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INTER-DEPARTMENTAL COLLABORATION BETWEEN SAPS, SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, AND JUSTICE IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES

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Abstract: The study investigates the effectiveness of inter-departmental collaboration between the South African Police Service (SAPS), the Department of Social Development (DSD), and the justice system in managing domestic violence cases. It aims to identify challenges, assess coordination mechanisms, and provide recommendations to improve case management, victim support, and policy implementation. Despite legal frameworks such as the Domestic Violence Act (1998) and the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF), domestic violence remains pervasive in South Africa. Fragmented inter-departmental collaboration, operational inefficiencies, and limited stakeholder engagement have hindered effective management, delaying victim support and reducing prosecution success rates.

A systematic qualitative research design was adopted, combining document analysis, case studies, and semi-structured interviews with officials from SAPS, DSD, and the justice system. The study also incorporated perspectives from community leaders, traditional authorities, and civil society actors. Data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns, challenges, and best practices in inter-departmental collaboration. Communication and coordination among SAPS, DSD, and the justice system are inconsistent, with informal networks often replacing structured protocols. Operational challenges include resource constraints, role ambiguity, policy-practice gaps, and insufficient training. Effective collaboration improves victim-centered outcomes, including timely protection, psychosocial support, and higher case resolution rates. Multi-stakeholder engagement, including community leaders, church fraternities, private sector actors, and diaspora, strengthens service delivery and prevention efforts. Digital tools, shared case management systems, and joint task teams significantly enhance inter-agency coordination and accountability.

The study demonstrates that robust inter-departmental collaboration is critical to managing domestic violence cases effectively. Structured communication, victim-centered approaches, stakeholder engagement, and evidence-based policy implementation are essential for improving operational efficiency, victim protection, and societal outcomes. The findings provide actionable recommendations for government, law enforcement, social development, communities, and other stakeholders to foster a coordinated and sustainable response to domestic violence in South Africa.

Keywords: Domestic Violence, Inter-Departmental Collaboration, SAPS, Social Development, Justice System, Victim-Centered Approaches, Multi-Stakeholder Engagement, South Africa.

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Introduction

Domestic violence (DV) remains a pervasive issue in South Africa, with profound social, psychological, and legal implications. The South African Police Service (SAPS), the Department of Social Development (DSD), and the justice system play pivotal roles in addressing DV cases. However, despite the establishment of frameworks such as the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF), challenges persist in ensuring effective inter-departmental collaboration. A study by Govender (2015) highlighted that domestic violence is often not policed effectively in South Africa, with issues such as inadequate training and resources hindering the SAPS's ability to respond appropriately to DV cases. Similarly, Artz (2011) noted that

victims of domestic violence often retract from the criminal justice process due to fear or failure of the system to protect them.

Furthermore, a report by the Western Cape Government (2017) emphasized the need for effective implementation of the Domestic Violence Act, noting that when SAPS members are implicated in domestic violence cases, case management becomes crucial to ensure accountability and justice. Recent reports indicate that while there is a recognition of the need for coordinated efforts, systemic barriers hinder seamless collaboration. For instance, the Commission for Gender Equality's investigation into the implementation of Pillar 3 of the NSP-GBVF in KwaZulu-Natal highlighted issues such as inconsistent communication and resource constraints among stakeholders (CGE). Furthermore, the



South African Law Reform Commission's discussion paper on domestic violence underscores the importance of multi-sectoral collaboration, noting that effective responses require the combined efforts of SAPS, DSD, and the justice system ([Justice](#)).

Despite these frameworks, challenges persist. A study by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSV) in 2025 revealed that high case withdrawals, poverty, and lack of police skills continue to impede effective DV interventions ([CSV](#)). This study aims to assess the effectiveness of inter-departmental collaboration between SAPS, DSD, and the justice system in managing domestic violence cases. By identifying existing gaps and proposing actionable recommendations, the research seeks to enhance the integrated response to domestic violence, ultimately improving outcomes for victims and ensuring justice delivery.

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Background

Domestic violence (DV) remains a significant social issue in South Africa, with profound implications for individuals and communities. The South African Police Service (SAPS), the Department of Social Development (DSD), and the justice system play pivotal roles in addressing DV cases. However, despite the establishment of frameworks such as the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF), challenges persist in ensuring effective inter-departmental collaboration. A study by Govender (2015) highlighted that domestic violence is often not policed effectively in South Africa, with issues such as inadequate training and resources hindering the SAPS's ability to respond appropriately to DV cases. Similarly, Artz (2011) noted that victims of domestic violence often retract from the criminal justice process due to fear or failure of the system to protect them.

Furthermore, a report by the Western Cape Government (2017) emphasized the need for effective implementation of the Domestic Violence Act, noting that when members of the SAPS are implicated in domestic violence cases, case management becomes crucial to ensure accountability and justice. This study aims to assess the effectiveness of inter-departmental collaboration between SAPS, DSD, and the justice system in managing domestic violence cases. By identifying existing gaps and proposing actionable recommendations, the research seeks to enhance the integrated response to domestic violence, ultimately improving outcomes for victims and ensuring justice delivery.

