



Rape murder of women and children in South Africa

By Shanaaz Mathews

The rape and murder of women and girl children is a distinct form of gender-based violence that combines two of the most extreme forms of violence against women and children.

This study found that 494 of women murdered and 104 of the child murders in 2009 were linked to rape at the time of their murder. Rape-murder is therefore not a rare event in South Africa – the rape-murder rate for adult women is similar to the overall global murder rate of adult women.

This study showed that one in ten murders of children were a rape murder and far exceeds other reported rates of rape and murder of children. Girls are by far more likely to be raped and murdered than boy children, but we know that rape it is not expected in boy children and could therefore be missed. Strangulation was the most common manner of death among women and children (35.5%) and perpetrators were seldom strangers.

The most common perpetrators for the rape and murder of children were people known to them: family members (27.1%) and acquaintances (37.5%). This is similar to violence against children which often occur in the context of domestic and family violence. However, in high income settings the rape murder of children were mainly found to be strangers.



Although we don't know much about the common modus operandi associated with rape murder of children – abduction of the child victim is not uncommon.

Strangulation was among the most common manner of death in cases of rape–murder for adult females and by far the most common for children. This manner of death possibly points to the primary motive – it may have been rape as strangulation are used to induce unconsciousness. We suggest that protocols be developed for the police and Forensic Pathology Services to ensure routine screening and investigation of all child and female homicides for sexual crimes.

Citation:

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