the *Jesus Dominion International Church* until she successfully escaped from the church.

5.2. The complainant: Cheryl Zondi

Nombulelo Nokhanya Cheryl Zondi became popularly known as 'Cheryl Zondi' through the publicised rape trial of Timothy Omotoso. At the time of her testimony in 2018, she was twenty-two years old. She lived in Secunda with her mother and siblings, and in December 2012, they moved from Secunda to Gauteng. She joined the *Jesus Dominion International Church* in 2009 as a thirteen-year-old high school learner. While delivering her testimony, she shared that she is a second-year marketing student at the University of Johannesburg.

Her experience of sexual trauma began in Durban at the age of fourteen. It continued for two and a half years until 2013, when her mother removed her from the church. Zondi later returned to the church for five months, between May and August 2015 (Zondi's testimony, 2018a; Zondi's testimony, 2018c, Zondi's testimony, 2018d, Zondi's testimony, 2018e).

5.3. The men involved in the trial

The purpose of this section is to describe the other characters in Cheryl Zondi's narrative: the perpetrator, the lawyers, and the Judge. They play a significant role in how the public received her story.

5.3.1. The Accused: Timothy Omotoso

Timothy Omotoso (60) is the senior pastor of the *Jesus Dominion International Church*, based in Durban, South Africa. The church is a seemingly charismatic Christian religious movement led by Nigerian pastor Timothy Omotoso (Tawengwa, 2018). Omotoso initiated a youth project in South Africa called *Youth Empowerment Project* (YEP), which allowed him to mentor several music groups, including *Grace Galaxy* and *Simply Chrysolite,* who have composed songs and produced albums with his guidance. Omotoso is also the founder of a 24-

hour satellite television station, *Ancient of Days Broadcasting Network* (ADBN), which aired worldwide. *Just as I Am*, his weekly television broadcast features music, sermons, and miracle sessions and airs across various networks (Tawengwa, 2018). Omotoso is known to his congregation as the 'man of God,' and the young women he musically mentored saw him as a father figure and referred to him as 'Daddy.'

Omotoso and his co-accused Lusanda Sulani and Zukiswa Sitho faced ninety-seven charges, including rape, human trafficking, and racketeering (Koen, 2019). Omotoso is alleged to have groomed girls and abused them from the age of fourteen. He is alleged to have serially abused women over some time and shielded his acts behind the pulpit. Over thirty young women came forward to detail their experiences with the alleged sexual predator (Mkhize, 2017). Omotoso's rape offences took place in South Africa and abroad (Zondi, 2018a).

5.3.2. The Defence Lawyer: Peter Daubermann

The defence lawyer, Peter Daubermann, played a significant role in how the public receives Zondi's narrative. Daubermann was merciless when he cross-examined Zondi, which planted doubt in the minds of many.

Before defending Omotoso, Daubermann was known for defending Christopher Panayioto in his trial for orchestrating the murder of his wife. Journalist Andile Sicetsha provides detailed background about Daubermann's career. Sicetsha (2018) states that Daubermann started his career in the Eastern Cape. In 1976, he served as the Department of Justice administrative assistant and later became a state prosecutor in Grahamstown. Between 1988 and 1989, Daubermann became a magistrate and a prosecutor in the high court. In 2012, Daubermann opened his private practice in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, servicing all those who needed representation against the state.

Sicetsha (2018) describes Daubermann as 'tech-savvy.' Calling Daubermann tech-savvy refers to the "attorney's lengths to establish reasonable doubt in trials" (Sicetsha 2018). Daubermann did precisely that in his cross-examination. He asked Zondi uncomfortable and challenging questions to contradict herself and create doubt in her testimony. Zanele Zama (2018) reported that the *General Council of the Bar of South Africa* had issued a statement distancing itself from Daubermann and his callous cross-examination in the Timothy Omotoso trial. Although the term for Daubermann's behaviour might be 'tech-savvy,' his demeanour

throughout the cross-examining of Zondi made the public uncomfortable. He caused the public to question his professionalism and call him 'vicious' and a 'pervert' (Zondi, 2018e). Daubermann asked inappropriate questions, such as 'How many centimetres did Omotoso penetrate you?'. He also made several claims implying that Zondi was a willing participant in the rape and molestation. He even went to the extent of saying that she accepted the risk of being raped by going to the mission house in Durban. In addition to asking her dehumanising questions, Daubermann kept raising his voice at Zondi. At times he would not even allow her to complete her sentence by bombarding her with another question. On multiple occasions, Zondi explained the impacts of trauma, such as the inability to remember all the details of her abuse. Still, Daubermann shouted at her in apparent frustration when she failed to remember the exact dates and persisted in asking, 'Can't you work out the exact time?' (Zondi, 2018e).

5.3.3. The State Prosecutor: Nceba Ntelwa

State prosecutor Nceba Ntelwa is from Port Elizabeth. He studied at Fort Hare University and is a Commissioner at the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (https://www.facebook.com/nceba.ntelwa). Before the Omotoso trial, Ntelwa enjoyed little online visibility. The only online activity is an outdated Facebook and LinkedIn profile (https://www.facebook.com/nceba.ntelwa; https://www.linkedin.com/in/nceba-ntelwa-940b8bb6/). His name made headlines for the first time as the state prosecutor in this case. Ntelwa's newly found public image did not start on a positive note. The public criticised him in the Omotoso trial for his 'soft' nature. They categorised him as a 'weak' prosecutor. They questioned why he never objected to many of Daubermann's harsh cross-examining questions (Zondi comments, 2018e).

Compared to Daubermann, Ntelwa did not convince the public that he was confident in his questioning. Instead, he stuttered and stumbled over his words with many of the questions he asked, and the phrasing of his questions was more indirect statements.

5.3.4. The Judge, Mandela Makaula

Judge Mandela Makaula was appointed in 2010 as the Judge of the High Court, Eastern Cape Division. Before that, he had practiced at a law firm called *Makaula Zilwa & Co* for two years. He started his legal career as a clerk and court interpreter in the mid-80s before he worked his way up to become a prosecutor and then magistrate (Judges Matter Candidate Bio 2017).

In several parts of the Omotoso trial, Judge Mandela Makaula showed his humanity, especially towards Zondi. He even wished her good luck with her exams. On several occasions, Makaula reprimanded Daubermann for his questioning. He sternly told Daubermann that he could use his options, as Daubermann was permitted to do so by law if he was unhappy with being reprimanded. After Makaula wished Zondi good luck, Daubermann filed a complaint stating that Makaula had 'aligned himself with Zondi' and should recuse himself from the trial. After a 30-minute adjournment, Makaula returned to deliver the judgment, stating: 'Suffice to say the application has no merit, the application has been denied' (Zondi's testimony, 2018e).

5.4. The women involved in grooming Zondi

Although Omotoso was the perpetrator who sexually abused several girls, he did not act alone. He sought the help of women to recruit girls to join his ministry, girls which he would later abuse. These women did not only recruit the girls, but they also encouraged and groomed them to visit Omotoso's bedroom and please him. The women aiding Zondi's sexual abuse were Lusanda Sulani, Zukiswa Sitho, and Fezeka Mboni.

5.4.1. Co-accused number two: Lusanda Sulani

Lusanda Sulani (36) is one of the two women who faced ninety-seven charges, including rape and human trafficking with Omotoso. She and her young daughter lived in the mission house with Omotoso and the girls. When Zondi joined the church in 2009, Sulani was the assistant of Fezeka Mboni, Omotoso's personal assistant. However, when Zondi returned to the mission house in 2015, it seemed as if she now took on Mboni's role (Zondi's testimony, 2018a). Sulani was the intermediary between Omotoso and the girls. She handled most of the communication, organised transportation, and ensured the girls arrived whenever Omotoso summoned them. She groomed and coached the girls on how to conduct themselves when called to Omotoso's room, told them to dress 'sexy', and instructed them to "make him happy and please him" (Zondi's testimony, 2018b).

5.4.2. Co-accused number three: Zukiswa Sitho

Zukiswa Sitho (28) is the third co-accused in the Omotoso trial. Besides being charged with recruiting girls and women from his congregation for sexual exploitation, there is almost no

reference made to her. Sitho's husband was the key protocol officer of the church, and Zondi and the girls only knew her as 'Lobsey' (Zondi's testimony, 2018a). Zondi only mentioned her once in her testimony, stating that she was present in the mission house when she returned in 2015 (Zondi's testimony, 2018a).

5.4.3. The groomer: Fezeka Mboni

Fezeka Mboni approached Zondi to join the church; she later became her groomer in the mission house (Zondi's testimony, 2018b). She was Omotoso's 'right-hand woman'. Mboni's role in the mission house included arranging transportation, food and accommodation for Omotoso and the girls when they were travelling. She also cooked for Omotoso, made sure that someone took his clothes to the laundromat, ironed his clothes, and counted his money (Zondi's testimony, 2018b).

5.5. Cheryl Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse

"People are warned when they go out to a party and when they go out at night. But they're not necessarily warned when they're going to a church, an ancestral space, a traditional space, or any kind of religious setting" (Zondi's testimony, 2018b).

The above extract was taken from the testimony of Zondi. The statement sets the tone for what follows as Zondi retells her experience of clergy sexual abuse. The line "But they're not necessarily warned when they're going to a church…" elucidates the need for a feminist framing of sexual abuse. The occurrence of sexual violation has always been associated with being out at night or going to a party, but less often with sacred spaces. Thus, this statement made by Zondi invites the listener to rethink where sexual violations can occur and who are the prospective perpetrators.

Timothy Omotoso was well known in churches for mentoring many musical groups. He was known for his 'Triple T- Tim Tosh Touch' magic that he added to any piece of music to improve the quality (Zondi's testimony, 2018d). Zondi first came across the *Jesus Dominion International church* through a youth group while church-hopping with her friends. She was instantly attracted to the vibrant atmosphere and the many young faces that filled the church. The idea of being able to sing in a choir, praise God, develop a promising music career, and

receive mentorship from the respected 'man of God' enthralled her, so much so that attending a single mid-week service became a four-day weekly devotion.

In an interview with Dawjee, Zondi mentioned that *"[e]very conversation that didn't involve the word 'Christianity' started to feel satanic"* (Dawjee, 2019). She added that her evangelism became manic, and her actions and character became unrecognisable. As a result, her mother, who never attended church, came and dragged her out of the church. Yet, she still became a member and a resident singer in one of the leading gospel girl bands, *Grace Galaxy*. Being in the band entailed music mentorship by Omotoso and spending substantial time with him. The church's musical aspect and Omotoso's coaching made joining the church even more appealing. Zondi was familiar with attending church. However, when she joined this particular church, it was as if a new world had opened.

On day one of the three-day trial, Zondi revisited her first encounter of sexual abuse by Omotoso when she was only fourteen. While retelling the account, she succumbed to emotional stress and displayed strong feelings of pain and heartache. However, she persevered in her goal to complete sharing the experience without taking a break. Zondi testified that sometime after joining the church, Omotoso started behaving differently and made inappropriate advances. He invited her to his bedroom and suggested that she sit down next to him. He asked inappropriate questions about her romantic life and engaged her in conversations about sex and relationships. She reported: *"At the time, believing that this person was a man of God, I didn't trust my suspicious thoughts that I had in my mind. I dismissed them immediately"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018c). Zondi responded to his advances by clarifying that she wanted to be his daughter-in-Christ and wanted mentorship of the kind he offered with *Simply Chrysolites*, another musical group under his management.

Instead, Omotoso gave her a long, tight, uncomfortable hug, unlike any hug she had experienced from him before. He moved his hands along Zondi's back, pulled her bra strap, pushed her onto the bed, and lowered himself on top of her. *"I was in such shock I just laid there paralysed.... He was having the time of his life, laughing. While he was doing this, all I could do was lay there shocked, paralysed, and scared. All I did was listen to my heartbeat"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018c). Zondi was in apparent disbelief of the situation, to the extent that the experience had her feeling paralysed and unable to move or push him off her. Omotoso first built a close relationship with Zondi, gained her trust, then took advantage of her faith in him. Such behaviour is described by Garland and Argueta (2010) as grooming. Omotoso has

groomed Zondi since she first joined the church. To an extent, she recognised that his actions were inappropriate, but she trusted him more than her instincts.

Consequently, Zondi's new reality included being called to Omotoso's bedroom whenever he summoned her for pleasure. After this pattern continued, she realised that it was typical for Omotoso's co-accused, Lusanda, and Zukiswa, to approach beautiful young girls who visited the church. They were commissioned to recruit girls for Omotoso, which made her only one of his many pursuits. When Omotoso violated his professional role the first time, Zondi dismissed her suspicions and doubted herself instead of him. He was the 'man of God', a trusted and respected person. Therefore, it was more believable for her to be making the wrong assumptions of what was happening. As with many clergy sexual abuse experiences, Omotoso hindered Zondi's spiritual growth. Zondi mentioned how she questioned and begged God, asking him why he is allowing this, asking why she should please Omotoso to go to heaven, and begging God to relieve her from the abuse she experienced at the mission house. However, Omotoso made her believe that God would not answer her prayers against him. It felt as if God was not answering her prayers for a long time, leading her to conclude that God favoured Omotoso.
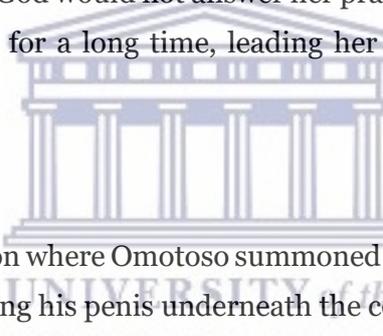
Zondi described another occasion where Omotoso summoned her into his bedroom. When she entered the room, he was fondling his penis underneath the covers. He instructed her to *"join him"* in bed (Zondi's testimony, 2018e), and she got in fully dressed. He then *"instructed me to take off my headscarf because he said it made me look old"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018c). He told her to take off her night dress after that, and she stepped out of bed and obliged. He told her to take off the rest of her garments. Zondi removed her stockings and underwear and stood naked in front of Omotoso before re-joining him in bed. She testified that she did not doubt that he was about to rape her (Zondi's testimony, 2018e). Omotoso asked her to hand a Vaseline tub to him on the bed as she lay in bed. *"So, I did so. He took some of the Vaseline... And he rubbed it on himself under the covers"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018e). She continued by explaining how he harassed her to please him. It was as if *"he wanted to feel wanted by a teenager"* (Zondi' testimony, 2018a). He told her to be free to please him and do whatever she wanted to do to him. She recalls, *"...at the time, I was just confused. I did not know what he meant when he told me, 'do what you want.' I don't know what he thinks I wanted to do to him"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018c). He then instructed that she should rub the Vaseline on him. She rubbed some on his thighs. When she failed to understand his hints and gestures that her hands should go further, he lowered himself onto her, this time removing his underwear. He eventually climaxed, and his semen was all over her thighs. *"He told me to go and wipe myself*

off. So, I went to his bathroom, I took some toilet paper, I wiped his semen off of me, and I flushed. He told me to come back into bed. So, I did that" (Zondi's testimony, 2018e).

When she returned to his bed, she just laid there, still. Omotoso then fell asleep with his leg over Zondi and his chin on her face, restraining her from attempting to leave his bedroom while he was sleeping. *"I remember my heart was beating very loudly. That's all I listen to, on top of his snoring. When he finally decided to wake up, he prayed- asking God to forgive us as if I was somehow part of the filthy thing he had just done. And then, after he prayed, he dismissed me, and before I could walk out of the room, he told me that what happened was a covenant between me, him, and God. And if I ever broke it, there will be detrimental consequences to pay. Then he told me that I'm fourteen years old, so I better not say anything to anyone because the 'man of God' cannot go to jail. Those were his words while he was laughing. It was so nice for him"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018c). After he prayed, she left the room and went downstairs. *"My eyes were teary. One of the ladies asked me, 'what's wrong? Why are your eyes like this?' and I told her nothing, and I went about my way"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018e). Omotoso did not only sexually abuse Zondi. He was also manipulative and used religious doctrine to emotionally and spiritually abuse her to ensure she complied and remained silent.
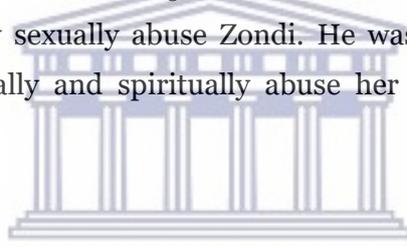
Zondi testified that Omotoso would fly her back and forth between Secunda and Durban almost every weekend and school holiday before her full-time residence in the mission house, under the pretense that she had to rehearse with *Grace Galaxy*. *"[H]is musical training was the cover of why I would go to his house and why I would be there all the time. So, everyone understood that he was mentoring me and training me, even though that was not the case"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018a). Zondi reported that the only time she got a break from satisfying Omotoso was when she was menstruating. *"So, if I were there for a weekend, he would do this to me on Saturday. On Sunday, if there was a chance. If I was there during holidays, the only time I'd catch a break was if I was on my menstrual cycle"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018a). She had to inform him when she was on her cycle, either by SMS or when she passed him. She recalls that Omotoso was very demanding and always wanted her to do something new, sexually. *"Every time that I went to him, he would demand that I 'do something new. Do SOMETHING new!' and that's how all these things came into play"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018a). 'These things', Zondi was referring to, was how the sexual abuse escalated and became more intense.

When they travelled with the church, he would summon her to his bedroom at every destination. Zondi recalled one specific travelling incident when they stayed at a hotel in Richards Bay. *"It was two separate buildings, he was staying on the one side, and we [the girls in the band] were staying in the other building. He summoned me in the odd hours of the morning like two, three, and I had to walk from my room in that building to his room, which was roughly a ten-minute or so walk at night, to his room. And when he was done with me, I had to walk back by myself"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018d). Not only did Zondi have to walk alone back to her hotel room, but she also had to lie and make up excuses after she was with Omotoso. She explained that the church did not allow women to have hair extensions. They had to wear their natural hair. At the time, she had short hair, which needed to be styled at a salon.

Yet, whenever Zondi was summoned to Omotoso's bedroom, he would ruin her hairstyle. *"[H]e would disregard the style and ruin it, and the only way to fix it was to go back to the hair salon... [When] all these people asked 'what happened to your hair?' 'What is it that you do up there?' I would have to cover it up, saying maybe he put his foot on my head while I was massaging his feet"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018a). Using the girls to massage his feet and legs was a standard grooming method used by Omotoso. He first summoned most of them to his room to give him massages, and later would he sexually abuse them. However, with Zondi, it was different. He first started sexually abusing her and only later ordered her to massage his feet, legs and back.

While residing in the mission house, the girls had no freedom to make any decisions. They endured sexual, psychological and emotional abuse from their pastor. Moreover, Omotoso decided how the day would go. A typical day consisted of cooking, cleaning, doing Omotoso's washing and ironing, and entertaining and massaging him. The girls who were not singers would be assigned either cooking or cleaning duties, rotating weekly. Those in a band spent less time doing chores and more time practising. The majority of the girls in the house were not singers. When the girls completed their tasks, they would sit around and wait for him to call them. The girls were assigned different times to sit beside Omotoso all day. He would recline on his couch and require the girls to come and inappropriately hug him while he was lying on the sofa. *"If he comes downstairs from his room, you must come downstairs and be with him. Someone must massage his feet, you know, talk to him"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018b). The rest of the day consisted of prayer, and they all concluded their day by attending a church service.