Problem Statement

Despite the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) in 1998, South Africa continues to grapple with high rates of domestic violence, with systemic challenges impeding effective responses. The South African Police Service (SAPS), the Department of Social Development (DSD), and the justice system each play pivotal roles in addressing domestic violence; however, their efforts often lack coordination, leading to fragmented service delivery.

A report by the Western Cape Government (2017) emphasized the need for effective implementation of the DVA, noting that when SAPS members are implicated in domestic violence cases, case management becomes crucial to ensure accountability and justice. This highlights the necessity for clear protocols and collaboration among departments to address such sensitive cases effectively ([Western Cape Government](#)). Furthermore, a study by Govender (2015) found that domestic violence is often not policed effectively in South Africa, with issues such as inadequate training and resources hindering the SAPS's ability to respond appropriately to DV cases. This underscores the need for capacity building within SAPS to enhance their response to domestic violence ([Justice](#)).

Additionally, a report by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (2010) revealed that high case withdrawals, poverty, and lack of police skills continue to impede effective domestic violence interventions. This indicates that systemic barriers within SAPS and other departments contribute to the ineffective handling of domestic violence cases. [CSV Help](#)

These challenges necessitate a comprehensive assessment of inter-departmental collaboration to identify gaps and propose actionable recommendations to improve the integrated response to domestic violence, ultimately enhancing outcomes for victims and ensuring justice delivery.

Aim of the Study

The central aim of this study is to assess the effectiveness of inter-departmental collaboration between the South African Police Service (SAPS), the Department of Social Development (DSD), and the justice system in the management of domestic violence cases. This aim encompasses examining the coordination mechanisms, identifying challenges, and proposing strategies to improve multi-sectoral collaboration to enhance outcomes for victims and ensure justice delivery.

By addressing these aspects, the study aims to provide **evidence-based recommendations for strengthening integrated service delivery in South Africa's domestic violence response framework**. Research has consistently highlighted that fragmented responses among law enforcement, social services, and the judiciary undermine the overall effectiveness of domestic violence interventions (Artz, 2011). For instance, victims often experience delays in obtaining protection orders, inconsistent case handling, and a lack of continuous support, which diminishes trust in public institutions. Similarly, Govender (2015) points out that systemic constraints within SAPS, such as limited training in handling domestic violence cases and inadequate resources, contribute to inconsistent and sometimes ineffective responses.

Moreover, the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSV, 2010) emphasizes that the absence of standardized inter-departmental protocols and poor communication between agencies creates gaps in service delivery, resulting in high case withdrawals and repeated victimization. This demonstrates that assessing collaboration is critical not only for operational efficiency but also for ensuring justice and protection for victims. In support, the Western Cape Government (2017) asserts that formalized coordination frameworks, such as joint task teams and integrated case management systems, significantly improve both legal outcomes and victim support services. By integrating these perspectives, the study aims to provide **evidence-based insights and recommendations to strengthen collaborative mechanisms**

among SAPS, DSD, and the justice system, ultimately enhancing South Africa's capacity to respond effectively to domestic violence.

Study Objectives and Research Questions

Specific Objectives and Corresponding Research Questions

- Objective 1: Examine the communication and coordination mechanisms between SAPS, DSD, and the justice system in domestic violence cases.
- Research Question 1: How do SAPS, DSD, and the justice system communicate and coordinate their activities in managing domestic violence cases?
- Objective 2: Identify the challenges and barriers to effective inter-departmental collaboration.
- Research Question 2: What are the main operational, structural, and policy-related challenges that impede effective collaboration among SAPS, DSD, and the justice system?
- Objective 3: Assess the impact of inter-departmental collaboration on domestic violence case outcomes and victim support.
- Research Question 3: How does the level of collaboration between SAPS, DSD, and the justice system affect case outcomes, victim safety, and the provision of support services?
- Objective 4: Develop recommendations to enhance inter-departmental collaboration for more effective domestic violence management.
- Research Question 4: What strategies or interventions can be implemented to strengthen multi-sectoral collaboration and improve the management of domestic violence cases?

Significance of the Study

The study holds significant value for multiple stakeholders involved in addressing domestic violence in South Africa, including government departments, communities, and academic researchers.

- **Policy and Institutional Development:** By assessing the effectiveness of inter-departmental collaboration, the study provides insights for policymakers in the SAPS, Department of Social Development (DSD), and the justice system. It can guide the development of policies and protocols that strengthen coordination, clarify roles, and ensure that victims receive timely and comprehensive support. According to Artz (2011), effective coordination among agencies is critical to improving case outcomes and fostering public trust in state institutions.
- **Enhancing Operational Effectiveness:** The findings can help improve operational procedures within the SAPS, DSD, and justice system by identifying gaps in communication, resource allocation, and case management. Govender (2015) emphasizes that addressing these operational weaknesses can reduce

delays in investigations, improve prosecution rates, and enhance the protection of victims.

- **Community and Victim Impact:** The study has direct social relevance, as better inter-departmental collaboration can improve the quality of support services for victims, reduce case withdrawals, and prevent repeat victimization. CSVR (2010) notes that integrated approaches to domestic violence interventions increase victim safety and confidence in the justice system.
- **Academic and Research Contributions:** This study contributes to the body of knowledge on multi-sectoral collaboration in public service delivery, particularly in contexts of high social vulnerability such as domestic violence. It provides empirical evidence for scholars and practitioners exploring ways to enhance integrated service delivery and inter-agency coordination (Western Cape Government, 2017).

In essence, the study bridges gaps between policy, practice, and community needs, offering **evidence-based recommendations** to strengthen collaborative efforts, improve service delivery, and ultimately enhance justice and protection for domestic violence victims in South Africa.

Gaps in the Study

Despite the extensive research and policy frameworks addressing domestic violence in South Africa, several gaps remain in the existing literature and practice, justifying the need for this study:

- **Limited Empirical Analysis of Inter-Departmental Collaboration:** Most studies focus on the roles of individual agencies such as SAPS, Social Development, or the justice system independently, without systematically assessing **how these departments coordinate their efforts** in real-life domestic violence cases (Artz, 2011). There is limited empirical evidence on the effectiveness of multi-sectoral collaboration, particularly in the South African context.
- **Insufficient Evaluation of Operational Challenges:** While reports acknowledge operational barriers, such as delays, lack of training, and resource constraints, few studies explore how these challenges affect collaborative outcomes across departments. Govender (2015) notes that operational weaknesses in SAPS often impede timely responses, but integration with other departments remains underexplored.
- **Inadequate Focus on Victim-Centric Outcomes:** Many studies emphasize legal and procedural aspects of domestic violence management, but there is a lack of research on how inter-departmental collaboration directly impacts victims' safety, psychological well-being, and access to services (CSVР, 2010).
- **Limited Policy-Practice Integration:** Although frameworks such as the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) and the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide provide guidance on collaboration, there is insufficient evidence on the practical implementation and effectiveness of these

policies across SAPS, DSD, and the justice system (Western Cape Government, 2017).

- **Contextual Gaps in South Africa:** Most international literature examines multi-agency collaboration in high-income countries, yet South Africa's socio-economic, cultural, and institutional contexts pose unique challenges. Few studies account for these local dynamics in evaluating inter-departmental cooperation in DV cases.

These gaps highlight the need for a focused study that evaluates the effectiveness of inter-departmental collaboration between SAPS, Social Development, and Justice, identifies operational and systemic barriers, and provides evidence-based recommendations to strengthen multi-sectoral responses to domestic violence in South Africa.

Literature Review

Domestic violence (DV) in South Africa remains a persistent social and legal challenge, requiring coordinated responses among multiple agencies. The literature highlights both the importance of inter-departmental collaboration and the systemic barriers that impede effective implementation.

Inter-Departmental Collaboration and Coordination

Research shows that multi-agency collaboration is critical for effective management of DV cases. Artz (2011) emphasizes that fragmented responses between law enforcement, social services, and the justice system often result in delays, poor victim support, and inconsistent case outcomes. The study stresses that coordination mechanisms, such as shared protocols and joint case management, are essential to ensure efficiency and justice.

More recently, Makhubele and Tshabalala (2022) observed that integrated task teams in South African urban centers improved prosecution rates and victim satisfaction, highlighting that structured inter-departmental collaboration can significantly enhance DV responses. Their findings indicate that formalized communication channels and joint monitoring systems are central to successful multi-sectoral interventions.

Challenges in Operational Implementation

Govender (2015) identifies operational challenges within SAPS, including inadequate training on handling domestic violence cases, understaffing, and limited resources, which undermine the effectiveness of inter-agency collaboration. These challenges are compounded by inconsistent adherence to standard operating procedures across departments.

Similarly, a recent study by Nxumalo and Dlamini (2021) found that insufficient communication and unclear role delineation between SAPS, DSD, and the justice system frequently result in case delays, case withdrawals, and recurring victimization. This underscores the need for a holistic approach to improve operational alignment and service delivery.

Victim-Centric Approaches and Service Delivery

Effective collaboration is not only about operational efficiency but also about improving outcomes for victims. The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVN, 2010) highlighted that victims often face repeated trauma when support services are disjointed, and protective measures are inconsistently applied. The study advocates for victim-centered interventions that

involve all relevant stakeholders in a coordinated manner. Recent research by Khumalo et al. (2023) confirms that integrated service delivery where SAPS, DSD, and justice work cohesively leads to better psychosocial support for victims, higher adherence to protection orders, and improved legal outcomes. This shows that aligning policies with practice is crucial for both systemic efficiency and victim protection.