Zondi referred to Omotoso as their 'ruler' (Zondi's testimony, 2018d). *"He would be the ruler, he had our days mapped out basically. So, we did not own our days, our days belonged to him. He would tell us what to do, and you would do that"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018d). They had no control over their activities. Stricter rules apply to those in the band. They had to spend the entire day rehearsing. He composed all of their songs, then recorded himself singing them. He expected them to sing every note exactly the way he did. *"Every single note that comes from his mouth. We would have to sing it as a group and make a replica. So, we were not even allowed to make our own music"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018a). Omotoso was not afraid to show his controlling and demanding character towards the girls.

Omotoso expected them to turn away when they watched television if an attractive male appeared on the screen. If they did not, he would rebuke and accuse them of desiring the man. They were also not allowed to be in contact with males other than their family members. *"If I looked at someone in the church who is male, I would get in trouble. I would have to beg and plead for my life. He would call me stupid, and I would say I'm stupid until he forgave me"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018d).

Omotoso had various mechanisms to manipulate the girls and exert power over them, especially psychological power. *"...besides the sleep deprivation in that house, not being able to get enough sleep, we were starved. We would eat once a day, maybe twice if we were lucky, he'd share some of his food, throw it at someone, and we had to catch it and eat it"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018d). Omotoso forced the starving girls to watch him enjoy his meals. Yet, they still had great respect for him, despite him punishing them for his amusement. Zondi asserted that although they lived in harsh conditions, they were never ungrateful and would always thank him. *"I remember one time he called us cockroaches and told us that we should be grateful for what he's doing in our lives and all the while, you know, being starved and living like that"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018d). Although they lived in inhumane circumstances, Zondi stated that no one would dare speak up or go against this powerful 'man of God.'

5.6. The possessive 'man of God'

"I suffered sexual abuse and psychological oppression at the hands of someone who was supposed to be a 'man of God'..." (Zondi's testimony, 2018b).

There is a certain level of trust, conviction, and characteristics attached to the term 'man of God.' A man of God is often thought of as pure-hearted, devoted to God and God's work, is filled with integrity, and concerned with growing God's kingdom. When Zondi refers to Omotoso as '*someone who was supposed to be a man of God*', she asserts that she believed he portrayed such characteristics, that she would be safe and encounter spiritual growth. Zondi's testimony of Omotoso's behaviour displayed the exact opposite of what one would expect from a man of God. Instead of using the mission house to extend God's kingdom, he used it as a place where he would render himself as a god, and the girls became his subjects.

As mentioned above, Zondi flew back and forth between her home and the mission house. One particular weekend, she did not go to the mission house in Durban. Instead, she attended her first school social. Omotoso was unhappy that she chose a school event over him. When Zondi was not with Omotoso, she had to check in regularly at the designated times. If she missed her check-in time or sent a vague SMS, she would be in trouble, and he would torment her over the phone. This particular weekend, she did not check in as usual. In the early morning hours, he phoned her, bombarded her cell phone, and viciously rebuked her for long periods at a time. *"I remember my mom would even complain about me being woken up because we would sleep in the same bed. She'd complain about me being woken up by phone calls at 2 or 3 am. [I would] go to the next room, begging for my life. Begging for him to forgive me because I forgot to SMS that day"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018a).

As any teenager, Zondi had a crush on a boy at school. She spent some time with the boy at the school social, and they kissed at the end of the night. Somehow Omotoso found out about the boy. The following morning, he called her multiple times, questioning her about this boy and scolding her for 'fooling around with boys'. *"I don't even know how he found out about it. I can't explain it, but he knew. And he was rebuking me, so, so terribly that my mother was listening from outside the door"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018a). She recalls that this all became too much for her mother. Zondi's mother took the cell phone from her hand and ended the call. Shortly after that, Fezeka, a house mother who assisted the co-accused Lusanda in grooming girls, started besieging her mother's phone with calls. Fezeka told her mother that she was misbehaving.

Zondi's mother simply told Fezeka: *"Listen, I'm taking my child out of this church, I'm taking her out of this band. If God has to kill someone for that, let it be me"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018d). Zondi's mother articulated strong words, yet, these were the exact words that Omotoso used to control and keep Zondi at the mission house. Zondi never returned to the mission house again. She continued with grade eleven and managed to pass the year. Zondi added that the only reason she never attempted to disobey Omotoso or leave the church was

because of the fear he instilled in her, threatening to harm her family. He would say things like: *"If ever your family would take you out, they'd be putting their lives in jeopardy"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018d) or *"Cheryl, love your life, you are going to die if you disobey me"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018d). He would even remind her that he is the 'man of God', so if you are against him, *"God will not hear your prayers"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018d).

In essence, Omotoso taught the girls at the mission house that being against him meant that you were against God. Zondi recalls praying to God for a long time, asking him to relieve her from her situation, asking God*: "Why are you allowing me to go through this? Why is this man saying that I need to please him to get a crown in heaven? Why is this my ticket to get into heaven? Why am I going to hell if I do not please him?"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018d). Omotoso would continuously remind her that God would not hear her prayers. He used a ritual as sacred as prayer to manipulate Zondi.

The two years that followed after her mother removed her from the church, Zondi resided at home and had no contact with Omotoso. Yet, she still lived in fear, always expecting something terrible to happen to herself or her family. He still had a spiritual and psychological hold over her. Zondi shared an incident that occurred shortly after she came home. Her mother went through her belongings, found contraceptives and questioned her about it. *"I had gotten them because of him. He said that I should get contraceptives or condoms. Because I was too scared of getting condoms, and I was also below age... I just bought the contraceptives"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018a). She lied to her mother and said that Sindi told her it would help with her weight. She recalls immediately being agitated with her mother and snapping at her. Zondi testified that she told herself: *"Don't this woman know I'm trying to keep her alive. She must just stop asking me questions and let things happen"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018a). Although she did not directly confide in her mother or family, they noticed that she behaved strangely and made assumptions about what could have happened to her while away.

In 2014, during her matric year, she struggled to cope emotionally. Zondi was diagnosed with depression. Her family decided that she needed therapy, especially since she had developed harmful coping mechanisms. Zondi revealed: *"I would drink a lot of alcohol, and uhm, I would be very angry and aggressive towards my family. I would wear all black all the time. I was just like a lost soul, I was just very sad"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018a). It seemed as if the therapy was worked for a short duration, and her mental health was improving, but then she had a setback. Zondi withdrew from going to therapy and stopped taking her medication, which led

Page | 62

to her becoming suicidal. *"There came the point where I just became too overwhelmed. I tried to kill myself, and then I never went back to her [therapy] after that attempt. So, I stopped everything abruptly. I stopped with the medication that she had prescribed to me as well"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018a). Daubermann asked Zondi if her therapist did not advise her to report her abuse to the police. She responded yes, her therapist recommended it, but she opted against reporting the abuse for two reasons. First, she was not emotionally ready to deal with everything that accompanies reporting a crime. Second, she would not dare call the police; she did not trust them to help her.

"…I mean, how could I trust the police? He [Omotoso] had police officers as protocol observers in the church. They took off their police jackets and laid them on the floor for him to walk on… They would escort him in and out of the auditorium" (Zondi's testimony, 2018b). Zondi affirmed that Omotoso encouraged them to wear their uniform. Omotoso often called the officers to address the church, and they would tell the church how much they adored him. They would state the extent that they would go to protect him, regardless of the cost. *"So, after that, how can I trust the police? How can it be easy for me to approach them?"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018b). The officers even laid their jackets on the floor for Omotoso to walk on when he exited the church. *"This man is above them. He is above us, he is above the law"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018b).
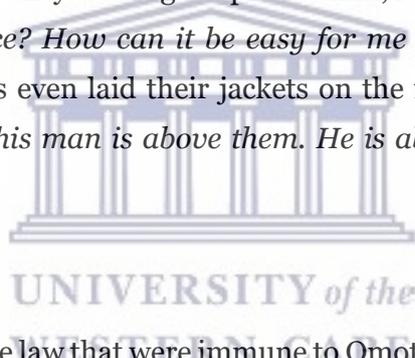
It was not only the officers of the law that were immune to Omotoso's devious ways. His entire congregation seemed to be hypnotised by him. *"[They] view[ed] him as God's very best friend. Perhaps half God, because where he walked, people would try to retrace his steps and walk on the same path. If he threw a bottle of water in the church, people would even hurt each other trying to get to that bottle. If he said 'stand up and jump 20 times,' everyone would jump 21 times"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018a). The congregation followed each instruction given by Omotoso meticulously. Zondi believed that it could be partly because of the fear that he instilled in the congregation. She notes that he would say, *"You South Africans are so stupid"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018a), and the congregation would agree. They agreed because everything he did was said to be in the name of God. It was because of God's name that everyone always defended him.

The congregation supported Omotoso even when he became more blatant. He would confess to the church, saying, *"I carry girls in the bust. My wife knows that I have a thorn in my flesh"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018a). Still, they supported him, and his image was unaffected. Omotoso continued running his church and musically training girls. Contrastingly, Zondi suffered

severely. She was ashamed that her family knew what had happened to her. She blamed herself for allowing Omotoso to abuse her repeatedly. More strikingly, she became unrecognisable to herself and her family, and she was depressed and suicidal. Although singing was Zondi's passion, the sexual abuse made her experience in the mission house unpleasant. Yet, Zondi was equally unhappy being home and not singing.

5.7. Returning to the church

"...things were very difficult for me. I was being confronted by him [Omotoso], day in and day out. It was not pleasant. It was not a pleasant experience. I was being rebuked for feeling the way that I was feeling... It was just a hellish experience" (Zondi's testimony, 2018b).

Zondi chose to use the word 'hellish' to describe her experience in the mission house. However, being away from it did not bring her peace or joy. She was still living in fear, experiencing those 'hellish' conditions internally. In the two years that Zondi was not a part of the *Jesus Dominion International Church,* she was not herself. Not singing in the church made her feel as though there was a void in her life. Simultaneously, she also hoped to receive an apology from Omotoso. Zondi wondered if the apology would bring her the closure that she had been fighting with internally.

Zondi remained in contact with two of the girls in the house, Sindi and Vicky. They persuaded her to re-join the band and return to the mission house in one of their phone calls. They told Zondi that they missed her, missed singing with her, and convinced her that things were different in the house and she would not regret coming back. Whenever they asked her why she left the church, she would respond: *"You guys probably know why I left"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018a). Zondi testified that no one ever spoke about what happened behind closed doors in the mission house, but everyone knew. To an extent, she felt as if the survival of the girl band was her responsibility. Whenever Omotoso was angry at the group, they would tell her, *"...go see him. You know the way you always do. Maybe he'll forgive us"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018a).

As the conversation continued, Sindi and Vicky told Zondi, *"the man of God has changed. Those things that used to happen in the mission house don't happen anymore"* (Zondi's

testimony, 2018a). Zondi was skeptical, but she believed them, and she wanted closure and an apology as well. Zondi decided to return to the church, although her mother was entirely against her returning. Lusanda booked a plane ticket for Zondi, and Omotoso paid for it. She flew from Johannesburg to Port Elizabeth, where the church was attending a crusade. A crusade is usually a week or weekend of religious gathering, bringing together different church branches for preaching, praise, and worship. Lusanda, Omotoso's co-accused, and Sindi, her friend from the mission house, met Zondi was met at the airport. They took her back to their residence and told her to get ready for the evening service.

Zukiswa, also known as 'Lobsey', was also there when she got to the house. Lusanda and Sindi accompanied Zondi upstairs to see Omotoso. As soon as she saw him, she instantly became overwhelmed with emotions and burst into tears. She explained to the court: *"What I was expecting to hear [from Omotoso] was, 'I'm sorry, Cheryl' but instead what I heard was 'I forgive you, Cheryl.' And that sent a wave of shock over my body. Because now, I am nineteen, and I've managed to put myself in the same spot that caused me so much pain for so many years. At that moment, I knew that nothing had changed at all"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018d). Zondi then realised that she would never receive an apology from Omotoso, and perhaps it was a mistake to have returned.

Before leaving for the evening service, Lusanda informed Zondi that she would be driving with Omotoso. She used this opportunity to gather the courage to confront him. Zondi testified, in the car ride, she told Omotoso: *"I do not like what happened, that's the reason why I left. I don't like what you are doing to me. Why was this needed? Why was this necessary?"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018d). As she recalled what happened next at that moment, the court watched how Zondi's tone changed into a despairing voice. She repeated Omotoso's response: *"He said that there's no other way, that I have no other option. It's either I'm in or out"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018d). Omotoso ignored her, dismissed her concerns, and instead asked her if things could remain the same as before she left the church. He pressured her to respond to his request. He wanted an answer by the time they arrived at the church, as he needed to know what to say to the 'children of God.'

With a sigh, all she said was 'okay.' She recalls that drive saying: *"I told him I don't like it, why is it so necessary and he rushed me for a decision. And then I said okay. So, I don't know what he would have said to the church had I said 'actually no.' I don't know what he would have said: 'children of God, Cheryl doesn't want to sleep with me?' I don't know what he*

would have said" (Zondi's testimony, 2018e). That evening Zondi was welcomed back into the church. She testified how good it was to be back and sang a solo piece.

When the crusade ended, Zondi assumed that she would be returning home to Secunda. Instead, she was informed that Lusanda did not book her a return flight, and she was expected to return with everyone to the new mission house in Umhlanga Rocks, Durban. Soon after she arrived at the mission house, the abuse recommenced. *"It was just very emotional that the same thing was happening. He was calling me to his room, and I was giving him oral sex. He was going between my thighs, over and over again. And this time, he used my age against me. He said, 'You're nineteen now. If you leave this time, the punishment will be double than when you left the first time.' He told me, I will go insane or drop dead if I didn't do what he said I must do"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018d). She disclosed to the court: *"I was now nineteen, and I managed to put myself in the same spot that caused me all of this trauma, all of this pain… I felt defeated"* (Zondi, 2018e). She hoped that things would be better when she returned to the church. Unfortunately, the reality was the opposite of what she expected, and she was even unhappier than before. This time, it was harder not to disclose what she was truly feeling. Omotoso recognised the change in Zondi's behaviour, and roughly the same time, the twins, Neliswa and Anele Mxakaza, were also in trouble by Omotoso.

Omotoso then organised a meeting with the ministry's secretary general to rebuke Zondi and the twins. He told her that Zondi and the twins were misbehaving and putting their lives at risk. In contrast, the truth was that they were refusing to please him. With the secretary general present in the room, Omotoso said: *"Cheryl, you know the things that you are supposed to do to me. You know the things that you're supposed to do for me. But you are not doing them. So, how do you think that you will survive? You're nineteen now"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018a). Zondi added that the general secretary of this holy ministry sat there and kept nodding in agreement with Omotoso. She confessed: *"I had to keep on pretending that I'll change, I'll behave. I'll do this, and I'll do that. I'll go and pray. I'll go down and go pray in a corner, asking God forgiveness. While at the back of my mind, I knew I was coming up with a plan to escape"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018a). In the months that followed, she endured various forms of abuse by Omotoso until she escaped. She constantly had to put on a front and pretend that she agreed. Most importantly, she had to be obedient and comply with his every demand.

Omotoso was a well-known televangelist and public figure, and as a result, the cameras always surrounded him. There was constantly a camera crew recording his preaching and the musical performances of those he trained. Zondi testified that whenever cameras or photographers were present, she had to seem happy and put up a front as if everything was okay. *"Because not putting up a front would be a sign of standing against this figure of authority. He had*

Page | 66

our whole lives in his hands" (Zondi's testimony, 2018a). Zondi and the other girls feared for their lives and were too afraid to disobey him or do anything to make him unhappy. Omotoso constantly bragged about things that happened to people who disobeyed him, and they witnessed some of these happenings. Zondi reported: *"If ever you disobeyed or did not follow an instruction that was given to you, or you spoke against him, or you dared to leave the church and think against him. You would die… I remember there was a man in the church, I don't remember his name, but he died. He [Omotoso] had explained it and said that the man died because this man had disobeyed him"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018d). These deaths happened frequently, and Omotoso would use them to reinforce fear into the congregation. He would use death as an excuse to flaunt his self-importance. He would tell his congregation that the person died because they disobeyed Omotoso, and therefore, God is angry.

Between May and August 2015, Zondi returned to the church. In the five months that she was there, she recalled Omotoso was more brazen about his lifestyle. He paraded in the mission house, public and in front of the congregants. *"The girls were told or encouraged to dress, kind of skimpy, short dresses, short shorts, you know, showing cleavage. And during these sessions where we would sing, sometimes he would get up and walk around and sometimes spank us on the behind. You know, feel us up, dance with someone. And it would just be like a party"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018d). Omotoso violated his pastoral boundaries in front of the congregation, and not one of them confronted him or saw it as inappropriate. Zondi found it taxing to comply with Omotoso and his expectations. She even tried to avoid interactions with him, slightly started speaking up against him, and eventually displayed an intense dissatisfaction with him. As a result, she was reprimanded continuously and confronted by him. Omotoso was not impressed with Zondi's attitude and punished her by not allowing her to leave the mission house except when attending church.

Most of the girls could go to town, sometimes accompanied by Lusanda, unaccompanied. Yet, Zondi was confined to the house. If Zondi needed toiletries or anything else, she had to inform Lusanda, and she would purchase it or assign someone else to do it. Later Omotoso isolated Zondi even more. All the girls slept in rooms outside the house, but Zondi and two other girls shared a room next to Omotoso's room. He ordered the three young women to sleep inside, closer to him, and be ready whenever he called them to his room. Zondi explained, *"They [the other girls] had a nickname for the girls in that room, calling us his wives."* (Zondi's testimony, 2018e). It was now even more convenient to call her to his room. Omotoso had two methods of summoning Zondi. He would either phone her or ask the previous person to call Zondi on her way out if he had a girl in his room before.

Page | 67

Zondi shared with the court that Lusanda would regularly converse with them about 'pleasing the man of God'. She would say: "*When you go up there, don't waste time. Because at the end of the day, you are doing this for your life. You are doing this for tomorrow*" (Zondi's testimony, 2018b). Lusanda referred to the girls visiting Omotoso's room to sexually please him as their "*appointment with Omotoso*" (Zondi's testimony, 2018b). Zondi stated that when Lusanda encouraged them to attend their 'appointments', she sounded like she was helping them and teaching them how to stay alive. Zondi knew that it was time to escape from the house. She reached out to her mother for help. This time she was completely transparent and informed her mother about everything that transpired in the mission house.

When the defence lawyer questioned Zondi, he asked her why did she not reach out to her grandmother for help since she lived close to the mission house. Zondi replied with despair, saying: "*When you're assaulted, especially sexual assault, it's accompanied by lots of feelings of shame. I mean, she saw me as an untainted grandchild, so the thought of telling her just upset me. I didn't want to hurt her*" (Zondi's testimony, 2018a). Even though Zondi opened up to her mother about her experiences at the mission house, she was not ready for her grandmother to know that she was 'tainted.' She felt ashamed by her experience. Zondi then continued to describe the build-up to her escape.

In August, the church prepared to attend a crusade in Durban. Omotoso gave each girl three-hundred-rand to get their hair done for the crusade. Zondi used this as an opportunity to plan her escape from the house. She kept her money to aid her escape and informed her mother about her plan. Zondi had an aunt who lived in Pietermaritzburg, whom her mom advised her to contact. After Zondi got hold of her aunt, her aunt's husband contacted his cousin, who lives at a KwaZulu-Natal student residence. Collectively, they set the plan in motion.