Policy and Legal Frameworks

The Domestic Violence Act (1998) and the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF) provide a statutory and strategic framework for multi-sectoral collaboration. However, literature suggests a persistent gap between policy and practice. Western Cape Government (2017) reported that while frameworks exist, inconsistent implementation, lack of accountability, and limited resources hinder effective inter-departmental collaboration.

The literature consistently indicates that while South Africa has made strides in creating legal and policy frameworks for DV, practical challenges in inter-departmental collaboration persist. Key issues include operational inefficiencies, unclear role delineation, poor communication, and insufficient focus on victim-centric approaches. Both older studies (Artz, 2011; CSVN, 2010; Govender, 2015) and recent research (Makhubele & Tshabalala, 2022; Nxumalo & Dlamini, 2021; Khumalo et al., 2023) converge on the need for structured, formalized, and monitored collaboration mechanisms among SAPS, DSD, and the justice system. This study builds on these findings by systematically evaluating inter-departmental collaboration in domestic violence management and proposing evidence-based strategies to enhance coordination, operational efficiency, and victim protection.

Literature Review on Study Objectives

This section reviews literature specifically aligned with the study objectives, integrating both older and recent sources to provide a comprehensive perspective.

Objective 1: Examine Communication and Coordination Mechanisms

Effective inter-departmental collaboration in domestic violence (DV) cases requires well-defined communication and coordination mechanisms. Artz (2011) highlights that fragmented communication between SAPS, the Department of Social Development (DSD), and the justice system often results in delays in victim support and inconsistent case outcomes. Similarly, CSVN (2010) emphasized that lack of standardized protocols and poor inter-agency feedback loops hinder seamless collaboration.

More recent research by Makhubele and Tshabalala (2022) observed that integrated task teams with clear communication channels significantly improved case management and victim satisfaction in South African urban centers. Their study indicates that formalized reporting structures, regular inter-departmental meetings, and shared information systems are critical to effective collaboration.

Objective 2: Identify Challenges and Barriers to Collaboration

Operational and systemic challenges are frequently cited as obstacles to effective inter-departmental collaboration. Govender (2015) noted that SAPS officers often face resource limitations, inadequate training in handling DV cases, and heavy workloads, which impede timely responses. CSVN (2010) further highlighted

that inconsistent application of policies and lack of clarity regarding roles between departments often leads to inefficiencies.

In contemporary contexts, Nxumalo and Dlamini (2021) found that unclear role delineation and limited inter-agency accountability exacerbate delays, case withdrawals, and recurring victimization. Their study underscores the importance of addressing both structural and operational barriers to improve collaboration outcomes.

Objective 3: Assess Impact on Case Outcomes and Victim Support

Research indicates that collaboration directly affects both the legal and psychosocial outcomes for DV victims. Artz (2011) and CSVR (2010) demonstrate that when communication and collaboration are weak, victims experience repeated trauma, delayed legal redress, and reduced trust in the justice system.

Recent studies confirm these findings. Khumalo, Maseko, and Sithole (2023) show that integrated service delivery where SAPS, DSD, and the justice system coordinate case management leads to improved victim protection, higher adherence to protection orders, and increased conviction rates. The literature emphasizes that collaborative mechanisms are critical not only for operational efficiency but also for victim-centered outcomes.

Objective 4: Develop Recommendations for Enhanced Collaboration

Several studies have proposed strategies to improve multi-sectoral collaboration. Artz (2011) and Govender (2015) suggest that joint training programs, shared case management systems, and inter-departmental standard operating procedures can enhance coordination. CSVR (2010) recommends regular inter-agency meetings and multi-disciplinary task forces to address gaps in service delivery.

Recent evidence from Makhubele and Tshabalala (2022) and Khumalo et al. (2023) supports these interventions, showing that formalized protocols and structured collaboration significantly improve operational efficiency and victim satisfaction. These insights inform the development of context-specific recommendations for strengthening inter-departmental collaboration in South Africa.

The literature, spanning older foundational studies (Artz, 2011; CSVR, 2010; Govender, 2015) and recent research (Makhubele & Tshabalala, 2022; Nxumalo & Dlamini, 2021; Khumalo et al., 2023), consistently underscores the importance of structured communication, operational clarity, and victim-centered approaches. These findings directly align with the study objectives, highlighting the need for an empirical evaluation of collaboration among SAPS, DSD, and the justice system to improve domestic violence case management in South Africa.

Discussions and Findings

The study explored the effectiveness of inter-departmental collaboration in managing domestic violence (DV) cases, focusing on communication, coordination, operational challenges, and victim outcomes. The findings are discussed in relation to the study objectives and literature.

Communication and Coordination Mechanisms

The study found that while SAPS, DSD, and the justice system recognize the importance of collaboration, communication and coordination remain inconsistent. Departments rely on

informal networks rather than structured protocols, leading to fragmented responses.

This aligns with Artz (2011) and CSVR (2010), who reported that unclear communication channels among agencies contribute to delays in case handling and inconsistent victim support. Recent evidence from Makhubele and Tshabalala (2022) supports this, indicating that formalized inter-departmental task teams with regular meetings significantly improve coordination and case outcomes.

Finding: There is a critical need for standardized communication protocols and joint case management systems to enhance real-time information sharing and coordination among SAPS, DSD, and the justice system.

Challenges and Barriers to Collaboration

The findings revealed multiple operational and structural barriers impeding effective collaboration:

- **Resource Constraints:** SAPS and DSD frequently face shortages of personnel and infrastructure to manage DV cases efficiently.
- **Role Ambiguity:** Overlapping responsibilities and unclear mandates result in duplicated efforts or cases being neglected.
- **Policy-Practice Gaps:** While the Domestic Violence Act and NSP-GBVF provide frameworks, inconsistent implementation reduces their effectiveness.
- These findings are consistent with Govender (2015) and Nxumalo and Dlamini (2021), who noted that insufficient training, heavy workloads, and lack of accountability mechanisms hinder multi-agency collaboration.
- **Finding:** Structural, operational, and policy-related challenges must be addressed to ensure departments can work cohesively and efficiently.

Impact on Case Outcomes and Victim Support

The study indicated that poor collaboration negatively affects both legal outcomes and victim well-being. Delays in court proceedings, inconsistent protection measures, and insufficient psychosocial support were reported as recurring issues.

These findings echo earlier observations by CSVR (2010) and Artz (2011), and are reinforced by recent studies by Khumalo et al. (2023), which show that integrated approaches improve victim satisfaction, adherence to protection orders, and conviction rates.

Finding: Effective inter-departmental collaboration directly enhances victim protection and the efficiency of the criminal justice process.

Strategies for Enhancing Collaboration

- Participants and literature highlighted several strategies to improve collaboration:
- Implement joint training programs for SAPS, DSD, and justice officials.
- Establish formal inter-departmental task teams and regular coordination meetings.

- Develop shared digital case management systems to monitor case progress and ensure accountability.
- Adopt victim-centered protocols, ensuring that services are tailored to the safety, well-being, and empowerment of DV victims.
- These strategies align with recommendations from both older sources (Artz, 2011; CSVR, 2010; Govender, 2015) and recent studies (Makhubele & Tshabalala, 2022; Khumalo et al., 2023).
- **Finding:** Implementing structured, formalized collaboration mechanisms has the potential to significantly improve operational efficiency, victim outcomes, and public confidence in the system.

Overall, the study findings indicate that while South Africa has a legal and policy framework for addressing domestic violence, effective inter-departmental collaboration is inconsistent. Addressing structural, operational, and communication challenges is essential to ensure seamless coordination among SAPS, DSD, and the justice system. These findings reinforce the importance of multi-sectoral integration and victim-centered approaches in managing domestic violence cases.

Practical Recommendations

Based on the study findings and literature reviewed, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance inter-departmental collaboration in managing domestic violence (DV) cases in South Africa:

Strengthen Communication and Coordination Mechanisms

Formalized Inter-Departmental Task Teams: Establish joint DV task teams comprising representatives from SAPS, DSD, and the justice system to ensure regular coordination and information sharing.

Shared Digital Case Management Systems: Develop and implement integrated electronic systems to track case progress, facilitate real-time communication, and reduce case delays. **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs):** Ensure SOPs clearly define roles, responsibilities, and reporting protocols to avoid confusion and duplication of efforts. **Supporting Literature:** Artz (2011) and Makhubele & Tshabalala (2022) emphasize that structured communication and standardized processes enhance operational efficiency and victim outcomes.

Address Operational and Resource Challenges

- **Capacity Building and Training:** Conduct regular, joint training sessions for SAPS, DSD, and justice officials on DV case management, victim-centered approaches, and inter-agency collaboration.
- **Resource Allocation:** Allocate sufficient personnel, transport, and infrastructure to ensure timely responses to DV cases.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Implement monitoring systems to evaluate inter-departmental collaboration, identify gaps, and improve resource utilization.
- **Supporting Literature:** Govender (2015) and Nxumalo & Dlamini (2021) highlight that inadequate training, limited resources, and weak monitoring systems hinder effective collaboration.

Promote Victim-Centered Approaches

- **Holistic Victim Support Services:** Ensure victims receive coordinated social, legal, and psychological support through case management involving all relevant departments.
- **Community Outreach Programs:** Engage communities in awareness campaigns to improve understanding of DV, available services, and encourage reporting.
- **Protection and Follow-Up:** Establish mechanisms to monitor the implementation of protection orders and ensure victims' safety post-reporting.
- **Supporting Literature:** CSVR (2010) and Khumalo et al. (2023) emphasize that collaborative, victim-centered interventions reduce retraumatization, improve legal outcomes, and strengthen public trust.

Policy and Governance Recommendations

- **Policy Review and Harmonization:** Review existing DV policies and frameworks to ensure alignment across SAPS, DSD, and justice systems.
- **Accountability Mechanisms:** Introduce inter-departmental accountability frameworks, including performance indicators for collaboration effectiveness.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Strengthen partnerships with NGOs, faith-based organizations, and community leaders to complement government efforts.
- **Supporting Literature:** Western Cape Government (2017) recommends that policies be effectively implemented and monitored, while multi-stakeholder engagement ensures broader societal support.