The evening of her escape, Omotoso was at church, training another musical group. Zondi communicated with someone at church who would warn her when he would leave the church to return home. Around three in the morning when she received the go-ahead and ordered a taxi to collect her. "*I threw my bag outside that window, the bathroom window from upstairs. I took my toiletries last. Leaving a lot of my clothes in one of the closets in the house, and then I walked out. I wanted everyone in the house to be asleep when I walked out. But there was one lady who was still awake, and she was in the kitchen. She was busy cleaning the kitchen. And I decided at that moment that this is do or die. It's either that I am going to leave today, or you know, I'm stuck here. So, I acted as if I didn't see her. I took the remote*

key, the one that opened the garage. I let myself out of the door, I quickly ran to get my bag, and I ran out the gate" (Zondi's testimony, 2018a). The lady in the kitchen saw Zondi and notified the rest of the girls about her escape. They shouted at her in the street, trying to convince her to stay by saying: *"Cheryl, you need to come back, so he [Omotoso] can pray for you. He can pray for you tomorrow so that you can be saved and won't die"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018d). Zondi looked back one last time, was unbothered by the threats and got into the taxi. She was willing to take the risk that came with leaving the house, and she left. Zondi received several calls trying to persuade her to return, including calls from Lusanda and Lulu, the woman who kept tabs on Omotoso. Zondi said proudly to the courtroom: *"Everyone was blowing up my phone, trying to get me to come back. And I didn't go back"* (Zondi's testimony, 2018a).

When asked what made her leave this time or why she did not listen to the girls and turn around, Zondi responded: *"I was tired of feeling sorry for myself about something that wasn't my fault. I needed to start gathering my strength back from this person who went out of his way to take it from me. So, I needed to tell people that this happened to me, and I survived. I'm not the useless thing that he wanted me to be. He took my power, my dignity, my strength"* (Zondi's testimony 2018a).

5.8. Conclusion

In this chapter, I used narrative inquiry as a tool to create a thick description of Zondi's experience of clergy sexual abuse derived from her court testimony. Narrative inquiry is a way to understand and study that experience and retell stories based on the narrative's critical elements, such as time, place, plot, and scene (Connelly and Jean Clandinin, 1990; Byrne, 2017; Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002). The chapter opens with an introduction of all the characters involved in the Omotoso trial. It was followed by a detailed description of Zondi's entire period of encounters with Omotoso. The thick description started from the day Zondi visited the *Jesus Dominion International Church* with her previous youth members to the evening she escaped from the mission house while Omotoso was at the church. Within her testimony, the reader was introduced to the various ways Omotoso misused his position of power to manipulate, groom, and later sexually abuse Zondi. Furthermore, the reader was exposed to the harsh and gruesome cross-examination that left many social media users feeling uncomfortable and disheartened and might discourage other victims from reporting

their abuse. The reactions of the social media users to her narrative will be the subject of the following two chapter

Chapter Six

How do social media users engage with Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse?

6.1. Introduction

Mainstream media has traditionally held the monopoly on news reporting controversial issues such as clergy sexual abuse. The engagement of the general public with such topics was limited by the opportunities that such media sites provided for engagement. For example, radio shows may offer call-in opportunities for listeners to express their views, and newspapers may publish letters to the editor. Still, these public interactions are not comparable to the kind of access, immediacy and scope that social media sites such as YouTube offer. Social media offer platforms for social media users to interact with society's issues and provide more access for the public to engage. Social media users can openly express their opinions, share their judgements, and confront one another through the comments sections by commenting directly on YouTube videos.

Social media users employ these platforms in numerous ways. Users can make use of the platform to establish online communities in which support and experiences are shared. Thus, social media can function as sites of activism and informal justice. The activism and awareness created in online communities transcend public perceptions and proceeds to offline communities.

The purpose of this chapter is to understand how social media users engaged with Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse. I divided the comments into four broad categories, in which the users engage and express their views regarding Zondi's testimony. The four categories are Zondi as a victim, Zondi as a survivor, religion and sexual abuse, and 'credible' rape victims. Below I explain how the categories were generated.

6.2. Findings

As mentioned in chapter four, I manually copied the comments below each YouTube video of Zondi's testimony and imported it into ATLAS.ti. Some of the comments required translation, as they were not in English. The initial data sample consisted of 903 comments, which were

deemed useful for the analysis. I only included comments made on YouTube if they reflected or challenged normative understandings of gender and power. I based the initial coding scheme on what I hoped to convey in this dissertation about how social media users engage with Zondi's testimony and the Omotoso trial. However, the data directed the discussion. Upon the first close reading of the comments, nineteen codes emerged. After a second close reading, I proceeded to cluster the codes as they relate to one another. The clustering was done by identifying common words and phrases used within the comments. A few comments that referred to a particular person, action, or emotion, were clustered together. The codes were subdivided and grouped into smaller categories, resulting in the comments displayed in four broad codes.

The results indicated four codes to describe how social media users engage with Zondi's narrative of sexual abuse. The codes were further broken into sub-codes that aid the later discussion of why social media users engage with Zondi's narrative in the way they do.

1. Zondi as a victim	2. Zondi as a survivor	3. Religion and sexual abuse	4. 'Credible' rape victim
Revictimised by the inhumane pervert lawyer	Womandla* *A vernacular term for celebrating women	God is with her; she will not fall	That is not an image of a victim
Social media users offer Zondi support	Zondi speaks up against her oppressor	Man of God	How should victims of abuse look?
The instillation of Fear and trauma			

These codes provided essential insights into how social media users engaged with Zondi's testimony in the Omotoso trial. In some comments, social media users explicitly challenged the patriarchal religious norms of gender and power, which emerged during Daubermann's cross-examination and Zondi's testimony relating to Omotoso's behaviour. Other comments supported the norms and blamed Zondi for the abuse. However, a limitation of employing social media users' comments is that many users only made short statements using a few

words. Some only offered support or dissent through the implementation of repetition, emoticons, or other forms of shorthand reinforcement. Although social media users might discuss patriarchal religious norms of gender and power in their remarks, some failed to provide enough detail to articulate their position clearly. As a result, I cannot use those comments in the analysis.

6.3. Zondi as a victim

"And people wonder why females don't want to report rape/sexual assaults. The trials are absolutely brutal. This lawyer does exactly what many attorneys do when questioning the VICTIM --> revictimising the innocent person. Despicable." (Zondi comments, 2018c).

Elaine Steyn and Jéan Steyn (2008:43) explain that "victimisation means making a victim of – in the sense of exploiting, depriving, deceiving, ignoring and violating the right of, or causing harm to a person. It also implies the person being subjected to double standards." Steyn and Steyn (2008) maintain that there are two kinds of victimisation: primary and secondary victimisation. Primary victimisation involves "the individual victim who is directly harmed in a face-to-face offence, who is threatened or who has property stolen or damaged. Primary victimisation includes both direct and indirect victims." Secondary victimisation, also known as revictimisation, refers to "the negative experiences which involve behaviours and attitudes of social service providers that are victim-blaming and insensitive, and which traumatised victims of violence who these agencies are serving" (Steyn and Steyn, 2008:43). As suggested by this definition, Zondi was a victim and experienced primary victimisation when Omotoso violated her. She also experienced secondary victimisation by the court system when the defence lawyer tried to determine if she was a 'credible victim' and was faced with questioning that sought to establish if she took appropriate measures to 'avoid' the sexual violations she experienced.

During Zondi's cross-examination, Daubermann asked her: "Why didn't you scream when you were sexually assaulted?" (Zondi comments, 2018c). This question resonated with several South African women who have experienced gender-based violence. It is just one example of the type of questions posed to women by defence lawyers. The modus operandi of the justice system coerces women to suffer in silence instead of reporting the crime (Gqola, 2015). The justice system almost guarantees those who do report their crimes secondary victimisation. The revictimisation might include double gendered standards or victim-blaming from police

officers when victims report an act of abuse. South Africa has one of the highest rape statistics globally. However, Naidoo (2013), Gqola (2015), and Franziska Meinck, Lucie Cluver, Mark Boyes, and Heidi Loening-Voysey (2016) report that rape victims report fewer than half of the rapes. Like many gender-based violence victims, Zondi suffered in silence until she gathered the courage to speak against her abuser.

Like the Jacob Zuma rape trial, which was instructive of how the South African justice system deals with rape (Gqola 2015), the Omotoso case too was a primary example of "why rape survivors make certain choices and the fraught ways in which the legal system responds to and treat rape complainants" (Gqola, 2015:101). The Omotoso trial became a primary example of why abuse victims want to avoid the courtroom. Zondi, as a victim, was treated by the defence lawyer like a perpetrator. She was scrutinized in the courtroom, by Omotoso's supporters, and on social media. As seen with most abuse and rape cases reported in the country, the complainant's credibility is often cross-examined and doubted. The justice system grants the accused more benefit of the doubt than the complainant. Steyn and Steyn's (2008) research investigated why rape victims are not reporting their rape incidences to the South African Police Service (SAPS). First, the treatment of the police towards rape victims who reported their rape incidences was apathetic or uncaring. Accordingly, the second reason for not reporting rape was that they felt intimidated or threatened by the police. To elaborate, victims reported that when police officers asked personal questions about their sexual history and the circumstances surrounding their violation, they felt blamed and criminalised (Steyn and Steyn, 2008:51-52). After reporting the crime, rape victims felt frightened, fearful and anxious, and they were filled with guilt, shame, self-blame, and distrust (Steyn and Steyn, 2008:53). Zondi had similar experiences as those rape victims in Steyn and Steyn's (2008) study. It is evident in the videos that Daubermann was aggressive and engaged in ruthless questioning. He questioned whether it was rape or consensual sex and interrogated Zondi as if she was the one on trial.

As a religious leader, Omotoso had more social standing than Zondi. He was a highly respected man in his church, and in his work, no one dared to defy, let alone doubt him. In contrast, Zondi was a young woman looking to make a name in the gospel music industry. Publicly, she worked well alongside Omotoso, he provided her with the best musical training, and she even returned to church after leaving for some time. Without Zondi reporting the abuse that she experienced at the hands of Omotoso, likely, he would not have been suspected of sexual abuse by his community. When comparing the two, one could argue that Omotoso was a respectable man with an excellent track record as a minister and mentoring the youth. Zondi was a

confused and indecisive teenager who became overwhelmed with the demanding life of being a member of *Grace Galaxy* in the *Jesus Dominion International Church.* However, Zondi's experience of sexual abuse was unique but not rare. She was manipulated, coerced, and abused spiritually and sexually by her pastor and not a stranger. Her abuse occurred in the mission house or when they travelled with the church, not when she was out partying. It did not leave visible scars or bruises, and it was not loud and violent enough for anyone to notice. As a result, her credibility and the course of events leading to the sexual abuse were interrogated with a fine toothcomb.

When analysing the comments below the YouTube videos of Zondi's testimony, the data indicated that several social media users perceived Zondi as a victim, and they engage with her narrative accordingly. The words and phrases used by the users formed the foundation for this interpretation. Additionally, I identified anger, disgust, and discomfort in the tone of their comments. The public identified Zondi as a victim who had been violated on numerous occasions, first by Omotoso, then by Daubermann, and the justice system. I will examine the theme of 'Zondi as a victim' under three headings: Inhumane pervert lawyer, social media users offer Zondi support, and the instillation of fear and trauma. Social media users who consider Zondi a victim either challenged or criticised patriarchal religious norms and provided various reasons for their sentiments.
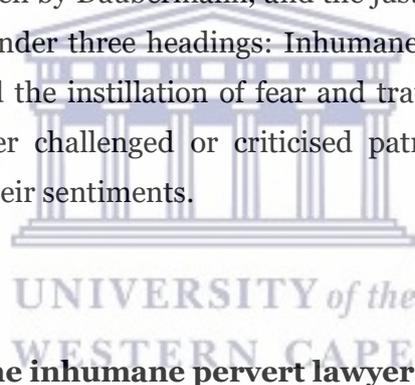
6.3.1. Revictimisation by the inhumane pervert lawyer

Social media users dedicated a great deal of comments to Daubermann and his cross-examination methods. Many social media users were appalled by him and suggested that his questioning was inappropriate and perverted. In forty-nine comments, the social media users used the word 'pervert' to refer to Daubermann.

During the cross-examination, Daubermann insisted that Zondi provide an in-depth detailed account of her experience of sexual abuse. When she could not answer him for various reasons, including emotional and psychological distress, he would raise his voice, change his tone, and repeat his question. Throughout his cross-examination, he attempted to belittle, humiliate, and embarrass Zondi. He also indirectly said that she knew that Omotoso would violate her and twisted her words. Steyn and Steyn (2008:42) suggest that many rape survivors do not report their experiences because of "a fear of not being believed, a fear of being blamed for the attack, fear of the social stigma attached to being a rape survivor, and a fear of the conviction process."

Below is an extract of the transcription from Zondi's questioning by Daubermann in the video testimony: *The judge had to jump in when the lawyer asked this... (Zondi's testimony, 2018c)*.

Cheryl Zondi: Then he proceeded to shove his penis between my thighs, and as I explained to the court, on my clitoris.

Adv. Peter Daubermann: Uhm… Your clitoris is above your vaginal opening, is that correct?

Judge Mandela Makaula: You don't have to go into those details….

Adv. Peter Daubermann: We unfortunately do, my lord… My lord, I just want to make sure the witness and I understand each other here. This is important, my lord. So, he placed his penis on your clitoris, which is just above your vaginal opening, not so? (Zondi's testimony, 2018c).

Judge Makaula quickly stepped in when he realised that much of the details asked by Daubermann were agonizing for both Zondi and the courtroom, and the questions were irrelevant to his point. However, Judge Makaula's objection to this line of questioning did not prevent Daubermann from persisting. His questions provoked a large part of the engagement from the public, which perturbed the judge and the viewers. The following is another extract from Daubermann's questioning.

Adv. Peter Daubermann: And between your thighs...look when you're referring to "between your thighs", you're not referring to…to your…to your vagina. Is that correct?

Cheryl Zondi: He slightly. Because he was rubbing me slightly, in the slightest, went into the vagina opening. Not far enough to break my hymen, which was still intact.

Adv. Peter Daubermann: So, he did insert his penis into your vagina, to a certain limited extent? Is that correct?

Cheryl Zondi: Yes, to a very slight extent.

Adv. Peter Daubermann: How many centimetres? Do you know?

Judge Mandela Makaula: How can you measure that? How would you know?

Adv. Peter Daubermann: My lord….

Judge Mandela Makaula: How, Mr. Daubermann? How can one know 'how many centimetres'? How do you know that? How would she know that?

Adv. Peter Daubermann: She could have felt it?

Judge Mandela Makaula: And then measure it at the same time?

Adv. Peter Daubermann: My lordship…

Judge Mandela Makaula: I will not allow that question. I'm not going to allow it.

Adv. Peter Daubermann: My lord…

Judge Mandela Makaula: Yes, I am saying that she will not be able to be in a position to measure how many centimetres, and I will not allow that question.

Adv. Peter Daubermann: My lord, can I please state that you are hampering my cross-examination.
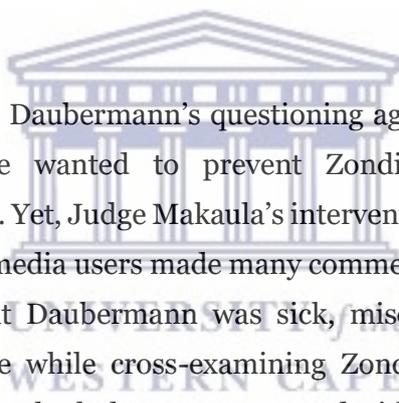
Judge Mandela Makaula: No, I am not at all. But I will not allow that question, where you ask the witness, 'how many centimetres did he penetrate'!

Adv. Peter Daubermann: My lord, my lord…

Judge Mandela Makaula: Do you know centimetres, miss?

Cheryl Zondi: No.

Judge Mandela Makaula: She doesn't know. Then we can carry on, Mr Daubermann (Zondi's testimony, 2018c).

It is evident in this extract that Daubermann's questioning aggravated Judge Makaula. One could even presume that he wanted to prevent Zondi from experiencing further revictimisation by Daubermann. Yet, Judge Makaula's intervention was insufficient to prevent Zondi's revictimisation. Social media users made many comments under this particular video testimony. They discerned that Daubermann was sick, misogynistic, perverted, and was receiving some sexual pleasure while cross-examining Zondi. Wheatcroft, Wagstaff, and Moran (2009) indicate that several scholars are concerned with the court procedure and how defence counsel treats the victim by undermining evidence. They assert that through the persistent questioning, 'testing' for inconsistencies in the testimony and suggesting "the intercourse was consensual, primarily if a prior relationship with the perpetrator existed, the general reputation and character of the victim can be challenged" (Wheatcroft, Wagstaff, and Moran, 2009:276). Wheatcroft, Wagstaff, and Moran confirm that such traumatic examinations of victims prevent reporting their abuse.

i.   *"He [Daubermann] sounds like a pervert. [S]he couldn't be any clearer. He was enjoying it, that's why he kept asking the very same questions again and again"* (Zondi comments, 2018c)
ii. *"I think the lawyer was getting turned on by asking those questions."* (Zondi comments, 2018c)
iii. *"The lawyer is a pervert! Disgusting display of the pursuit for the truth"* (Zondi comments, 2018c)

The social media users who described Daubermann as a pervert acknowledged that his sexual behaviour in the courtroom was degenerate and unacceptable, especially during a trial of sexual abuse. One of the comments even said that he is *"sicker than his client"* (Zondi comments, 2018c), and another suggested that he should be *"disbarred from ever practising law."* (Zondi comments, 2018a). Many users indicated that Zondi was comprehensible in her testimony. Therefore, there was no need for detailed descriptions, such as the examples in the extract above. Yet, Daubermann showed no compassion towards Zondi when he asked her to describe traumatic moments. Instead, he badgered her with questions, barely giving her sufficient time to answer before interrupting her and adding another question. The users questioned his method, asking: *"Why is she being asked so many questions?... He doesn't sound as if he care[s] about this young lady. We live in a wicked world"* (Zondi comments, 2018c). The social media users were disturbed by the cross-examination and sensed that Daubermann violated Zondi for speaking her truth. This particular user chose to refer to the world as 'wicked' after watching Daubermann's cross-examination, indicating that something felt morally wrong regarding what she just experienced. Social media users argued that the arrogant behaviour displayed by Daubermann appears to be influenced by his position. He possesses multi-layered privilege, being a lawyer, a man, and more specifically, a white man. A user called Daubermann out for his white privilege. "Wow*! White privilege travels far!!! This maniac needs to be disbarred from ever practising law!! His logic is perverted!! Is this how they conduct their courts in Africa!?"* (Zondi comments, 2018c). Wheatcroft, Wagstaff, and Moran (2009:276) report many victims indicated that in a case of rape, 'the victim rather than the defendant that is on trial'. Consequently, revictimisation can be perceived as worse than the initial crime itself.