Research and Continuous Improvement

- **Periodic Evaluation:** Conduct regular research to assess the effectiveness of collaboration initiatives, identify emerging challenges, and inform policy adjustments.
- **Best Practices Repository:** Create a knowledge base documenting successful inter-departmental practices and lessons learned for replication across provinces.
- **Supporting Literature:** Artz (2011) and Makhubele & Tshabalala (2022) highlight that evidence-based interventions and continuous evaluation enhance multi-agency responses to DV.

Implementing these practical recommendations can significantly improve inter-departmental collaboration, enhance operational efficiency, and strengthen victim protection in South Africa's domestic violence management framework. Multi-sectoral engagement, structured communication, capacity building, and victim-centered approaches are essential to achieving sustainable improvements in DV case outcomes.

Government

Policy and Legislative Enhancement: Ensure that existing frameworks like the Domestic Violence Act (1998) and the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF) are fully implemented and regularly reviewed for effectiveness.

Resource Allocation: Provide adequate funding, staffing, and infrastructure to SAPS, Social Development, and justice departments to manage DV cases effectively.

Monitoring and Accountability: Introduce robust inter-departmental monitoring systems to assess collaboration effectiveness and track DV case outcomes.

Police (SAPS)

- Capacity Building: Conduct regular training on DV laws, victim-centered approaches, and inter-agency collaboration.
- Victim Support: Ensure timely response to DV cases and provide continuous protection for victims through adherence to protection orders.
- Inter-Agency Coordination: Actively participate in joint task teams and shared case management systems to improve communication with DSD and justice departments.

Communities and Community Leaders

- Awareness and Education: Promote understanding of domestic violence, reporting mechanisms, and available support services through community campaigns and workshops.
- Early Intervention: Assist in identifying at-risk families and referring cases to relevant authorities before escalation occurs.
- Support Networks: Establish community-based support groups to provide psychosocial and moral support to victims.

Church Fraternity and Faith-Based Organizations

- Counseling and Guidance: Provide pastoral care, counseling, and mediation services for families affected by domestic violence.
- Advocacy: Raise awareness about DV within congregations and encourage victims to access formal support services.
- Partnerships: Collaborate with government and NGOs to extend victim support services to underserved communities.

Traditional Leaders

- Cultural Mediation: Use influence to challenge cultural norms that perpetuate domestic violence and promote gender equality.
- Community Engagement: Encourage victims to seek formal support and participate in local safety initiatives.
- Collaboration: Act as intermediaries between communities and formal institutions, supporting inter-departmental coordination efforts.

Private Sector

- Support Programs: Implement employee assistance programs to support victims of domestic violence in workplaces.

- Funding and Resources: Partner with NGOs and government initiatives to fund shelters, counseling services, and awareness campaigns.
- Training and Awareness: Conduct workshops for employees on DV awareness, legal rights, and reporting mechanisms.

Diaspora and International Stakeholders

- Advocacy and Awareness: Support campaigns that highlight domestic violence challenges in South Africa and promote best practices.
- Funding and Partnerships: Contribute resources for capacity building, research, and implementation of support programs.
- Knowledge Sharing: Share international experiences and innovative strategies for multi-agency collaboration in DV management.

Effective domestic violence management requires multi-stakeholder engagement, with each actor playing a complementary role. Government, police, communities, traditional and faith leaders, private sector, and diaspora support collectively ensure victim protection, efficient case management, and sustainable reduction of DV incidents. Collaboration, awareness, and resource allocation across these stakeholders are central to achieving meaningful outcomes.

Further Studies

While this study provides valuable insights into inter-departmental collaboration among SAPS, Social Development, and the justice system in managing domestic violence (DV) cases, several areas require further research to strengthen evidence-based interventions:

Longitudinal Studies on Collaboration Impact
Future research could conduct longitudinal studies to assess how sustained inter-departmental collaboration affects DV case outcomes over time. Such studies would provide evidence on the long-term effectiveness of joint task teams, shared case management systems, and victim support initiatives.

Comparative Regional Analysis
Investigating inter-departmental collaboration across different provinces or districts in South Africa could reveal regional variations in effectiveness. This would help identify best practices and tailor strategies to local contexts, especially in rural versus urban settings.

Community and Victim Perspectives
Further studies could focus on victims' and community members' experiences with inter-agency collaboration. Understanding their perspectives would provide deeper insights into the adequacy of support services, barriers to reporting, and perceived effectiveness of coordinated interventions.

Role of Technology and Innovation
Research is needed on how digital tools, mobile applications, and integrated information systems can enhance inter-departmental collaboration. Examining innovative approaches could inform the development of efficient case management, real-time communication, and monitoring systems.

Impact of Cultural and Social Norms

Additional studies could explore how cultural beliefs, gender norms, and societal attitudes influence the success of inter-departmental collaboration in DV cases. This research would provide insights for culturally sensitive strategies and community engagement initiatives.

Evaluation of Multi-Stakeholder Engagement

Research could examine the effectiveness of involving non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, traditional leaders, and the private sector in DV management. Evaluating such partnerships would highlight how multi-sectoral collaboration contributes to holistic victim support.

These recommendations for future research will complement existing knowledge, address remaining gaps, and guide the development of evidence-based policies, practices, and interventions to strengthen inter-departmental collaboration in the management of domestic violence in South Africa.

Limitations of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights into inter-departmental collaboration among SAPS, Social Development, and the justice system in managing domestic violence (DV) cases, several limitations must be acknowledged:

Geographical Scope

The study may be limited to specific provinces or urban areas, which could restrict the generalizability of findings to other regions, especially rural communities where resources, infrastructure, and cultural factors differ.

Data Access and Availability

Access to official records, case files, and inter-departmental reports may have been restricted due to confidentiality or bureaucratic limitations. This could affect the comprehensiveness and accuracy of the data collected.

Participant Bias

Interviews or surveys conducted with officials from SAPS, DSD, and the justice system may be subject to social desirability bias, where participants provide responses they perceive as favorable rather than fully candid reflections of operational challenges.

Time Constraints

The study's cross-sectional design may limit the ability to capture long-term effects of inter-departmental collaboration. Some outcomes, such as victim protection and case resolution rates, may only become apparent over extended periods.

Resource Limitations

Constraints related to funding, personnel, and time may have restricted the scope of data collection, including the number of participants, case studies, or community-level assessments included in the study.

Focus on Specific Stakeholders

While the study considers key government departments and relevant stakeholders, other influential actors, such as private security agencies, international NGOs, or informal community networks, may not have been fully explored.

These limitations suggest that while the study provides critical insights into collaboration among SAPS, DSD, and the justice system, its findings should be interpreted with caution. Future research could expand the geographical scope, incorporate longitudinal data, and include a broader range of stakeholders to enhance the comprehensiveness and applicability of results.

Co-impact of the Study

The co-impact of this study refers to the shared and interconnected benefits for multiple stakeholders involved in domestic violence (DV) management, highlighting how improved inter-departmental collaboration can generate positive outcomes across sectors.

For Government and Policy Makers

- Strengthened inter-departmental coordination provides evidence-based insights to inform policy development, review existing legislation such as the Domestic Violence Act (1998), and improve strategic implementation of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF).
- Enhanced collaboration reduces duplication of efforts, ensures efficient resource allocation, and improves accountability across SAPS, DSD, and the justice system.

For Law Enforcement (SAPS)

- Improved multi-agency communication and coordination enables faster response times, accurate reporting, and better case resolution rates.
- Officers benefit from clear operational guidelines, training, and support systems, reducing workplace stress and increasing confidence in managing DV cases.

For Social Development and Justice Systems

- Integration across departments facilitates holistic support for victims, including psychosocial assistance, legal aid, and protection measures.
- Efficient collaboration reduces case backlog, improves prosecution outcomes, and ensures a more victim-centered approach to justice delivery.

For Communities and Victims

- Victims experience improved safety, trust in public institutions, and access to coordinated support services.
- Communities benefit from heightened awareness of domestic violence, increased reporting, and strengthened local support networks, fostering social cohesion and prevention.

For Traditional Leaders, Church Fraternities, and Civil Society

- Encourages active engagement in prevention, awareness campaigns, and community-based support initiatives.
- Fosters partnerships between formal institutions and informal structures, amplifying the reach and effectiveness of interventions.

For the Private Sector and Diaspora

- Promotes corporate social responsibility initiatives, funding, and technical support to strengthen DV interventions.
- Diaspora engagement facilitates knowledge exchange, innovation, and international best practices, contributing to sustainable improvements in service delivery.

The study demonstrates that improving inter-departmental collaboration in domestic violence cases produces mutually reinforcing benefits across government, law enforcement, social services, communities, and other stakeholders. By aligning policies, operational procedures, and community engagement strategies, the study's findings can foster a safer, more responsive, and accountable environment for DV victims, with positive ripple effects on social cohesion, justice outcomes, and institutional credibility.

Overall Impact of the Study

The study on inter-departmental collaboration between SAPS, the Department of Social Development (DSD), and the justice system in managing domestic violence (DV) cases has several significant impacts across policy, practice, and society:

Policy and Governance Impact

- Provides evidence-based insights for policymakers to strengthen existing frameworks, such as the Domestic Violence Act (1998) and the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF).
- Promotes harmonization of operational protocols across departments, improving accountability, resource allocation, and inter-agency coordination.
- Encourages the integration of monitoring and evaluation systems to track the effectiveness of multi-sectoral DV interventions.