Daubermann purposefully tried to oppress, upset and confuse Zondi with his misogynistic and unethical questioning, hoping that she would either contradict her facts or say something to implicate herself. Instead, he embarrassed her and subjugated her to further humiliation. Gemma Aitchison (2017) suggests that individuals like Daubermann dehumanise victims to help justify acts of violence. In addition, police and defence lawyers "fail to take sexual offences seriously and blame victims, but they also use their position of authority to further sexually exploit victims" (Aitchison, 2017:72). It was discernible from the comments that the users disliked his exertion of power and ill-treatment of Zondi. A few users commented:

    i.   *"It angers me that she is being victimised again by that wicked beast of a so-called lawyer!"* (Zondi comments, 2018c)
    ii.   *"This guy is sick and stupid. People like him make it difficult for victims to come forward"* (Zondi comments, 2018c)

Social media users display apparent resentment for how the justice system allowed the revictimisation of Zondi in the courtroom. They expressed concerns that the Omotoso trial will discourage victims from reporting their perpetrators, similarly to the Zuma trial. It will especially dissuade victims from reporting their perpetrators if the perpetrators have powerful positions.

6.3.2. Social media users offer Zondi support

In these sets of comments, social media users present themselves as a community in solidarity with Zondi, regardless of the trial's outcome. The comments of this online community convey support based on at least three motivations: The first is the justice system's failure to protect Zondi from revictimisation; second, the double trauma she experienced from Omotoso and Daubermann; and third, doubt and distrust of her account of what happened to her. One user stated: *"Look what the world has become, people think this woman is lying. I can't believe this!"* (Zondi comments, 2018a). Another commented: *"Never be afraid to speak up, to speak the truth. Yes, they'll come with their verbal knives and pitchforks, but we've got to be a supportive country that throws discrimination over the fence"* (Zondi comments, 2018a). This group of social media users expressed shock that many still suggested she was untruthful even after hearing her testimony. However, they encouraged her not to be dismayed by this.

In these comments, social media users strongly assert that although the justice system might attempt to break Zondi, they supported her. They believe that she is telling the truth, that she was a victim of sexual abuse at the hands of Omotoso, and they will fight for justice to be served. At this stage, the trial was in its infancy stage. However, when Daubermann's actions were allowed without repercussions, the users suggested that the justice system had already failed Zondi. One user commended Zondi for sharing her experience by saying: *"justice might fail her, but she had a chance to tell her story"* (Zondi comments, 2018b). The social media users suggested that Zondi sharing her narrative was a form of justice to herself and other victims of sexual abuse. Speaking up against her perpetrator, despite the hardship and trauma, earned Zondi the respect of social media users. She possibly motivated others in similar situations to be as courageous as she was. A user commented: *"Melinda Gates was right when she said, 'A woman with a voice, is by definition a strong woman'!"* (Zondi comments, 2018b). Zondi using her voice was the beginning of her reclaiming her power, and the public

recognised her for doing so. Thus, the users praised her for breaking the norm of silence and using her voice to fight injustice.

While several social media users laboriously criticised Zondi in many comments for returning to the mission house after her mother removed her from it, more users indicated that they believed that Zondi was brainwashed, manipulated, and threatened by Omotoso. In response to viewing Zondi as a victim, the public elicited a range of reactions. Approximately fifty comments displayed the exact words *"we are behind you"* to indicate that they supported her fight for justice. Three users commented: *"Aluta continua (the struggle continues)"* (Zondi comments, 2018b), demonstrating that they are in solidarity with her struggle.

Furthermore, users showed sympathy towards Zondi by emphasising how men exert spiritual, emotional, and psychological power over women. They questioned, in such contexts, the likelihood of a fourteen-year-old disobeying her pastor's orders. Some social media users expressed their concerns around this issue by commenting:

> i. *"At the age of [fourteen], you know nothing about love wenza lento uyithunywayo (you do what you are told)"* (Zondi comments, 2018a)
> ii. *"She is devoutly religious, and this man [Omotoso] was a pastor. He had a psychological hold over her. Besides, she was living in his house and had no money and nowhere else to go immediately. A young girl can find it very hard to say no to an authority figure."* (Zondi comments, 2018c)
> iii. *"Guys, when you are [fourteen] years old, you look up to your pastor, and you respect them. Pastors take advantage of that. She was just a child when she started in that church. She was groomed by the same pastor who raped her"* (Zondi comments, 2018a)

These comments implied that the social media users were mindful that the professional has the higher authority and respect in the room; this applies in any clergy-congregant relationship. Therefore, Zondi was respectful and obedient by following Omotoso's instructions. Kennedy (2003:27) argued that given the power imbalance between clergy and congregant, one must be suspicious of the possibility of a clergy-congregant relationship being consensual. Still, several users have indicated that they believe Zondi and Omotoso's sexual encounters were consensual. One user opposed such thinking and argued that Omotoso's actions were bluntly unethical and questioned how people could support it or even require more justification. She commented*: "For heaven's sake, we are talking about a [fourteen]-year-old that was threatened! Until we protect children, this behaviour will continue! A child can never date an older man! A man abused a child! Some comments are showing our poor judgment and pure lack of sympathy."* (Zondi comments, 2018a). This user, like many others, was concerned with how accepting many were of the idea that a teenager could have a

consensual relationship with an adult. They suggested that Omotoso used his position as a pastor for personal gain and pleasure. Kennedy (2003:27) points out that congregants seeking help are subordinate, and the clergy person holds considerable power, status, education, and respect.

As a pastor, Omotoso was obligated to spiritually guide and protect his congregation, not lure them under false pretence and take advantage of them. Zondi joined his church seeking help with musical training. However, Omotoso exerted his power and force in his actions and behaviour. He ensured that the girls living in his mission house were passive, dependent on him, and emotionally manipulated. The users insisted in their comments that this is not how a mission house or a religious leader should operate. They were appalled that Omotoso used his position and religious doctrine to abuse the girls. They argued that too many women become victims of abuse due to coercive patriarchal teachings and practices, as the comments below indicate:

> i.   *I tr[ied] to warn my sisters not to praise and worship these so-called pastors in Pentecostal churches. They turn[ed] on me and called me possessed with the devil, saying I must get deliverance from those so-called men of God…. If you ask any brother in the church, they will tell you it is difficult to date the praise and worship singers. They spend most of the[ir] time with their pastors"* (Zondi comments, 2018d)
> ii.   *"Could it be that abusers have infiltrated our society everywhere and are showing their true colours, abusing women and children (even the elderly and the disabled) and are hiding behind all kinds of things like religion, education, politics etc.?"* (Zondi comments, 2018d)
> iii.   *"What makes this story unique is the fact that these people are used to getting away with a lot by hiding behind the veil of being 'holy men'. If such things are exposed every day, maybe my people will be awaken[ed]. We are all born equal. There's no superior being among us that can lay hands on you and save you"* (Zondi comments, 2018d)

In addition to coercive gendered practices, users also reflected on the ways in which some religious and cultural teachings about gender norms influence how men and women engage and relate to each other. For example, a male user mentioned the traditional and religious teachings of chastity. To this user, his comment was made in support of Zondi telling the truth of abuse. However, simultaneously, his statement suggests that Zondi is now ruined and unable to marry. He commented: *"Virginity is everything for a woman in her part of the country. She risked everything by giving her testimony. Her being able to marry a good man, her being able to marry at all. She risked being imprisoned and everything"* (Zondi comments, 2018c). This user pointed out that Zondi was familiar with other patriarchal

religious norms, such as obedience to men and elders. She had to be familiar with the standard of purity. Therefore, if remaining 'pure' until marriage was significant to her and her community, why would she accuse Omotoso of sexually abusing her if it negatively impacts her more? She had much more to lose by sharing her truth.

6.3.3. The instillation of fear and trauma

Zondi mentioned on multiple occasions during her testimony how fearful she was of Omotoso. She testified that he used his relationship with God as a scare tactic to control his congregation. He declared to his congregants: he had the ability to cause individuals who defied him to 'drop-down and die'.

Zondi testified: *"The fear that he instilled in the church was too much. He would even say, 'You South African's are so stupid,' and they would agree. He was doing whatever he wanted to do in the name of God. Had it been that this man did his disgusting things, not in the name of God, maybe it would be a different story. But everything he did was in the name of God. And everyone defended him"* (Zondi comments, 2018a). Dr Rafael Cazarin reports in an interview with Haji Mohamed Dawjee: "Religious leaders take advantage of the power that comes with their positions, as the community rarely contests these due to their divine nature. Altogether, the institution protects these leaders, their position, their peers, and their divine power. The combination of these 'walls' makes enough room for abusive behaviour" (Dawjee, 2019). Omotoso's treatment of his congregants constituted psychological, emotional, sexual and spiritual abuse. However, they did not recognise it because of his self-declared divinity as a man of God. As a result, they continued to be devoted followers, regardless of the harmful ways in which he treated them. Zondi told the court about the unhealthy coping mechanisms she turned to due to the trauma she experienced as a result of Omotoso's abuse. On many occasions, she indicated that she: *"feared the man in his presence and in his absence"* (Zondi comments, 2018a). Zondi maintained that *"Predators like Omotoso are not common thugs that rape you and leave you alone. A thug takes what he wants and goes. The worst they can do is threaten you if you don't keep quiet. But Omotoso owned my life"* (Dawjee, 2019). She continuously referred to the fear and trauma that she experienced. Yet, it was Daubermann who implied that Zondi was using this fear as a front. When she could not recall specific memories, he became frustrated and almost upset. She explained to him how the mind works when it has experienced trauma, *"it's involuntary, it blocks out certain things"* (Zondi comments, 2018a). When Daubermann asked Zondi to recall specific incidents, which she

previously suppressed and was unable to, Zondi realised the magnitude of the trauma she suffered due to the abuse.

Steyn and Steyn (2008) assert that fear is the most prominent psychological reaction to rape and trauma in general. They maintain that the most common denominator of psychological trauma is the "feeling of intense fear, helplessness, and loss of control and threat of annihilation" (Steyn and Steyn, 2008:44). Both fear and anxiety are prominent symptoms experienced after a rape. The fear can range from "being raped again to fearing that the rapist may kill the victim or hurt her family. Longitudinal studies have shown that the intense fear of being raped relates to situations that were reported up to [sixteen] years after the assault" (Steyn and Steyn, 2008:53).

Many social media users too picked up on overlooking the effects of fear and trauma on victims of rape and abuse. Zondi testified that she was afraid of Omotoso and what he could have done to her and her family. At the time, that was enough reason for her to keep quiet and not report the crime. Steyn and Steyn (2008) report that no two rape situations are the same. "There are factors present in the event preceding the assault, during the assault and after the assault, which influence how the victim will respond. It is difficult to say which specific factors, preceding the rape, will influence the event" (Steyn and Steyn, 2008:44). With that being said, there was no right or wrong way for Zondi to behave after the abuse. Therefore, at that particular time, she acted out of fear and chose to remain silent. One user seemed to relate to Zondi and commented: *"Pastors position themselves very well in the victim's lives through manipulation and threats and later reveal who they are. When your mind has been introduced to that kind of environment where fear persists, you keep quiet"* (Zondi comments, 2018f).

Zondi indirectly explained to the courtroom how the brains 'fight-flight-freeze' response works. Danielle Maack, Erin Buchanan, and John Young (2015) assert that the brain's fight-flight-freeze response is not a conscious decision; instead, the reply is your body's natural reaction to danger. Psychological fears trigger your body's fight-flight-freeze response. "It is a built-in defence mechanism that causes physiological changes that enable you to protect yourself from a perceived threat quickly" (Maack, Buchanan, and Young, 2015:118). However, there is a fourth response, 'fawn,' which is not universally recognised by post-trauma stress psychologists. "Fawn refers to the patient's response by aligning their wishes with the wishes of those around them – to 'get along' with others and to subsume their identity within the identities of those surrounding them" (Becker, 2017:64). It is possible that throughout Zondi's experience of abuse, her brain adapted to the fawn response. Therefore, she seemed 'compliant', yet she was only protecting herself.

The social media users recognised that Zondi had experienced all four modes of defence. For that, they showed admiration for her bravery in retelling her experience of sexual abuse. Many social media users admitted that they would not have had the courage to speak up. For example, one user said: *"Trauma [can] sometimes destroy you or make you stronger… Even if Omotoso wins, no one will ever touch this girl again without her permission"* (Zondi comments, 2018d). At the end of Zondi's testimony, she mentioned that she consciously chose to stop allowing her traumatic experiences to consume her. Instead, she used it to help others. More specifically, Zondi aims to help victims and make their experiences easier in ways that she was not assisted.

Several social media users questioned the avoidable revictimisation Zondi endured while being cross-examined by Daubermann. Below are two examples.

i. *"It is a pity that our system takes forever to execute justice. Victims become victimised more and more in the name of digging out the truth"* (Zondi comments, 2018a)
ii. *"Rape is naturally traumatic, and it takes a lot of courage, determination, and confronting fears head-on"* (Zondi comments, 2018d)

In these comments, the users suggest that Zondi encountered enough trauma and suffering and should not have been ill-treated in the courtroom. It was clear that Daubermann was projecting victim-blaming towards Zondi, implying that she could have prevented the abuse. A handful of social media users discussed how religious leaders have manipulated adults. The manipulation led to congregants voluntarily drinking petrol, eating grass and snakes, being sprayed by doom, and a pastor even shaved the pubic hairs of women. For example, South African Pastor Lesego Daniel of *Rabboni Centre Ministries* previously made his congregation eat grass, and a few months later, he convinced them to drink petrol (eNCA.com, 2014). Ghanaian Pastor Attah requested to shave the private parts and bathed his members so that all uncleanliness in their lives would be washed away (Simon, 2020). South African Pastor Lethebo Rabalago has been found guilty of assault after spraying his followers with the insecticide Doom. Rabalago claimed the insect repellent could heal cancer and HIV (BBC News, 2018). Most examples of pastors manipulating their congregation to exercise harmful practices occur in new Christian religious movements.

Hence, it is not hard to imagine that a teenage girl believed the lies her pastor told her. In the first comment below, a male user made an example of power and privilege, hoping that others would understand the fear Zondi experienced. In the second comment, a user attempted to explain how Omotoso infiltrated Zondi's understanding of God and religious doctrine.

i. *"As a man, I understand how possible it is to have power over a human being, let alone a woman, or worse, a teenager. Now imagine how easy it was for a pastor with that much following [to have power over Zondi]"* (Zondi comments, 2018d)

ii. *"This happens when the naturally inquisitive mind of the child is suppressed, and a religious 'truth' and morality are imposed. The child is not brought up to develop their belief system or be aware that there are other belief systems. Religions produce a childhood dominated by fear – a real fear of hell, of disapproval in the present and eternal damnation. This is a trauma that has effects lasting well into adulthood. The judgemental atmosphere of Pentecostalism produces a little appreciation of love in the child. All she gets is conditional love and continually seeks to avoid judgment and to search for little rewards. Unhealthy religions don't allow children to ask questions – consequences can be harsh for an inquiring child. As with physical and sexual forms of child abuse, the motivation of the abusers, the religious leaders, is usually their desire to control – to have a sense of power"* (Zondi comments, 2018f)

The user in the second comment does not indicate if she wrote this comment based on personal experience or in a professional capacity. However, this comment suggested that others understand what Zondi has been trying to articulate about her abusive experiences. The users understanding of what Zondi was attempting to communicate further supports the idea that Daubermann's questioning of Zondi was deliberately invasive and inappropriate. Several studies have examined trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, and its effects on women who had experienced clergy sexual abuse (van Wormer and Berns, 2004; Flynn, 2008; and Fogler *et al.*, 2008). These studies collectively outline that clergy sexual abuse may have long-term negative consequences on women, such as leaving an impact on religious faith, affecting their character and agency, and leading to various psychological conditions. The public displays some sort of understanding of this nature and, therefore, opposes the position of power used by Omotoso to oppress and violate Zondi. However, they did not use the term 'spiritual abuse'. Scholars define spiritual abuse as "the misuse of power, authority, or trust by any person in a position of spiritual power. Or, through controlling, coercing, manipulating, or dominating spiritual development" (Ward, 2011; Segura-April, 2016; Starr, 2017; and Gray, LaBore, and Carter, 2018). Social media users alluded to it and declared that they opposed how Omotoso used religion and the Bible to instil fear into Zondi. They challenged the notion that individuals blindly put their trust in a religious leader because of promised blessings, prosperity, health, and wealth. They proposed that individuals should be more critical before accepting the beliefs and practices, especially if their instinct flags that it could be harmful.

6.4. Zondi as a survivor

> *"This is a beautiful, strong, and intelligent young lady. I respect her so much for her strength and guts to do what she is doing. She's remaining so calm and well-spoken. What she went through and what she has to testify about is such a hard thing, and most victims can't hold their composure in a situation like this"* (Zondi comments, 2018f).

Throughout her testimony, Zondi spoke of being victimised by Omotoso. When doing media interviews after the trial and launching the *Cheryl Zondi Foundation*, she referred to herself as a survivor who needs to *"turn her pain into purpose"* (Zondi comments, 2018b). Pitre *et al.* (2013:122) observe that a narrative enables the storytellers to "view themselves and interpret their agency within their world." Narratives are "examined to recognise expressions of resistance and emancipation" (Pitre *et al.*, 2013:122). When Zondi chose to speak out about her sexual violation and testify against Omotoso, she asserted her agency within her narrative. However, she, unfortunately, exposed herself to a position of revictimisation by the justice system and the court of public opinion. In addition, Zondi did not have any physical or visible wounds or scars to substantiate her claim when she reported her abuse, which made her testimony questionable. It is such doubt and condemnation that scares off many victims from reporting injustices done to them.

Motsei (2007:21) points out; it is believed "that a woman who fails to show visible injuries as a sign of having resisted rape may have engaged in sex willingly." Sadly, that statement is the foundation of most sexual abuse dockets. The law doubts and ill-treats victims due to a 'lack of evidence'. Yet, the perpetrator is expected to be referred to as the 'alleged perpetrator' and is innocent until proven guilty. Eusebius McKaiser (2015:79) argues that "in a sense, the court demands that you show a receipt for the rape. No receipt, no guilty verdict". When Zondi failed to provide the correct 'receipt of rape,' which Daubermann expected, she was harshly cross-examined as if she fabricated her testimony. Although Daubermann publicly revictimised her, she refused to be discouraged. Instead, she boldly delivered her testimony, kept her composure, and sobbed quietly. Dawjee interviewed Zondi for an article. When she asked Zondi about Daubermann's insensitive cross-examination, Zondi replied*: "I was in a state of shock through all of that. It's painful to have to answer graphic questions and deal with someone who clearly doesn't care and is constantly trying to belittle your pain. But I also understand that this man is here to do a job. He didn't come to lose. His job is to win this case"* (Dawjee, 2019). According to the comments, Zondi was strong-willed and defiant. Based on their interpretation of her testimony and her general disposition in the courtroom, the

users declared, she was no longer that fearful teenager whose desperation to worship God was used by Omotoso as an entry for her abuse. She was a young woman who was ready to use her voice to speak on behalf of all those still too afraid.

A quarter of the comments made by social media users who have watched Zondi's testimony perceive her as a survivor and someone who possesses great strength. I will examine the theme 'Zondi as a survivor' under two headings: womandla and Zondi speaks up against her oppressor.

6.4.1. Womandla

Social media users called Zondi several affirming names. When the reference 'Womandla' started to trend, a user asked what it meant. To which another responded: *"We normally refer to Womandla [as] a strong and brave woman. Made of woman + Amandla which equals Womandla. Amandla is a Zulu word that means power"* (Zondi comments, 2018f). In the comments, social media users referred to Zondi as a strong, brave, confident, and courageous woman 136 times. They used the word 'Womandla' five times to describe her, the term 'girl power' four times, and 'lioness' thrice. Zondi's bravery for not only speaking up but remaining calm and collected during her cross-examination was highly praised by this group of social media users.

Hundreds of social media users flooded YouTube with comments filled with words of encouragement and admiration towards Zondi. Many confessed that they would not have been as courageous when vilified the way she was, and they affirmed her determination, resilience and willingness to seek justice. The way Zondi conducted herself during her testimony and cross-examination: some users expressed their sentiments of pride towards her, and on multiple occasions, users even thanked her for the strength she displayed when sharing her experience.

i. *"I am so proud of her because she is not taking his nonsense and is not intimidated by him at all. I just love how she is so eloquent when answering her questions. She is witty and truthful when asked questions"* (Zondi comments, 2018a)
ii. *"The way she [Zondi] tells her story says that she is a rape survivor. She does not need you to believe her because she is going to survive this with or without your opinion"* (Zondi comments, 2018d)
iii. *"Thank you, girl, for your bravery. It's hard as it is, but you made us proud"* (Zondi comments, 2018d)

iv. *"Thank you, Cheryl, for not allowing yourself to be bullied and intimidated by Daubermann. I pray that The Living God will continue to strengthen you as you face the Goliaths in your life. Stand on the truth, speak the truth and live the truth. We are praying for you and all the victims"* (Zondi comments, 2018f)

A striking aspect of the data is how the public praised Zondi for standing her ground and always keeping her head up, especially how she always looked Daubermann and Omotoso straight in their faces. A user commented: *"This young woman was absolutely brilliant in the witness stand. The way she looked straight at the defence advocate when he was posing questions to her, the way she looked straight at the accused when repeating what she said to him. Amazing!"* (Zondi comments, 2018d). To these users, this was an indication that Zondi reclaimed her power. When someone made the slightest suggestion that Zondi was 'too strong to be a victim,' another user was always quick to be on her defence. In one instance, a user defending Zondi responded: *"So was she supposed to break down and cry and scream so that the monster can think that he has more power over her than he actually does??? This girl is brave. She gathered all her strength and faced the monster and showed him that he hadn't taken her strength, and he sure as hell doesn't have any power over her"* (Zondi comments, 2018d). The ability to be composed and show strength in the face of adversity was a personal victory for Zondi and a whole community of women who have been sexually abused, especially those who could only dream of displaying such characteristics. By using her voice to share her narrative of sexual abuse, she encouraged other women who have not yet shared their experience or reported their rapists to do so as well. Although these users were commending Zondi for her robustness, it is essential to note that simultaneously they are glorifying her because of the abuse that she experienced. It is deplorable conditions that forced Zondi to be strong.

In the courtroom, during her three-day testimony, Zondi brought strength into play that was perhaps unexpected. However, she admitted to being broken down and fragile in the past. On the witness stand, that brittle person seemed to disappear Zondi challenged the norm of femininity, which many understood as fragility. In addition, she proved that strength and endurance were not restricted to men or masculinity. The comments showed that the public supported her and praised her for the strength she displayed. Many wished her continued strength and hoped her robustness and courage would inspire other victims to adopt similar toughness.

6.4.2. Zondi speaks up against her oppressor

A user described Zondi as *"a voice to all those who were made to feel that it's their fault"* (Zondi comments, 2018f). I found this comment profound, as it emphasises the commonality in which perpetrators, society, and the justice system blame and shame victims. The blaming and shaming are done to the extent that victims would prefer not to use their voices. Some victims even believe that they are the cause of their violation. Therefore, when Zondi used her voice and spoke up against her perpetrator, she reminded others that it was never their fault and that they should not be afraid and ashamed to use their voices. She encouraged them to stand up for themselves. Subsequently, several comments generally mentioned that they wished all abuse victims would have the courage to expose their truth. However, eighteen social media users admitted that they were sexually abused or alluded to being sexually abused.

The social media users who were heroic enough to share their experience of sexual abuse all advocated how difficult it is to speak out against their abusers. Some users mentioned that although they share their narrative with the public, they have never reported their perpetrator to the police.
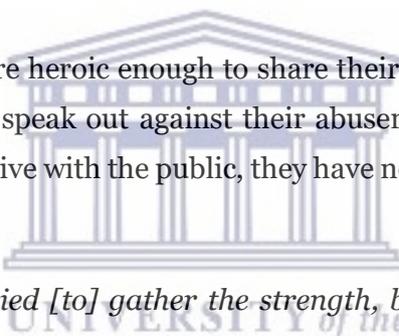
  i.   *"… I applaud her. I tried [to] gather the strength, but I still can't do it…"* (Zondi comments, 2018d)
 ii.   *"Some of us are burning in silence. Wish we had that courage to voice it out, but we can't because of so many reasons . That lady is brave. May she find peace within herself"* (Zondi comments, 2018d)
iii.   *"This should have been stop[ed] [by] her lawyer, [it is] really bad to let this carry on, that poor young lady. That is why young ladies like me, don't report rape"* (Zondi comments, 2018e)

They maintain that it is much more difficult to tell someone about your violation than many would expect. These users suggested several factors that accompany merely speaking up. It includes the overwhelming feelings of pain, anger, shame, and an array of other emotions. They emphasised the internal fights experienced to build up that courage. Such courage, unfortunately, does not happen overnight.

  i.   *"Have you been raped before? Do you know what a devastating and demeaning ordeal it is? Have you been through trauma? If not… Shut UP!"* (Zondi comments, 2018a)
 ii.   *"You are a disgrace. You are a fucking disgrace. Do you know how hard it is for rape victims to come out and talk about what happened to them? Such things just*

*don't happen overnight. You wouldn't be so heartless if you were the one in that
position"* (Zondi comments, 2018d)

iii. *"We live with shame. Afraid of people telling us that it was our fault. While we are
the victims"* (Zondi comments, 2018b)

iv. *"They've been quiet all along because they were scare[d]. So please, you don't know
the feeling of being raped. It's painful"* (Zondi comments, 2018a)

v. *"[Anonymous] what must she do or say for you to believe her? What do you mean
by the way she is? And what story is she telling by being the way she is? Have you
ever been raped or sexually assaulted? Walk in her shoes, then [you] will consider
your opinion!"* (Zondi comments, 2018a)

Many users were concerned with the reactions of family and friends, primarily if the
perpetrator is known to them. Most importantly, many are not ready to face their perpetrators
in the courtroom or are emotionally not strong enough for the revictimisation accompanied
by reporting abuse. Thus, social media users view Zondi as fearless and embody characteristics
they can only hope to develop. They long for her courage to fight confidently against the
doubting justice system.

Earlier in the chapter, I mentioned the 'receipt of rape,' which police officers subliminally
expect women to have when reporting sexual abuse. Without it, the justice system treats most
women suspiciously, as if they have offended the perpetrator for reporting a crime. The victims
are treated worse if they fail to show visible abrasions. However, one user protested against
this treatment, commenting: *"rape experts and police tell women alike not to put up a fight
and lie as still as possible to avoid injury. I know from personal experience that sometimes
your mind just leaves your hurting body and goes off somewhere else until it's over. You don't
know how you will react or respond at all until you're in that situation"* (Zondi comments,
2018c). Based on this comment and research, women seldomly fight when attacked due to
practising what they have been taught. The comments revealed that those who reported their
sexual abuse were cross-examined and treated with doubt by the justice system. Many users
also revealed that ill-treatment and disbelief sometimes came from their families. In the
comment section, the women confess that after reporting the abuse, they sometimes felt as if
they should be blamed for the violation or as if they were at fault. One user commented: *"I
reported my assault at [thirteen] when my uncle tried it, and my aunts and grandmother
questioned me the same way. Just to find out that he raped my aunt for years when they
were young, and they waited until he passed away a few years ago before revealing it"*
(Zondi comments, 2018c). It is devastating when women dare to report their abuse and justice
does not get served, or the perpetrator gets away with only a slap on the wrist, as in the example
above.

Zondi was aware of all of these possibilities. She even experienced some of those mentioned above. Yet, she had a fighting spirit and was ready to share her narrative and 'turn her pain into purpose'. Pitre *et al.* (2013:118) suggest that narratives use "storytelling to make sense of the past and to engage in social action through speaking out to invite political mobilisation and change." Zondi wanted to evoke change for herself and the other young woman Omotoso and the justice system abused. Her narrative on social media created awareness and showed that there is no generic template for sexual abuse, especially since society has been judging experiences of abuse by an unrealistic template. Zondi's experience of sexual abuse cautions against the idea of a single-story narrative. Therefore, by speaking up against her abuser, she allowed the public to rethink experiences and settings of abuse. More importantly, she shed light on belittling patriarchal teachings.

By publicly challenging Omotoso, the 'male authority' and revealing what transpired in the mission house, Zondi went against the norm of 'knowing her place' and being 'discreet' as a woman. However, the users were in full support of her challenging these patriarchal religious norms. They believe that too many sexual abuse cases are kept a secret due to being obedient to these norms. If anything, users were concerned about the number of unreported and unspoken crimes that perpetrators might have committed in the name of God or patriarchal beliefs. These ideologies and norms were created to oppress and silence women. However, the public displayed a growing interest in women's narratives and experiences in various situations. Therefore, social media users emphasised that patriarchal norms should be less dominant in religious institutions or society.

6.5. Religion and sexual abuse

"How I pray people would defend Jesus the way they defend these crooks. Wake up, people, these are just men! Jesus died and rose again, serve him, not these pastors. They are in a cult; to them, religion is business. What is stopping people from going to God themselves? Seek him in prayer, and you shall find him. We are living in our last days; men like Omotoso are assigned to do what was revealed about false Prophets" (Zondi comments, 2018d).

In this comment, a social media user pleaded that people find God on their own terms and not through others. This user critiqued the *Jesus Dominion International Church and* suggested that people should not learn about God through pastors like Omotoso. They might be led

astray by those claiming to be followers of God. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, new Christian religious movements are often exposed in the news and social media for their unorthodox practices. Consequently, mainline churches are more established in their traditions and practices, and therefore receive less media attention when caught in unlawful practices.

Ysseldyk, Matheson, and Anisman (2010:61) argue that religion plays a pivotal role in belief systems that "encompass attitudes toward gender roles, representations of men and women, and gender stereotypes." Religion, as mediated by institutions and individuals, informs one's worldview. Given the sacred status ascribed to religious institutions and leadership, many followers wholeheartedly trust both what they are taught and whom they are taught by. However, many clergy sexual abuse cases have recently surfaced across denominations (See, Monama, 2018; Abraham, 2019; Akello Ogola, 2020). "The long-standing problem of sexual abuse of congregants by clergy and religious leaders has finally made its way into public consciousness, largely due to the persistence of the media" (Fortune 2013:14). As a result, clergy sexual abuse cases are no longer only institutional secrets but are known to the public.

Social media has been used to expose crimes of clergy sexual abuse and act as a platform for the public to join the conversation around it. For example, in the rape case of Rev June Dolley-Major. According to the Facebook page, Dolley-Major first reported her rape to the police. She reported it to the church when she received no justice from the criminal proceedings, which also did not assist her. Dolley-Major then went on her second hunger strike in 2020 (Akello Ogola, 2020). Dolley-Major turned to the social media platform, Facebook, to document her entire process of seeking justice, exposing her abuser, and allowing the public to engage in the conversation (https://www.facebook.com/Justiceforallwomen). Although Dolley-Major disclosed her abuse via social media, it is essential to note that the Tribunal contested the social media site as evidence, as there was no proof of criminal proceedings (See: Anglican Church of Southern Africa Diocese of Cape Town, Judgement of the Diocesan Tribunal to hear charges of misconduct against the Revd Melvin Booysen, 30 September 2021). Zondi, on the other hand, did not use social media to reveal her experience of clergy sexual abuse. Her testimony was posted on social media for the public to access. The social media exposure of her testimony mediated it and made her experience open to the public to engage with.

It is evident in society and a few comments that some churches may be more open to discussing abuse of power in the form of spiritual abuse and at the hands of religious leaders. In the case

of Omotoso, his self-proclaimed divine status meant that Zondi, as a layperson, felt especially torn at the prospect of undermining and questioning the integrity of a "man of God". Dawjee (2019) writes of Zondi's shared experience. According to Zondi: *"It doesn't take a lot of convincing to believe that Omotoso is a master manipulator. If you're desperate to serve in the eyes of God, to worship and find a path to heaven in the way that an innocent [fourteen]-year-old Zondi was. You're vulnerable to a 'super-Christian' like Omotoso. You'll believe him when he says he flies up to heaven and keeps the company of angels. And that he is your direct line to the divine"* (Dawjee, 2019). In this passage, Dawjee points out several examples of Zondi being naïve and vulnerable. Omotoso used that to his advantage. Pretorius (2007:274) suggests that spiritual abusers are "dogmatic, self-confident, arrogant and demand to be the spiritual focal point in the lives of their followers." Religious leaders demonstrate their arrogance in believing that "they are more spiritually in tune with God than anyone else. They claim unique insight into scripture that no one else has" (Pretorius, 2007:274). Therefore, congregants tend to avoid any questions or actions that will upset the clergy member. Omotoso manipulated Zondi to believe at the time that he possessed such divine powers and that she could only have a real relationship with God through him.

This section of the chapter focused on how social media users engaged with religion and sexual abuse. Based on the comments, I can best treat the topic 'religion and sexual abuse' under two headings: God is with her; she will not fall, and man of God.

6.5.1. God is with her; she will not fall

"God is with her; she will not fall" is a well-known Psalmist verse. Psalm 45 speaks of collapsing, turmoil, and finding refuge in divine intervention. The Psalm reassures that God has not forsaken the people, and those who trust and believe in him will not fall or be destroyed. They believed this to be true of Zondi, that she was a strong woman who God would not forsake in her hour of need. In the first part of this category of comments, the users identified themselves as Christians who have also declared that they do not condone manipulation and violations in the name of religion and God. The users often cited this Biblical text.

i. *"I feel sorry for these fake pastors who use God's name for their evil benefits. Jesus warned us in Matthew 7:21 about them...."* (Zondi comments, 2018b)

ii. *"God said take h[eed], do not be deceived, for many will come in my name and say I am Christ [Matthew 24:4]"* (Zondi comments, 2018b)

iii.   *"The word of God is clear when it comes to things like this. As long as it is written in the Bible, why should people wonder about these so-called fake prophets?"* (Zondi comments, 2018a)

In thirty-three comments, social media users reached out to Zondi, suggesting that she rely on God for healing guidance and strength. They are convinced that her spirituality is the key factor that will help her conquer her pain. In addition, eighteen comments indicated that social media users were praying for Zondi. The users often evoked the spirit to intervene when encouraging Zondi. For example:

i.   *"...Be strong, girl we are praying for you. The final judgment will come from God"* (Zondi comments, 2018d)
ii.   *"South Africa is praying for you, Zondi"* (Zondi comments, 2018b)
iii.   *"Praying for you and justice to be served"* (Zondi comments, 2018b)

Presumably, users chose this form of encouragement due to Zondi testifying that her perception of God and religion has been damaged due to the abuse that occurred in a place of presumable safety.

These users expressed their anger and disappointment towards Omotoso and the *Jesus Dominion International Church* for using the name of God as a premise to abuse girls.

i.   *"I truly hate how people use the word of God for their own Satanic missions"* (Zondi comments, 2018b)
ii.   *"She [Zondi] said the majority of the girls that were in the house were not singers. So, it looks like that place [mission house] was a brothel with loose girls just sitting around. How can these people call God's name in their mouths?* (Zondi comments, 2018b)
iii.   *"This so-called man of God [is] bringing shame in the kingdom of God..."* (Zondi comments, 2018e)
iv.   *"Shameless men using Gods name in vain. These are the false prophets the Bible talks about."* (Zondi comments, 2018d)

They are disgusted that someone claiming to be a 'man of God' was accused of causing pain to God's people. These users questioned Omotoso's spirituality and divinity. They interrogated his actions and maintained that one could not be deceiving, manipulative, and bring harm to others while calling oneself a religious leader or man of God.

Social media users had many questions about Omotoso and his 'super-Christian' status. For example:

i. *"How can he claim that he is a man of God when we are all God's people?"* (Zondi comments, 2018a)
ii. *"How can a married 'man of God' have sex with a minor? You say you are a man of God, but you are promoting adultery? You are a sick man!"* (Zondi comments, 2018a)

However, the congregants of the *Jesus Dominion International Church* did not find Omotoso's behaviour alarming, and they did not question his actions. The users argued that Omotoso had double standards; he had rules for himself and a stricter set for others. A user commented: *"Omotoso deserves a double life sentence, for the double life he lives"* (Zondi comments, 2018a). He held the young women in his mission house accountable for following strict biblical and patriarchal rules, but that did not apply to him. The actions that Zondi accused Omotoso of contradict the characteristics of a 'man of God'. *"How can a man of God who is married have sex with a minor, and call himself a man of God? You are promoting adultery. You are a sick man sies! [sic]"* (Zondi comments, 2018b) Instead, Omotoso was accused of a heinous crime and sin, or as described by a user: *"[Omotoso is] a sheep in wolf's clothes"* (Zondi comments, 2018a). Another user commented: *"You can't keep hurt[ing] people and use the word of God to do so"* (Zondi comments, 2018b)

During Zondi's testimony, Omotoso was exposed, and his duplicitous lifestyle was revealed. Michael Salter (2013) suggests that public 'naming and shaming' could result in long-term reputational damage to the perpetrator's reputation. However, in some cases, the perpetrators receive public support rather than being denounced.

A user comment indicated that it is normal for so-called pastors to use the church as a front for their schemes. Therefore, Zondi's testimony served as a warning and awareness that believers should be more vigilant. *"What makes this story unique is that these people [pastors] are used to getting away with a lot by hiding behind the veil of being 'holy men.' If such things are exposed every day, maybe people will be more aware. We are all born equal; there's no superior being among us that can lay hands on you and save you"* (Zondi comments, 2018f). Many social media users shared the sentiments of the comment above and expressed their rage and pain. They were disgusted and disappointed that Omotoso used vulnerable people desperate for a place to worship for his evil pleasure.

i. *"These people use God for so many evil shit in the world"* (Zondi comments, 2018e)
ii. *"Evil monster using the name of the Lord for pleasure"* (Zondi comments, 2018e)

Their comments show that they oppose all his religious norms to harm and abuse Zondi and the young women in the house.

i. *"If Zondi had to tell the women in the church about the abuse, they would have probably said [that] she is possessed, and the devil is using her to destroy the man of God"* (Zondi comments, 2018a)

ii. *"People like Omotoso are used to getting away by hiding behind the veil of being 'holy men'…. We are all born equal. There is no superior being among us that can lay hands on you and save you…"* (Zondi comments, 2018d)

iii. *"Those crazy parishioners smiling and waving at this so-called pastor sickens me to the core. They are supporting these charlatan paedophiles and using the word of God to justify it. Read your bible and stop listening to these demons that trade preaching for sex and money"* (Zondi comments, 2018d)

After hearing Zondi's testimony, many users indicated that they previously had or were willing to break ties with religious institutions and would instead worship at home with their families. They are cautious of being misled by pastors like Omotoso and only believe in the Bible's teachings.

i. *"Jesu engamemukela wangfundisa ukuthi ngkhonze yena yedwa engaxutshwe nalutho nokuthi uhlala Kimi NAMI kuye so angidingi man of God to pray for me yingakho ngingeke nghambe ngiphuza ojik ngidla iznyoka (The Jesus I worship taught me to praise him alone, and that He lives in me. So, I do not need a man of God to pray for me, that is why I will never drink bleach or eat snakes)"* (Zondi comments, 2018d)

The comment above suggests a language and attitude of resistance, especially towards new Christian religious movements with unconventional practices. Several users resonated with this comment. They confessed to rejecting any religious act that harms God's people or provides personal gain. Regardless, they would reject religious acts if it meant leaving the church and worshipping God independently. Thus, the comments indicated users are challenging patriarchal norms by not accepting everything said and taught in religious institutions. Instead, they are questioning the humility and morality of religious leaders and institutions.