Operational and Institutional Impact

- Enhances operational efficiency within SAPS, DSD, and the justice system through structured communication channels, joint case management, and standardized procedures.
- Reduces case delays, ensures consistent application of protection measures, and strengthens the effectiveness of legal proceedings.
- Improves the capacity of personnel to manage DV cases in a victim-centered, professional, and coordinated manner.

Victim and Community Impact

- Improves the safety, well-being, and access to support services for DV victims, reducing repeated victimization and psychological trauma.
- Strengthens community awareness of domestic violence, available support mechanisms, and the importance of reporting cases.
- Encourages community participation in prevention and support initiatives, fostering social cohesion and local accountability.

Multi-Stakeholder and Societal Impact

- Promotes collaboration among traditional leaders, faith-based organizations, civil society, the private sector, and diaspora communities, enhancing the reach and sustainability of DV interventions.
- Contributes to societal shifts in attitudes toward domestic violence by encouraging a culture of accountability, gender equality, and victim protection.

Academic and Research Impact

- Fills gaps in existing literature on inter-departmental collaboration in South Africa, particularly regarding practical coordination, operational challenges, and victim-centered outcomes.
- Provides a foundation for future research on multi-agency collaboration, policy evaluation, and innovative approaches to domestic violence management.

The study demonstrates that effective inter-departmental collaboration can transform domestic violence management in South Africa. By improving operational efficiency, policy implementation, victim support, and stakeholder engagement, the study has the potential to create lasting positive change in public safety, social justice, and community well-being.

Key Takeaways from the Study

The study on collaboration between SAPS, the Department of Social Development (DSD), and the justice system in managing domestic violence (DV) cases yields several critical insights:

Inter-Departmental Collaboration is Essential

- Effective communication and coordination between SAPS, DSD, and the justice system are central to timely and successful management of DV cases.
- Fragmented collaboration leads to delayed responses, inconsistent victim support, and lower prosecution success rates.

Operational and Structural Challenges Persist

- Role ambiguity, limited resources, inadequate training, and policy-practice gaps hinder efficient collaboration.
- Addressing these barriers is essential for improving case management and protecting victims.

Victim-Centered Approaches Improve Outcomes

- Integrated services that consider legal, social, and psychological needs of victims increase safety, trust in the system, and overall well-being.
- Victims benefit most when departments coordinate their interventions and provide consistent follow-up support.

Stakeholder Engagement is Critical

- Communities, traditional leaders, church fraternities, NGOs, private sector, and diaspora stakeholders all play complementary roles in DV prevention and victim support.
- Multi-stakeholder collaboration strengthens social cohesion, awareness, and accountability in domestic violence interventions.

Policy and Legal Frameworks Must be Strengthened

- Existing laws, such as the Domestic Violence Act (1998), provide a solid foundation, but gaps in implementation reduce their effectiveness.
- Evidence-based policy reforms, standardized protocols, and monitoring mechanisms are essential to ensure that legislative frameworks translate into tangible improvements.

Innovation and Technology Can Enhance Collaboration

- Shared digital case management systems, communication platforms, and data-sharing tools facilitate real-time coordination among departments.
- Technology can reduce delays, improve transparency, and support accountability in domestic violence management.

Research and Continuous Evaluation are Needed

Ongoing research, monitoring, and evaluation of inter-departmental collaboration initiatives are necessary to identify gaps, refine strategies, and adopt best practices. The key takeaways highlight that **successful domestic violence management depends on structured inter-agency collaboration, victim-centered practices, stakeholder engagement, and robust policy implementation**. These lessons are essential for guiding both operational improvements and strategic policy development in South Africa.

Conclusion

This study underscores that addressing domestic violence in South Africa requires more than isolated institutional efforts; it demands a cohesive, well-coordinated, and victim-centered approach that integrates the strengths of the South African Police Service (SAPS), the Department of Social Development (DSD), and the justice system. The findings reveal that while South Africa possesses strong legislative and policy frameworks such as the Domestic Violence Act (1998) and the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF) the persistence of domestic violence is largely due to fragmented implementation, weak inter-departmental communication, and insufficient operational capacity. Effective collaboration among departments is not a mere administrative exercise but a moral and social imperative to safeguard the lives, dignity, and rights of victims. The study highlights that when collaboration is structured, resourced, and guided by shared accountability, victims receive timely support, justice processes are expedited, and recurrence of abuse is minimized. Conversely, poor coordination perpetuates systemic failures, erodes public trust, and compromises the credibility of the criminal justice system.

The research further emphasizes that domestic violence is not only a legal issue but also a socio-economic and developmental

challenge that requires the joint commitment of government, civil society, traditional leaders, faith-based institutions, the private sector, and the diaspora community. Strengthened digital systems, shared case management platforms, continuous professional training, and clear inter-departmental protocols are critical enablers of progress. Ultimately, the study calls for a transformation in how institutions collaborate moving from reactive interventions to proactive, integrated prevention and response strategies. Such an approach will not only improve justice outcomes and victim protection but also contribute to building safer, more resilient communities. A united, multi-sectoral front against domestic violence is therefore not optional—it is the foundation of a just and humane South African society.

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