Made by users who identify as Christians, the comments above critique sexual abuse in the church. However, a few social media users have denounced the idea of a higher being, and quite frankly, they ridicule everyone who does believe. Yet, despite being non-religious, they still offered their opinion regarding the topic at hand.

These users were open to proclaiming their lack of religious alliance by commenting:

i. *"Religion is bullshit, period"* (Zondi comments, 2018f)
ii. *"I have never been a church fan too"* (Zondi comments, 2018f)

iii.   *"That's why I don't allow my wife and kids to believe today's pastors!!! They called themselves a man of God, sies!" [sic]* (Zondi comments, 2018f)

In all three of these comments, the users were blunt about their dislike of religion. Only the third comment provides some insight as to why. The other two posted their remarks as if it was ubiquitous for individuals to publicly reject religion, especially on a thread referring to religious leaders. These social media users suggested that religious believers tend to put their spiritual leaders on a pedestal and elevate their leaders to the extent that they cannot recognise harmful ones. One user commented: *"Some people treat pastors like they are God. The followers are the worst. Some of these pastors are a horrible mess. But it's the people that protect them that are even worse"* (Zondi comments, 2018f). These users find it even more disturbing that people are so desperate to know God that it becomes easy to manipulate them. Another user commented: *"God is not at the church. God is in your mind"* (Zondi comments, 2018a). It is as if these social media users are warning and asking the religious users to rethink and reconsider how they regard their religion and spirituality and perhaps consider an alternative method for approaching it.

Although these social media users do not conform to religious teachings, they reveal what could cause people to practice unconventional worship methods, leading to abuse. The comments and suggestions made by the public support Pretorius' (2007) critical components of new Christian religious movements that lure the vulnerable into the trap of spiritual abuse. They maintain that these churches always have something exciting to offer, which seems too good to be true. Therefore, instead of getting into *"church politics"* (Zondi comments, 2018a), they abstain from participating in any religious movement. Even though these users are not religious in any way, the data reported in this section appears to challenge patriarchal religious norms.

6.5.2. Man of God

In this section, I engaged the comments that support Omotoso. These users believe that Zondi falsely accused Omotoso. In terms of their view of the trial, they assert that Daubermann's intense questioning was crucial to rule out all possibilities of false accusations. It was expected that some comments would support Omotoso. However, the single most striking evidence in the data was that women made more than half of the comments supporting Omotoso, and women made many of the statements to vilify Zondi.

During Daubermann's questioning of Zondi, most social media users in the sample, I analysed protested vigorously against it. However, a few argued that Daubermann should be left alone and allowed to do his job. They suggested that people should stop allowing their emotions to get in the way of the law. For these users, Omotoso was innocent, and Daubermann's defence would prove this. Some believed that too many women falsely accused men of sexual abuse, and Zondi was one of them.

i.   *"It is the job of a lawyer to ask challenging or sometimes even so-called unfair questions. Otherwise, the trial won't be a fair one"* (Zondi comments, 2018c)
ii. *"Tim's life is at stake, so Zondi must be cross-examined thoroughly"* (Zondi comments, 2018c)

These social media users refer to a 'fair' and 'thorough' trial, yet they have also decided which direction they want the ruling to be steered. They have already agreed that Omotoso is innocent and Zondi should be reprimanded for her rumours. Without any context, an angry and dismayed user criticised Omotoso and commented: *"guys, I don't know, shaking my head… I wish you knew him. You'll hate him and wish to kill him"* (Zondi comments, 2018d). The user did not indicate whether or not she knows Omotoso personally or if her reaction is based on watching Zondi's testimony. However, Omotoso was defended in the comments, when another user commented in response to the user above: *"I have known him for the past [eleven] years, but I don't hate him, and I don't wish to kill him. So, what are you talking about?"* (Zondi comments, 2018d). Therefore, it is presumable that Omotoso has a loyal following that will stand behind him regardless of the trial's outcome.

In the comments section, Omotoso's supporters had many unanswered questions for Zondi and the testimony she delivered. They felt that there were inconsistencies in her testimony and insisted that Omotoso was financially supporting Zondi. They believe that Zondi lived a luxurious life at Omotoso's expense and that she must have demanded something more valuable, such as her own house or car. These users suggested that when Omotoso did not meet her demands, she falsely accused him of sexually abusing her. The comments made by these users illustrated that Omotoso's followers believed there was a sexual relationship between the two of them. However, it was consensual. Below are examples of the questions that the users posed:

i.   *"Why did [Zondi] take such a long period to report him? Also, why go back to the guy [Omotoso] if she wasn't enjoying it"* (Zondi comments, 2018a)
ii. *"Why did she go back to the same man without reporting the abuse? That tells us she was benefitting from this man. Unfortunately, people do not want to tell the truth"* (Zondi comments, 2018a)

iii.   "*It's only stupid people who followed Omotoso, like this girl! Now they want to blame him because she believed in him!*" (Zondi comments, 2018a)

Comments i and ii suggest that Omotoso did not violate Zondi. There could not possibly be a violation if she willingly returned to Omotoso and the mission house. They also believed that she enjoyed being around Omotoso and benefitted from him before she decided to report him. The user in the third comment blamed Zondi for being sexually abused by Omotoso. The user maintains that if Zondi were not as naïve, it would not have been that easy for Omotoso to manipulate her. Omotoso's supporters did not see any fault with his behaviour. If anything, they believed that it was the choice of the girls to join the church, regardless that they did not know what they were getting themselves into. Nor do they see fault when Daubermann harassed Zondi in an attempt to prove his client's innocence. Instead, the supporters blamed Zondi for Omotoso's actions.

Omotoso's supporters expected Zondi to display magnanimity. They questioned and interrogated every statement and accusation made by Zondi. The data showed various questions asked by these users as if they were the defence lawyers.

i.   "*How could you forget the man travelled when you said he was at home? Now you say, you forgot that the man travelled? You are a liar, Zondi*" (Zondi comments, 2018b)
ii.   "*How can you plan to escape without telling them the reason why you want to escape? She [was] supposed to tell her aunt [why she wants to escape]. I don't believe this girl, she is a liar*" (Zondi comments, 2018b)
iii.   "*How is it that she didn't run away even after the first incident when she went to the bathroom to clean up his semen off her thighs? Why did she return to lay with him in bed again? I don't mean to judge her, neither do I want to excuse the accused. My thinking is that a normal [fourteen-year-old] wouldn't have returned to that bed and would have been crying if it is something she didn't want*" (Zondi comments, 2018e)
iv.   "*From a woman's perspective, my question is why did she not report that when it happened? It could have been easier to solve this... I also don't understand why she went back there for an apology. Report first, and then an apology will come later*" (Zondi comments, 2018a)

Their comments insisted if Zondi had made truthful claims, she would have exposed him immediately, without hesitation. Also, if she was a victim and did not agree to a sexual relationship, she should not have returned to the church. They questioned why Zondi did not trust her instincts when Omotoso made her feel uncomfortable. Instead, she chose to trust and obey him.

Most of the comments made by social media users in this category indicate victim-blaming. The users questioned Zondi's actions or lack of efforts to prevent being abused by Omotoso. Yet, the users placed no accountability for the abuse on Omotoso. Zondi is the one who was vilified, crucified, and expected to do more. In none of these comments did any Omotoso follower consider any factor, such as fear or trauma that accompanies being sexually abused. In other words, the public expected the victim to take responsibility for their violation (Motsei, 2007 and Gqola, 2015). None of these users questioned why most victims of sexual abuse are women and men, the overwhelming majority of perpetrators. Nor do they acknowledge that it is women putting down women and supporting the perpetrators.

Evans and Balfour (2012:309) argue that it is common in modesty matters regarding sex that the ownership of being modest and the control of men's sexual urges are placed heavily on women. Consequently, women are expected not to 'provoke and damage men's spirituality with lustful thoughts.' Yet, men are not called out for acting upon those urges freely. In this section, users placed the responsibility of controlling Omotoso's sexual yearnings and desires solely on Zondi. Nonetheless, these users forgot that Zondi was not the only one Omotoso violated. More so, if not Zondi, another young woman would be his next victim. Therefore, how 'fair' is it to place the onus of his actions on one of his many pursuits.

Aitchison (2017:41) reports that "Men are the ones committing 99% of rape. Men are the ones committing the majority of violence. Men are the ones doing most of the battering…" However, all of these issues are labelled 'women's issues.' Therefore, the first example of the problem is that women are held responsible for the behaviour of men. These unrealistic expectations resonate with almost every incident of sexual abuse in South Africa. The magnifying glass is placed on the victim, questioning her attitude, dress code, location, alcohol levels, etc. Yet, the perpetrator is in the background, without any responsibility for the crime he committed. He is hardly ever held accountable for his behaviour. Aitchison (2017:55) maintains that "victim-blaming is entrenched into society. Women are taught that they have failed to prevent their attacks, highlighting society's expectation that women are responsible for men's behaviour."

 South Africa faces an infelicitous reality that when a victim accuses a perpetrator of a crime, the focus shifts from the perpetrator's actions to that of the victim. Police officers taking statements ask: 'What were you wearing?' 'Were you drunk?' 'Were you out late at night?', and the answers to these questions usually determine the plausibility of their experience (Gqola, 2015:29). Zondi's narrative of sexual abuse does not look like a narrative of sexual abuse that dominates the popular imagination where the abuse occurs in a dark place, and the perpetrator is a stranger. Nor does the stereotypical questions asked to victims of sexual abuse

relate to her experience. When reflecting on those questions illustrated above, which Gqola (2015) highlighted:

i.   Zondi was not wearing anything provocative. She usually wore her choir uniform or her sleep dress and headscarf.
ii.   Zondi was not drunk when the abuse occurred. The closest she got to alcohol was communion wine.
iii.   Zondi was not out late at night. She was in the church mission house and touring with the church.

6.6. The image of a victim

"Really? Did you just judge her because of how she looks? So, how should she look or dress? Must she be dirty and look like a victim?" (Zondi comments, 2018a).

This user protested against the scrutiny that victims experience daily. Society expects a victim to look a particular way, and if they fail to do so, their credibility is questioned even before being allowed to explain their violation. In an opinion piece entitled, *Cheryl Zondi: #MeToo, One year later, we're onto you,* Dawjee (2018) interrogated courtroom procedure during the Omotoso trial. On the topic of victim profiling, Dawjee asked: *"Why are we still asking this question in 2018? What the hell does a victim look like? What is she supposed to look like? Are victims only the silent ones? Can victims only be the underprivileged? Are victims worn and 'ugly' and do not conform to the norms of beauty – whatever those are in any case? Are they less 'made up,' weathered and dare not look like a proud Zondi on trial who dares to look defence lawyers in the eye and powerfully state: I am not here to make things easy for you?"* (Dawjee, 2018). She posed these questions to emphasise how problematic it is to think that a victim should only look and behave in a certain way. She critiqued how society dismisses victims and their violations if they fail to display a particular image. Unfortunately, in South Africa, the perceived attitude and appearance of the victim are considered the basis of an individual's credibility and ultimately the plausibility of their violation. The idea that women need to look a particular way to be believed stems from patriarchal religious norms that required women to behave and dress in a specific way to be deemed 'modest and respectful. The foundation of victim shaming dates back to power and control, where men determined norms and standards for women.

Lisa Wedeen (1999) focused on Syria and its autocratic leadership system; in her book, she emphasises disciplinary-symbolic power as a form of control. She asserts that the "effect of the regime's power is manifest in the active compliance of mobilised citizens, but also citizens passive compliance, in the cynical apathy of those who obey because they have become

habituated to the cult or to be left in peace" (Wedeen, 1999:147). In other words, individuals are conditioned to comply with the dominant opinion of those in leadership. In her book, Wedeen (1999) reflected on Max Weber's question: *"When and why do men obey?"* She proposed that "people obey because they believe in the values, norms, and standards within which a particular regime operates, because it is in their material interest to do so, or because they fear the coercive consequences of not obeying." However, individuals fail to account for how language, discourses, and teachings perpetuate abuse by merely obeying.

Similarly, the obedience which Wedeen alludes to is visible within the comments. Social media users are obedient to the teachings of religious, educational, and social institutions. These teachings are all that they have known their entire lives. As a result, users became unconsciously compliant with the teachings of victim-blaming and shaming.

I can best treat the 'image of a victim' section under two headings: That is not an image of a victim and How should victims of abuse look?
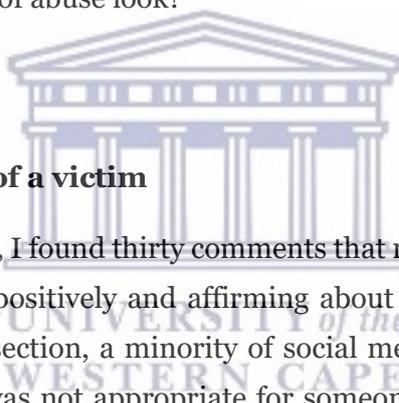
6.6.1. That is not an image of a victim

In my analysis of the comments, I found thirty comments that referred to Zondi's appearance. Twenty-four comments spoke positively and affirming about Zondi's appearance, while six found it disapproving. In this section, a minority of social media users believe that Zondi's appearance in the courtroom was not appropriate for someone claiming to be a victim, nor does it match her testimony. To the rest of the users, Zondi looked like an average twenty-two-year-old young woman. During the three days that Zondi took the witness stand, she wore a dress and floral blouse. She wore make-up. Zondi wore a medium-length weave, sometimes hanging loose and sometimes tied back with bits of hair flowing freely on her face. The users also drew my attention to Zondi's soft pink set of long acrylic nails. Her appearance showed that she was well-groomed, fashionable and objectively attractive.

In response to her appearance, one user commented*: "The lady looks too intelligent to be able to keep quiet this long"* (Zondi comments, 2018a). This comment suggested, based on her appearance, that Zondi's testimony was unconvincing. The other negative comments mainly critiqued her appearance and registers as digital heckling. They commented:

  i.   *"And the nails! And piercing on the tongue"* (Zondi comments, 2018a)
  ii.   *"WTF with the nails?"* (Zondi comments, 2018a)
  iii. *"dumb slay queen who thinks she knows the meaning of closure"* (Zondi comments, 2018f)

iv.   *"What an administration in wiping the tears"* (Zondi comments, 2018a).
v.   *"Yes, it's a whole administration [wiping her tears]"* (Zondi comments, 2018a)

The first two comments were about her nails and her piercings. It is evident in the tone of the comments that Zondi having acrylic nails or piercings does not sit well with these users. In the third comment, a user calls her a 'slay queen'. A slay queen is a slang phrase used to describe women interested in fashion, beauty, and supposedly frivolous interests and concerns. By calling Zondi a slay queen who does not know 'the meaning of closure', this user suggested that Zondi was putting on an act in the courtroom or could not comprehend the seriousness of the accusation. Comments iv and v were concerned with how she wipes her tears. The word 'administration' is used as a slang term in this context. It is referred to as turning a simple task into an entire process. Comments iv and v were made in response to Zondi slowly and gently wiping her tears to avoid smudging her make-up. Six social media users focused solely on her appearance, which does not match their perception of a victim's image. Her appearance, and not experience, judged her credibility. They did not give her testimony a chance because she does not portray the image of 'Christian modesty' (Nnadi, 2010:121). Wheatcroft, Wagstaff, and Moran (2009) suggest that an ideal of a 'real-rape template is still a prevalent societal view. "The real rape template involves a woman of high moral standing who is raped by a stranger who uses a weapon or force, and where the victim sustains injuries that are beyond that of the rape itself" Wheatcroft, Wagstaff, and Moran (2009:273).

6.6.2. How should victims of abuse look?

In response to the quibbling about Zondi's appearance, other comments expressed shock. They questioned what users would consider as a more 'suitable' appearance for her to exhibit. A large number of social media users complimented Zondi's physical, natural beauty and intellect. They praised her for displaying strength under pressure. They expressed admiration for how she carries herself out and the character she puts forth into the world. In other words, they were pleased to see that she has not allowed being a victim of sexual abuse to define her whole life and character. More so, they are glad that she does not 'look like a victim.' One user responded to the negative comments made on Zondi's appearance, saying: *"I wonder how is she [Zondi] supposed to act and look on that stand to show that she was abused on numerous occasions... This girl shows that she gathered all the strength to face this man, and she is ready to claim back her emotional strength"* (Zondi comments, 2018a). This comment indicated a sense of pride towards Zondi. There are several other comments similar to this one. In the comments, the users admire Zondi for her growth and offer words of affirmation.

To these users, Zondi advocates that victims can reclaim agency and take control of one's life, despite suffering and hardships. However, it is pleasing to read that many social media users admire Zondi and are encouraged by her experience. It is also essential to critique how users idolise Zondi and view her as the 'perfect victim'. By perceiving Zondi as a 'perfect victim', users' perspectives shift from seeing victims as weak and worn down to strong and courageous who do not fold under challenging circumstances. This 'perfect victim' idolisation is equally as problematic as viewing victims as fragile beings. It is intricate in the sense that the public might expect all victims to conform to the 'perfect victim' standard, and if they do not, they will be condemned for being weak. Therefore, this issue reminds readers that there will never be a single narrative of sexual abuse, nor will there be a correct reaction or a particular image and behaviour of a victim.

6.7. Conclusion

The coding and categorization of the YouTube comments played an essential role in guiding this analysis and enabling me to understand how social media users expressed their opinion regarding Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse and the Omotoso trial. The users' conversations were divided into four broad categories. First, they perceived Zondi as a victim who was abused by Omotoso, Daubermann and the courtroom, as well as the public and social media users. They responded to Zondi's testimony and her continuous revictimisation by showing overflowing support and encouragement towards her. Second, users viewed Zondi as a survivor and praised her for her strength and bravery. They shared their admiration towards her for speaking up against her abuser. Third, users engaged with Zondi's narrative from a religious perspective. Many users identified as Christians, therefore offering prayer and spiritual words of encouragement. A few users denounced religion but still offered Zondi support. However, both groups of users interrogated and rejected patriarchal teachings and practices, especially those harmful to followers. Finally, the users engaged with Zondi's narrative by focusing on her physical appearance. In this category, it was evident that users had a particular image of a victim. Many users challenged the traditional image and embraced the image of a victim as strong and liberated as seen with Zondi. However, by proposing an alternative vision of a victim, users are still conforming to the notion that there is only one correct image.

By understanding how social media users engaged with Zondi's narrative, this chapter has also investigated to what extent social media users support or challenge patriarchal religious norms. Surprisingly, most social media users challenged patriarchal norms. Consequently, this analysis showed that a change occurred in societies perspectives regarding patriarchal religious norms. The majority of societal views steeped in patriarchal worldviews are willing to reconsider and challenge the norm. A result of rejecting patriarchal norms could lead to societies and religious communities which are more gender-inclusive and could avoid or minimise spiritual, psychological and sexual abuse, which are usually justified by these norms. However, the few users who still support patriarchal religious norms are assertive and verbal with their views.

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Chapter Seven

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Why do social media users engage with Zondi's narrative in the way that they do?

</div>

7.1. Introduction

Globally women continue to "live with patriarchy and sexism, even in societies where legislation against overt forms of sexism, gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, and physical violence against women are commonplace" (Lazar, 2014:180). Patriarchy and sexism persist due to their continued reinscription as normative by social and religious institutions. Individuals and communities deem patriarchal structures as 'the way of life' and 'sanctioned and ordained by God' (Rakoczy, 2004:30). As a result, women are oppressed, assigned unequal gender roles, and are taught that they are inferior to men. For centuries women have been victimised by various social and religious systems, resulting in the rise of feminist thoughts, actions, and research. Feminist scholarship has done remarkable work in analysing, interrogating, and liberating women from oppression. However, patriarchal norms are resilient and require intensive and continuous contestation.

In the previous chapter, I used feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) to analyse to what extent social media users supported or challenged patriarchal religious norms by understanding how social media users engaged with Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse. The data extracted from the comments below Zondi's video testimony provided me with four broad themes: Zondi as a victim, Zondi as a survivor, religion and sexual abuse, and the image of a victim. These themes were further expanded in sub-themes which enabled me to comprehend how users engaged with her narrative.

Surprisingly, the comments which challenged patriarchal religious norms and supported Zondi outweighed the comments which supported the norms and vilified Zondi. Although patriarchal religious norms might still be pervasive and dominating in several contexts, it is evident in the comments that most of the social media users who commented on Zondi's video testimony have shifted from supporting patriarchal religious norms to interrogating and challenging them. In the previous chapter, most social media users questioned the order of both the church and the courtroom. They offered Zondi support through words of motivation, encouragement, and spiritual guidance. The users recognised that fear, trauma, and shame due to patriarchal religious norms contributed to Zondi remaining silent for so long. Several

users expressed admiration towards Zondi for her courage and bravery to speak up against her abuser. The users also examined Omotoso's character and self-proclaimed divine status. The minority of social media users supported Omotoso and defended him in the comments. They claimed his innocence and scrutinised every aspect of Zondi's testimony, including her physical appearance.

The four themes and their sub-themes in which the comments were categorised provided insight into how social media users interacted with Zondi's testimony of clergy sexual abuse, their perception of Omotoso and the patriarchal norms he implemented in the church. The themes also provided insights into the compassion of users during the cross-examination process. In this chapter, I will expand the analysis to discern why social media users engaged with Zondi's narrative in those particular ways. I will draw on the work of various feminist scholars, mainly focusing on Lazar's (2014) five critical elements of feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) to analyse why social media users whose comments have been subject to scrutiny in this study engaged with Zondi's narrative in the ways that they do.

FCDA provides a framework for interpreting patterns of thinking, reasoning and emoting within the responses (Lazar, 2014:182). Consequently, my examination produced six possibilities of why social media users engaged and responded to Zondi's narrative in these particular contexts in the ways they did. I propose the following: to evoke change in society, religious institutions and societal influence, race as an influence, social media as an influence, and loyal Omotoso supporters. Before I discuss each of these, I will explain my method further.

7.2. Five essential elements of feminist critical discourse analysis

In the research methods and design chapter, I motivated and justified why feminist critical discourse analysis was the most convincing analytical lens for understanding to what extent social media users support or challenge patriarchal norms and how and why they engage with these norms in the ways that they do. A feminist perspective of doing research interrogates discourses that perpetuate gendered social practices and uncover what perpetuates these practices. To achieve my objective, I used Lazar's (2014) five essential elements of FCDA as a theory and lens to read and analyse the social media users' comments. Lazar (2014) identified five elements:

1. *Feminist analytical activism.* The first element is concerned with the critical analysis of discourses that sustain a gendered social order. Lazar (2014:184) maintains that as a result of the sustained gendered order, women are often disadvantaged, excluded, and not taken seriously. FCDA's analysis of gendered discourse practices raised critical awareness through research and teaching. Therefore, "raising awareness is itself a form of activism" (Lazar, 2014:185). In other words, the critique of discourse can be viewed not only for action but as action.

2. *Gender as an ideological structure and practice.* Ideology functions as a system of ideas and ideals to maintain unequal power relations. "For feminists, 'gender' is considered an ideological system that divides people hierarchically into two classes, 'men' and 'women.' Feminists criticise the simple mapping of biological sex onto social gender" (Lazar, 2014:186).

3. *Complexity of gender and power relations.* "Power relations are a struggle over interests, which are maintained, and resisted through various modalities, extents, and degrees of explicitness from context to context" (Lazar, 2014:187). According to Lazar (2014:189), the task of FCDA is to examine how power and dominance are "discursively produced, resisted, and counter-resisted in various ways through textual representations of gendered social practices and through interactional strategies of talk." Therefore, to avoid making simplistic and universalising claims, "gender needs to be viewed as it intersects with other socially stratified identities such as race/ethnicity, social class and position, sexuality, disability, age, culture, nationality, and professional contexts" (Lazar, 2014:189).

4. *Discourse in the (de)construction of gender.* FCDA is interested in those aspects of social practices that are discursive and discursively represented in particular ideological ways. It analyses the relationships between the discourse and the social dynamics wherein social situations, institutions, and structures are constituted by discursive practices (Lazar, 2014:190). Therefore, FCDA examines how individuals renegotiate gender relations of power in language and conversations.

5. *Critical reflexivity as praxis.* Lazar (2014:192) maintains that reflexivity is a "critical awareness which has become a 'normal' feature of people's everyday lives." For FCDA practice, attention to reflexive practices constitutes an essential element, as it is an indicator of levels of social awareness and the possibility for change (Lazar, 2014:193). In other words, knowledge about social processes and structures can shape practices resulting in positive change, and critical awareness can become a regular feature of everyday life.

I used this analysis method as it enables me to identify and critique power and ideologies that sustain hierarchical gender relations. After identifying power and ideologies which sustained gender relations and patriarchal norms, I could understand how and why social media users maintain these norms and offer an alternative perspective. According to my analysis of the comments, first, users may react in a particular way to evoke change in society about reports of sexual abuse. Second, religious institutions and societal norms strongly influence individuals. The influence of institutions and society are deeply embedded in individuals' upbringing and might cause them to react in a certain way. Third, race has a similar impact on the response of individuals as institutions and society. How individuals were taught about race in their upbringing will determine how they respond to Zondi's narrative using race. Fourth, social media plays a significant role in influencing how individuals respond. Many react in a particular way because it is a popular trend in the media. Finally, some individuals are loyal Omotoso supporters and strongly believe in his innocence. Thus, the way they respond will indicate their support of Omotoso. At least two or more of Lazar's (2014) elements resonate and apply to each of these possibilities.

This chapter will continue with an in-depth analysis of each of the five possibilities why social media users reacted and engaged with Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse the way in which they did.
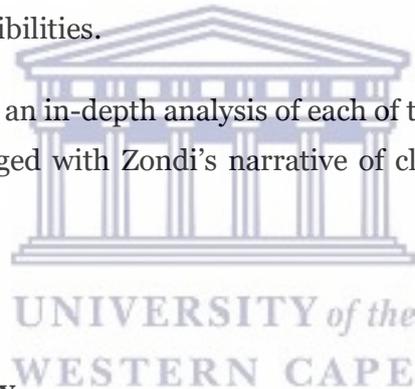
7.3. Evoke change in society

In numerous comments, social media users questioned and contested religious and societal patriarchal norms. In doing so, they indicate their dissatisfaction and disappointment with the gender norms that entrap women and elevate the status of men. A few distinct comments indicated that some users were victims of abuse or personally knew someone who was abused. These users shared their personal experience or knowledge of hostile treatment by the justice system when the abuse was reported. Due to the unsympathetic treatment, some users confessed that they regretted reporting their perpetrators and the crime. Other users who have experienced sexual trauma or abuse commented that they were too afraid to report the violations that they had experienced. In addition, the harsh treatment of Zondi by Daubermann and the experiences shared by others in the comments contributed to their ongoing decision not to report.

> i. *"... the vast majority of women would rather chew glass than go through a rape trial"* (Zondi comments, 2018c).

ii. *"Trust me. I applaud her [Zondi]. I tried to gather the strength, but I still can't do it. I was raped in my teens, I am in my 30's, but the pain is still fresh. I still have flashbacks of a fat cake being shoved in my mouth when I cried in pain. I remember him using Vaseline as lubrication and the blood flowing down my legs while walking home. People use[d] to say I loved boys. I wish people knew the pain I carry as a rape victim, then maybe they would understand."* (Zondi comments, 2018e).

Many users agreed with the sentiment expressed in the first comment. In the second comment, a woman shared her personal experience of sexual abuse. Given the nature of the comment section and the relative anonymity and spatial privacy it offered, she felt more comfortable and safer to share her experience online with strangers than with the police or in a courtroom out of fear of revictimisation. Both comments indicated that women would rather 'suffer in silence' and live with their pain than risk revictimisation through the justice system. As a result, the journey of recovery and healing is hindered, and many might not reach the point of perceiving themselves as survivors. They might not experience the psychological relief that may come from the experience of justice. In the context of support websites and Facebook groups, Bianca Fileborn (2017:1493) points out that for women, "online disclosure was a way of forming solidarity and support with other victims. It enabled victims to situate their experience within broader structural forces, and assisted some participants in resisting the idea that they were responsible for their own experience." In the context of the Omotoso trial comments, social media users raise awareness regarding the antiquated problem of cruel treatment, victim-shaming and revictimisation. Users engaged the space for its pedagogical and social justice potential even in the informal comments' space. As observed in the comments, women disclosing their experiences of abuse in online spaces may inspire others to report their abuse or seek alternative help to deal with their trauma. By finally disclosing their experience, women might receive psychological relief. However, a frequent disadvantage of revealing an incident of abuse is the possibility of being discriminated against and revictimised.

The data generated from the comments section displayed evidence of discrimination and prejudice about Zondi and women in general. In these comments, the users protest that victims are responsible for their violation instead of the perpetrators. However, several social media users defied these users and criticised them for making harsh and irrational statements. The users recognised and critiqued the gendered double standards, which punish women for engaging or being associated with sexual activity but praise men for the same engagement. Gqola (2015:73) asserts that "women do not feel safe in the streets and homes of South Africa

because women's bodies are seen as accessible for consumption - touching, raping, kidnapping, commenting on, grabbing, twisting, beating, burning, and controlling". Not only do women hardly feel safe, but society and the justice system also seem to expect women to take responsibility for the possibility that violations might occur. Thus, to avoid a violation, women must modify their behaviour accordingly. In other words, society and the justice system afford men the privilege of not being accountable for their actions.

Social media users who challenge the disparaging remarks of their counterparts are interrogating the social narrative that devalues women. They advocate for social media users to rethink these narratives and gender discrimination and stereotypes that accompany them. Gqola (2015:143) suggests that "rethinking and debunking rape myths is an important part of the conversation of how to bring down the rape statistic and create a world without rape". She asserts that rape myths and excuses are at the heart of keeping rape culture intact (Gqola, 2015:143). Rape myths are inaccurate beliefs about rape. "They are reinforced when beliefs surrounding circumstances, situations and characteristics of individuals connected to rape are applied to all situations uncritically" (Steyn and Steyn, 2008:46). Rape myths have the power to influence how victims perceive their violation. Steyn and Steyn (2008:46) emphasise that acceptance of rape myths and social responses can result in non-disclosure of the rape incident. Therefore, social media users want to create awareness around the impact of rape myths, victim-blaming, and making excuses for the perpetrators. These users want to evoke change in how sexual abuse is understood, engaged with and verbalised. Therefore, they hope to bring awareness of the seriousness of rape and create an online community where victims are supported and where rape is confronted rather than excused.

Keren Darmon (2014) and Fileborn (2017) acknowledge that social media and online activism could function as sites of informal justice. Online feminist spaces aim to redress the gender imbalance and can be used to protest against injustices, such as victim-blaming. Therefore, online spaces may hold the potential to shift users' perspectives and invite them to rethink narratives of sexual abuse. Darmon (2014:701) argue that "online spaces offer feminist activists the privileges for self-representation that are not necessarily carried into other spaces," namely the mass media or the formal justice system. Therefore, online spaces can act to "contest dominant social, cultural and legal narratives of sexual violence; circumvent formal criminal justice channels; give voice to their own experiences; and see their perpetrators punished or publically condemned" (Fileborn, 2017:1485). Victims and survivors used the comment section to share their experiences, and this created awareness. Although there are detractors and trolls, it is evident from the comments made about the Omotoso trial that

online spaces may function as sites of validation, where victims' experiences are taken seriously and believed.

7.4. Religious institutions and societal influence

The data in the previous chapter presented evidence indicating that religious and social influence has impacted some social media users positively and others negatively. However, there is a grey area between positive and negative thinking, which is seldom addressed, as it is subliminally perceived as normative. A primary example of this in the comments is that although religious support offered to Zondi might seem like a positive gesture of reaching out to her, it is limited. Prayers, motivational scriptures, and spiritual guidance might offer Zondi spiritual healing, but its action towards justice is restricted. Such limitations are hardly recognised because evoking God's name or prayer is identified as a positive religious influence.

Religion is a fundamental site for constructing gender and sexuality, and it plays a significant role in the inscription of social norms, practices, and values (Phiri, 1997:73). Nevertheless, societal influence plays an equally important role in the construction of an individual's thinking. Evans and Balfour (2012:310) suggest that various communal social encounters form an individual's entire worldview of their gendered identity and social norms. Therefore, religious and social influences implicate one another, and religious views form a part of societal influence.

Based on the comments analysed in the previous chapter, I will provide four examples that indicate that religious and social institutions influenced how social media engaged with Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse.

7.4.1. Evoking God in the comments

In the previous chapter, below the section, 'God is with her; she will not fall', several users identified themselves as Christians. Their identification was easily discernible, as their only response to Zondi's narrative was to provide a blessing or advise her to turn to God. On the one hand, extending messages of prayer, support, and comfort could be presumed as a positive influence of religion. In addition to offering Zondi support, these users use the comment section to emphasise that religion can create and provide a space where women's experiences of oppression within various contexts are welcomed and taken seriously. By evoking God, and

religious words and phrases in their comments, these users offered an alternative perspective of Christianity other than that described in the Omotoso trial.

On the other hand, the comments showed that many users only refer to religion or scripture when evoking patriarchal teachings or reprimanding Zondi or another user in the name of God. A key example of users reprimanding Zondi throughout her three-day testimony was when they policed her physical appearance and emotional endurance. Throughout this dissertation, the topic of Zondi's credibility based on her physical appearance was discussed. In the section, 'credible rape victim', it became evident that social media users grounded Zondi's credibility on her current appearance and ability to compose herself during the aggressive cross-examination and not on the appearance of fourteen-year-old Zondi.

7.4.2. Your body is your temple

The second example of religious institutions and societal influence is purity, male entitlement, and double standards. Children are taught in church, schools, and at home from a young age about morality and virtues. A popular lesson directed explicitly at girls is that young, unmarried women are expected to remain 'pure' until marriage. It was apparent in the comments that quite a few users had that expectation of Zondi. To a great extent, a few users came across as upset towards Zondi for the occurrence of her abuse. The users suggested if she reported Omotoso earlier, she might have protected her purity. Daubermann even went to the extent to say that 'she knew that he would rape' (Zondi, 2018c). In contrast, the social media users who expected Zondi to avoid the violation does not hold Omotoso accountable for violating her and making her 'impure'.

In addition to being frowned upon by the social media users because of her lack of purity, the users ridiculed Zondi for speaking openly about her experience of sexual abuse. The comments indicated users thought that it was taboo for women to be open about their sexual encounters. Religious institutions shame women for being sexual beings and teach that women are forbidden to talk about their sexuality (Pereira and Ibrahim, 2010:922). However, some comments seem to be contradictory. The users shamed Zondi for openly discussing details of her abuse in the courtroom. Yet, they strongly asserted if she discussed her abuse with an adult or reported it to the police at an earlier stage, she might have prevented the continuation of her abuse. The contradiction was also evident when Daubermann cross-examined Zondi. Most social media users were appalled by the cross-examination, yet Daubermann insisted and

Page | 113

probed Zondi to answer with more detail. When she answered it with detail, social media users vilified her for being well acquainted with the anatomy of the sexual organs.

Several users in this section presented their comments as being more concerned about Zondi's innocence and purity than the issue of clergy sexual abuse as a whole. The comments also indicated that many are still conditioned to believe that chastity teachings only apply to women.

7.4.3. Women should be weak and submissive

The third example of religious institutions and societal influence prominent in the comments was the idea that men are expected to be masculine and aggressive, and women passive and submissive (Takyi and Adda, 2002; Kambarami, 2006). It is visible in the section, 'Social media users offer Zondi support' that quite a few male users still practice and preach this norm. However, in contrast to those users, it was evident that several users were aware of this patriarchal religious norm and commended Zondi for challenging this norm. When Zondi took the witness stand, she broke the predetermined standard of a 'woman being weak' and exhibited inner strength, which many might not expect from a victim.

Nevertheless, the social media users received her extraordinary display of strength and courage well. There were 127 comments of admiration towards Zondi for her bravery and confidence and additional comments that display approval and support of her not allowing Daubermann to intimidate her. The specific words and phrases used by the users challenged the everyday discourse of weak women. Instead, it was a language and tone of empowerment that deconstructs the discursive language that describes women.

7.5. Race as an influence

Social media users' comments implied that Zondi's social identity determined the respect and power the justice system afforded her. To understand this dynamic, one needs to interrogate the history of rape and racism in South Africa. Gqola (2015:43) suggests that "slavocratic society created the stereotype of African hypersexuality which sought to justify and authorise the institutionalised rape of slaves. The stereotypes held that slave women could not be raped since, like all Africans, they were excessively sexual and impossible to satiate." Jenni Irish (1993:7) indicates that in South Africa, the rape of black women is so prolific that "it was just accepted by everyone; social workers, doctors, policemen and even the victim herself. A black

Page | 114

women's life was considered valueless, and what happened to her unimportant." As seen with Zondi, and many others, when a black woman reports her perpetrator and seeks justice, she instead gets revictimised or is discouraged from taking matters further.

Social media users believed that if Zondi were a white woman, more respect and humility would be recognisable during the cross-examination. Perhaps Zondi would not have been revictimised. The users were infuriated by Daubermann's treatment of Zondi and how he defied the Judge on numerous occasions despite being reprimanded.

i.   *"The lawyer is acting like that [because] she's a black girl. If she w[ere] white, this would have been a quick conviction with no extra bullshit questions"* (Zondi comments, 2018e)

ii. *"Racism is still a huge factor in South Africa. The white lawyer is bullying everyone" (Zondi comments, 2018e)*

iii. *"They seem to be afraid of the white guy"* (Zondi comments, 2018e)

iv. *"What a disrespectful lawyer. Why did the judge allow him to behave this way? I think he is taking advantage due to his race, period!"* (Zondi comments, 2018e)

v.   *"The white lawyer did not respect the black judge's authority. Why is he not being held in contempt for arguing with the judge?! Whose courtroom is it?!"* (Zondi comments, 2018e)

A tactic used by Daubermann in his cross-examination was to embarrass Zondi and imply that she was partly responsible for her abuse. Shailja Patel (2010) asserts that in order to understand how power works in societies, we need to interrogate who are the ones who hold power and who is doing the shaming. Gqola (2015:38) supports Patel's claim by emphasising that shame is a function of oppression. It is determined by who is valued and who is invisible in society. "Shame is the product of dehumanisation, and all systems of violent, oppressive power produce shame in those they brutalise. In white capitalist, white supremacist, heteropatriarchal societies, every form of degradation causes shame" (Gqola, 2015:38). The social media users recognised the power that accompanies being a particular race. They noticed how Daubermann used his privilege to belittle and shame Zondi. More importantly, they questioned Daubermann's arrogant behaviour towards the Judge, who was supposed to have the highest form of power and control in the courtroom. Therefore, these users cannot engage with Zondi's story without recognising the role of white supremacy, which significantly shapes how the public receives her narrative.

7.6. Digital Communities of influence

This project has already addressed the debate around to what extent mass media creates public opinion, attitudes, perceptions, and culture or to what extent it reflects existing attitudes, perceptions, and culture. There is a growing trend amongst the comments; when a user commented something significant or noteworthy, a few others join in and repeat the same word or term. For example, below the video testimony *Omotoso trial - Cheryl Zondi wraps up her testimony Part 2* (Zondi comments, 2018e), a user posted the words *'girl power'*. A short while later, three other users said *'girl power,'* nothing else, and one said *'girl power to you, Ma Zondi.'* Below the video testimony, *Cheryl stands firm* (Zondi comments, 2018f); a user commented, *'The lawyer trying to break her not knowing that she's a Womandla. Justice for Cheryl Zondi'*. Underneath the same video, five other people used the term *'Womandla'* in their comments. The final example is below the video *First Witness Takes the Stand* (Zondi comments, 2018d). A user referred to Zondi as a *'lioness'* almost immediately after that comment; two other users did as well.
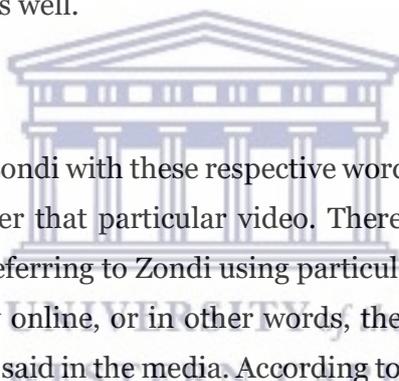
The uniqueness of referring to Zondi with these respective words is that these individuals only mention the specific word under that particular video. Therefore, it is no coincidence that several social media users are referring to Zondi using particular metaphors. They are merely following a trend that they saw online, or in other words, their response was influenced by what social media users already said in the media. According to Darmon (2014:701), feminists create a free space without domination, an area where the editorial collective and readers can exchange social media views. Social media users use internet technologies to create spaces online that are empowering to women. Muslim (2019:161) maintains that women's rights activists can now "create alternative ideas around identity politics, citizenship, and political participation in mediated discursive spaces." Therefore, it is not necessarily wrong when social media users follow a particular trend. They create activism using that specific word or phrase, which might later become a 'hashtag'. Jesse Fox, Carlos Cruz, and Ji Young Lee (2015:437) explain that social media users use hashtags to establish topical links. Using hashtags before words or phrases in a post allows the posts to be categorised. It also makes it easier for users to find posts relating to a specific topic (Fox, Cruz, and Lee, 2015:437). If a hashtag goes viral, users will create more exposure and activism around a particular case. Therefore, these publics chose to repeatedly call Zondi to refer to Zondi with affirming words, such as 'womandla' and 'lioness', hoping to establish a viral trend in the media.

Dana Rotman, Sarah Vieweg, Sarita Yardi, Ed H. Chi, Jenny Preece, Ben Shneiderman, Peter Pirolli, and Tom Glaisyer (2011:820) highlight that participation via social media might "lead to the development of social media tools that can work to increase the motivation and ability of users to participate in social change." However, one needs to question the merit of social participation through social media to create practical activism. Marko M. Skoric (2012:77) suggests that "online activism frequently manifests as mere voicing of opinions, posting of comments and links, and 'liking' of certain groups and causes. It has been criticised as a pointless exercise that does more to make the participant feel good about themselves than to address important political and social matters." The term used for this action is "slacktivism". Slacktivism can be defined as low-risk, low-cost, minimal effort activity via social media. Its purpose is to raise awareness, produce change, and grant satisfaction to the person engaged in the activity (Rotman *et al.*, 2011; Skoric, 2012).

These social media users could be considered as 'slacktivist' for merely following a social media trend. Their comments are also limited to the analysis of this research. It is insubstantial, as they fail to articulate their own opinion or support or challenge patriarchal norms. Therefore, being influenced by digital communities is twofold. On the one hand, it is positive because it could motivate a larger audience to participate in activism. On the other hand, it does not guarantee the occurrence of practical activism or social change.
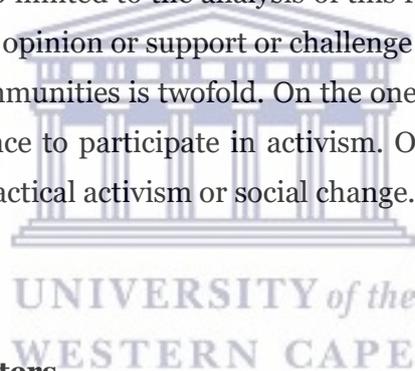
7.7. Loyal Omotoso supporters

There were ninety-three comments of users who made adverse inferences towards Zondi and chose to side with Omotoso. Of these comments, only a few distinctively indicated their alliance with Omotoso. Most of the comments were directed at criticising Zondi. Several social media users did not hesitate to call Zondi a liar. They referred to her as a liar without providing a reason or explaining why they might suspect her of lying. A few users suggested that her story 'does not add up' (Zondi comments, 2018d), that there were 'holes in her testimony,' she was leaving details out (Zondi comments, 2018c), and that she was overconfident, which led to her contradicting herself (Zondi comments, 2018d). One user commented that her testimony seemed 'polished' (Zondi comments, 2018e). Another user indicated that his doubt is due to Zondi saying 'she does not remember' on several occasions. Others were of the opinion that Omotoso did not coerce Zondi because she took too long to escape. They believed this because she was too obedient towards Omotoso, obeyed his every instruction, and returned to the church before reporting the abuse.

Quite a few other social media users share a riveting theory of why they believed Zondi was not truthful. These users suggested that Omotoso and Zondi did not only have consensual sex, but they were in a relationship. Some supported this theory but made additional claims, saying that Zondi wanted more than Omotoso offered her (Zondi comments, 2018d).

i. *"These two were dating, and something went wrong somewhere that made her angry"* (Zondi comments, 2018e)
ii. *"Something tells me that there is more to this case that [sic] we know nothing about. I don't believe this girl! There was a relationship between the two; they just didn't agree on something that led to this"* (Zondi comments, 2018e)
iii. *"Girls are pretty dangerous. They can really put you in hell if their demands and expectations are not met"* (Zondi comments, 2018e)

Above are three examples of theories that individuals shared regarding what happened between Zondi and Omotoso. Several users suggested that money or other material things led to Zondi accusing Omotoso of sexual abuse. These three users were most direct in their comments regarding money:

i. *"She was money hungry and thought she could exploit Omotoso"* (Zondi comments, 2018d)
ii. *"It's money, guys, that is all"* (Zondi comments, 2018e)
iii. *"Maybe the pastor used to give her money and stopped giving her"* (Zondi comments, 2018e)
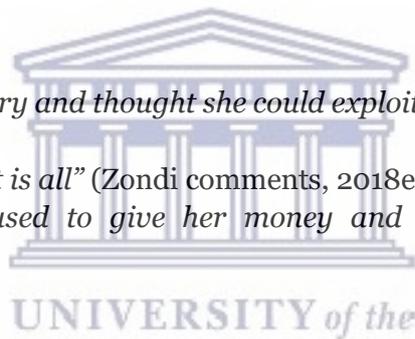
Two users implied that Zondi accusing Omotoso of sexually abusing her is common among women.

i. *"Something big will be uncovered. But I still blame her [Zondi]. She could have walked away, but she was enjoying the whole thing. I still believe if it is not a setup, then she asked Omotoso for a house or car, and he refused. She's not afraid to accuse him of rape, we all know is common with South African women"* (Zondi comments, 2018e)
ii. *"I think ladies need to get proper jobs, instead of choosing to accuse men of rape and nailing them for their own interest"* (Zondi comments, 2018e)

Thus, these comments implied that Zondi accused Omotoso to get back at him or for personal gain. Furthermore, these users made it appear as a norm for women to trick men. Not a single idea implicated Omotoso or hold him responsible for his actions. The responsibility of the violation, or more commonly perceived by these user's 'affair', is solely placed on Zondi.

The following social media users undeniably defended Omotoso, tried to salvage his reputation and claimed his innocence. They maintained that there was nothing wrong with

Daubermann's harsh questioning. If anything, they believed that it was necessary and justified. They were convinced that this was a conspiracy, and Zondi was used to deceive and discredit Omotoso.

i. *"If someone accused you of rape, wouldn't you want your accuser to be thoroughly questioned? I agree that some of the questions were useless, but if you were falsely accused of raping someone, you would want all evidence brought for all to know"* (Zondi comments, 2018c)

ii. *"Alleged victims of any crime have to go through difficult questioning by the defence team. Justice is a two-way street. There are victims and liars, and this is the only way to distinguish them apart. You would be thankful if you were falsely accused of something"* (Zondi comments, 2018c)

iii. *"People's lives get ruined because of women who claimed they were raped. All the questions are necessary, so if she is lying, she will slip up"* (Zondi comments, 2018c)

iv. *"This lady is lying. You can see in her eyes that she is being paid for this"* (Zondi comments, 2018e)

v. *"I don't believe her either. It is a setup! You can't allow someone to rape you more than once"* (Zondi comments, 2018e)

vi. *"We are aware that she is trying to set up Omotoso, but she won't succeed"* (Zondi comments, 2018e)

vii. *"The court deals with evidence, not emotions. Yes, she was [fourteen] when it apparently started, but she was 19 when she willingly returned to the church. According to South African law, she was an adult. She returned to the same church she now claims the pastor is abusing women. Why didn't she go to another church after discovering that Omotoso is not a man of God? Equal law needs to be applied to everyone, regardless of your gender or whether or not you are really a child of God"* (Zondi comments, 2018e).

Not only do these comments suggest that these users believed Omotoso was innocent. They demanded that the public and court treat him as an equal to Zondi - that is, sharing equal power. These users tried to convince others that Zondi's accusations were possibly a personal vendetta against Omotoso. More so, they made it seem as if Omotoso needed protection against Zondi and her possibly false allegations. These loyal supporters have not all sworn to Omotoso's loyalty, yet they are devoted to the perpetrators. They practised and preached the patriarchal norms of male privilege. To these users, it is easier, or it makes more sense to blame the victim of the abuse.

The irony is that these same social media users acknowledged that sexual abuse is a massive problem in society. Yet, they do not recognise what is enabling it. Patriarchy promotes rape culture. Gqola (2015) maintains that South African citizens should take rape more seriously and contribute to ensuring harsher consequences. "Society places so much pressure on women

to talk about rape, to access counselling and get legal services to process rape, but very seldom do we talk about the rapist. We run the dangers of speaking about rape as a perpetrator-less crime" (Gqola, 2015:7). She further argues: "There is a connection between rape culture, the manufacturing of female fear, and violent masculinities. Violent masculinities create a public consciousness in which violence is not just accepted and justified, but also natural and desirable" (Gqola, 2015:152). In other words, this pervasive culture means attacking those who stand up for themselves and report violent men. This behaviour is evident with the Omotoso supporters.

7.8. Conclusion

The analysis made in this chapter was guided by Lazar's (2014) five essential elements of FCDA. This analytical method enabled me to investigate why social media users engaged with Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse in the ways which they did. Altogether, I concluded that there are six possibilities why users would engage with the narrative in these particular ways. The first possibility was that users wanted to evoke change amongst individuals in society. Their aim is that society changes how they deal with cases of sexual abuse, rape myths, and social and gender norms. By creating awareness and evoking social change, these users hope that abuse victims will no longer be blamed for their abuse, and violations will no longer be treated as a perpetrator-less crime. The second possibility is that social media users rely on their religious and social upbringing, which dominates their worldviews regarding matters of sexual violence. As a result, they were conditioned to engage with certain topics from a specific perspective and were limited to that view. Other users could only engage with the narrative from a racial standpoint. These users assert that the past racial inequalities where white men dominated specific settings are still visible within the courtroom. They also believed that if Zondi was not a black woman, there was a likelihood that she would not have experienced revictimisation.

A few users did not express their own opinion with regards to the testimony and trial. Instead, they repeated the sentiments of others. As a result of the repetition, I questioned whether online activism is effective in practical action or if users engage in 'slacktivism'. The final suggestion is that some users are loyal Omotoso supporters, and therefore, engaged with the narrative accordingly. Although only a few users disclosed that they were Omotoso supporters, the rest in this category seemed to support and defend perpetrators in general. They claimed

that Zondi, like many other women, accused men of abusing them due to having a personal vendetta and seeking revenge.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was two-fold. The first task was to create a thick description of Cheryl Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse in order to understand the narrative. The second task of the research was to identify how social media users supported or challenged patriarchal religious understandings of gender and power in the context of clergy sexual abuse. Three critical research questions defined the study:

1. What is Cheryl Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse?
2. How do social media users engage with Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse?
3. Why do social media users engage with the narrative in the way that they do?

I would argue that my study's main contribution is a methodological one, in that it examines how online communities engage with patriarchal religious understandings of gender and power, in the context of clergy sexual abuse.

Through a feminist narrative inquiry, I was able to create a thick description of Zondi's testimony, as it enabled me to organise the narrative in chronological order. By placing her narrative in chronological order, readers received a more detailed account of her experience. Through this restructuring of the narrative, it also became evident how Omotoso groomed and manipulated Zondi into compliance and silence. Through narrative inquiry, I identified, described and analysed constitutive elements of abuse, such as manipulation, fear, spiritual and psychological abuse in the story of Zondi's experience. The most significant aspect of using narrative inquiry to retell Zondi's narrative is that this method enabled the narrative to be told in its crudest form and Zondi's authentic voice as she experienced it. The narrative was written with Zondi's perspective in mind, and the details divulged derived from her testimony and not a second-hand account told by a reporter. Direct quotes from Zondi's testimony was included in the narrative for readers to experience an account of Zondi's unpolished trauma and abuse.

The second data set was the comments made by social media users below Zondi's testimony. After translating, organising, and coding the initial 903 comments, I filtered the comments through feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA). By utilising FCDA to read the comments

closely, I identified gender stereotypes, sexism, patriarchy and discriminatory, and prejudice discourses. In addition to the negative connotations present in the comments, I also recognised how social media users identified and challenged rape culture, the enormous amount of support offered to Zondi, the occurrence of online activism, and how many users disassociated themselves with patriarchal norms and teachings. This analytical tool was beneficial in determining how social media users supported or challenged patriarchal religious understandings of gender and power.

By moving beyond 'how' users engaged with Zondi's narrative and interrogating 'why' they engaged with the narrative the way they did. I was able to theorise the ways in which social media users supported or challenged patriarchal religious understandings of gender power. I was also able to determine why they supported or challenged these norms and what led them to think and respond in that particular way.
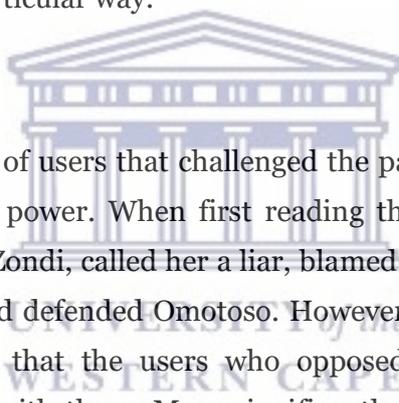
I was surprised by the number of users that challenged the patriarchal religious norms and understandings of gender and power. When first reading through the comments, several comments harshly scrutinised Zondi, called her a liar, blamed her for the abuse, agreed with patriarchal religious norms, and defended Omotoso. However, upon a closer reading of the comments, it became evident that the users who opposed patriarchal religious norms outweighed those who agreed with them. More significantly, when a user spoke poorly of Zondi, other users would come to her defence and stand up for her. Analysing the YouTube comments taught me that YouTube and its comment section are significant spaces for activism, public opinion, and community building that do not receive enough attention from scholars.

In this online space, communities were formed, users felt comfortable sharing their own stories of abuse and comforted each other. Users were able to engage with key aspects of the trial and share their opinions and debate. In this case, researching and analysing YouTube comments has proven valuable in understanding how people reacted and engaged on topics that usually have restricted public engagement. Zondi's testimony on YouTube allowed more people to hear her testimony and engage with it, unlike with the usual courtroom setting where only those present could listen.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the Omotoso trial was more accessible than any other trial. I did not account for the emotional impact of listening to the trial and reading all the comments, especially how difficult it would be to process and write about. This journey has been even more traumatic, processing the prosecution as a woman living in South Africa who constantly fears that someone would violate or murder me. When social media users commented on Zondi's testimony, it was evident that her testimony both triggered and comforted women. On the one hand, Zondi's testimony reminded users of the pain and suffering caused by abuse. On the other hand, it encouraged some users to speak up about their experiences of abuse and 'claim their status as survivors.'

This research extends our knowledge of using YouTube as a site to produce and present narratives and a site to engage with online communities to discuss and debate issues such as clergy sexual abuse. The study adds to the growing body of literature on clergy sexual abuse. Clergy sexual abuse is extensively discussed internationally by scholars. However, it is restricted in an African context despite its prevalence in several churches. This study also confirms Scharnick-Udemans' (2017) findings, which found that literature on religion, media, and gender from the African context is almost invisible in the scholarship.

As stated at the beginning, research on clergy sexual abuse has been limited to research methods that rely on court transcripts or interviews and focus group discussions. This study is likely one of the very few studies that examine the advantage of using YouTube as a site to study clergy sexual abuse and construct a narrative of clergy sexual abuse based on video testimony. The literature has shown that clergy sexual abuse is primarily studied with regard to the psychological consequences and the clergy sexual abuser and his character. Although the literature discussed spiritual abuse as a gateway to sexual abuse, this dissertation emphasised the emotional and psychological abuse accompanying clergy sexual abuse. Therefore, this in-depth analysis of Zondi's video testimony enabled readers to understand the general facts and the whole narrative of clergy sexual abuse from the victim's perspective.

Traditional qualitative methods rely on conventional methods such as interviews, survey, and focus groups to collect their data. For this study, I chose to explore a different research method by constructing Zondi's narrative of clergy sexual abuse by engaging with her video testimony on YouTube, and by reading her interviews with journalists. Consequently, I compiled a thick

description of Zondi's account of clergy sexual abuse. I was able to organise her narrative in a chronological sequence, and identified critical elements such as time, place, plot, and scene, as well as add rich details to provide a fuller narrative. Constructing a narrative in this way is a novel way of conducting research and can be seen as supplementary to conventional means of collecting data. Overall, this dissertation provides crucial insights regarding patriarchal religious norms relating to gender and sexuality that are essential for researchers interested in how individuals engage with sexual and faith-based norms, in the context of sexual violence generally, and clergy sexual abuse specifically.

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