

# Review of: "Exploring Perceptions on Sexual Empowerment Among Heterosexual Black Women in Braamfontein, Johannesburg"

Temitope J. Owolabi<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Lagos

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

## 1. Introduction

The introduction effectively sets the stage for the discussion by highlighting the increasing importance of sexual empowerment, particularly in the context of African cultures where gender inequality persists. It provides a comprehensive overview of existing literature, showcasing the complexity and multidimensionality of sexual empowerment. The mention of specific studies adds credibility to the discussion and demonstrates the breadth of research in the field. Furthermore, the introduction appropriately identifies the gap in research, particularly concerning sexual empowerment in Africa, and justifies the need for further exploration.

**Areas for Improvement** While the introduction provides a solid foundation for the study, it could benefit from greater clarity and focus. Some sentences are quite lengthy and could be condensed for better readability. Additionally, while the introduction acknowledges the importance of understanding sexual empowerment within the context of culture and gender inequality, it could elaborate further on how these factors intersect and influence women's perceptions. Providing a more nuanced discussion of the cultural and societal dynamics at play would enhance the reader's understanding of the research context. Finally, the transition from the broader discussion on sexual empowerment to the specific focus on perceptions among heterosexual black women in Braamfontein could be smoother. A clearer bridge between the general discussion and the specific study population would improve coherence.

## 2. Problem Statement

The problem statement clearly establishes the context of the research within South Africa's socio-cultural landscape, emphasizing the gendered power dynamics and societal norms that influence perceptions of sexual empowerment among women. Also, the acknowledgment of cultural practices and their impact on female sexual empowerment adds depth to the problem statement, showing an awareness of the complex interplay between culture, gender, and sexuality.

**Areas for Improvement:** Narrowing the Focus: While the problem statement effectively outlines the broader societal issues surrounding women's sexual empowerment in South Africa, it could benefit from a more focused articulation of the specific research questions or objectives. Clarifying the precise aspects of sexual empowerment that the study aims to explore would enhance the clarity and coherence of the problem statement.

**Integration of Intersectionality:** While the problem statement acknowledges the intersection of gender and culture in shaping perceptions of sexual empowerment, it could further integrate an intersectional perspective. Considering other intersecting identities such as race, class, and sexual orientation would provide a more nuanced understanding of women's experiences and challenges in relation to sexual empowerment.

**Proposition of Research Gap:** While the problem statement acknowledges the need for more research on female sexual empowerment, it could explicitly articulate the specific gap or gaps in knowledge that the current study seeks to address. Clearly defining the research gap would help justify the study's significance and relevance within the broader academic discourse.

### 3. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The literature review and theoretical framework as presented in the article offer a comprehensive understanding of the complex concept of sexual empowerment among heterosexual Black women in Braamfontein, Johannesburg. The review begins by addressing the ambiguity surrounding the definition of sexual empowerment, providing insights from various researchers and scholars. This approach adds depth to the discussion and allows readers to grasp the multidimensional nature of sexual empowerment effectively.

Moreover, the inclusion of socio-cultural factors such as culture, religion, and sexuality education enriches the analysis by highlighting the contextual influences on female sexual empowerment. By drawing from a diverse range of sources, including empirical studies and theoretical perspectives, the review successfully contextualizes the discussion within the broader societal and cultural landscape of Johannesburg.

The theoretical framework section is particularly noteworthy for its integration of empowerment theory to conceptualize female sexual empowerment. By breaking down empowerment into intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral components, the framework provides a clear and structured foundation for understanding how women perceive and exercise control over their sexual lives.

#### **Areas for Improvement:**

While the literature review provides a comprehensive overview of the topic, there is a need for more critical engagement with the existing literature. Rather than merely summarizing different perspectives, the review could benefit from a more critical analysis that evaluates the strengths and limitations of each approach. Additionally, integrating more recent studies or perspectives could enhance the relevance and currency of the literature review.

Furthermore, the discussion on socio-cultural factors could be expanded to include intersectional analyses that consider how factors such as race, class, and gender identity intersect to shape experiences of sexual empowerment among Black women in Johannesburg. This intersectional approach would offer a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by this demographic group.

In the theoretical framework section, while the empowerment theory provides a useful framework for understanding female sexual empowerment, the discussion could be strengthened by discussing potential critiques or limitations of this theoretical approach. Additionally, providing examples or empirical evidence that support the application of the empowerment theory to the context of sexual empowerment among Black women would enhance the theoretical grounding of the study.

#### 4. Methodology

The methodology section provides a comprehensive explanation of the research approach and design. The choice of a qualitative approach aligns well with the study's objective of understanding subjective perceptions of sexual empowerment among heterosexual Black women.

The rationale behind selecting a case study design is clearly articulated, emphasizing the need for detailed information about participants' perceptions. Additionally, the use of a semi-structured interview schedule is well-justified, considering its flexibility in gathering rich data.

The use of purposive sampling, including purposive snowball sampling, is appropriate for this study, given the specific characteristics of the target population and the challenges associated with locating suitable participants. This approach enhances the credibility of the findings by ensuring knowledgeable and relevant participants.

Thematic content analysis is a suitable method for analyzing qualitative data, particularly for identifying and organizing themes and subthemes. The explanation of this analysis method indicates a thoughtful approach to deriving meaning from the collected data.

The section addresses ethical considerations adequately, including informed consent, confidentiality measures, and obtaining ethical approval. The inclusion of the ethics protocol number enhances transparency and demonstrates compliance with ethical standards.

#### Areas for Improvement

- While the methodology is well-described, providing more details on the specific procedures followed during data collection and analysis would enhance the replicability of the study. Including information on interviewer training, data saturation, and inter-coder reliability (if applicable) would strengthen the methodological transparency.
- Although the methodology specifies the characteristics of the participants, such as age range and sexual orientation, additional demographic information (e.g., socioeconomic background, educational level) could provide a more nuanced understanding of the sample and enhance the generalizability of the findings.
- It would be beneficial for the researchers to acknowledge their own backgrounds, perspectives, and potential biases, as these factors can influence the research process and interpretation of results. Including a brief discussion on reflexivity and positionality would contribute to the transparency and reflexivity of the study.
- While thematic content analysis is appropriate for this study, incorporating data triangulation (e.g., using multiple data

sources or methods) could further validate the findings and enhance the credibility of the study. Exploring complementary data sources, such as participant observation or document analysis, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of sexual empowerment perceptions.

- Although the methodology section is focused on outlining the strengths of the study, acknowledging potential limitations, such as sample size constraints or potential biases inherent in qualitative research, would provide a more balanced presentation of the study's scope and findings.

## 5. Results

The results section offers a thorough presentation of the research findings, covering diverse themes such as gender norms, social media influence, peer influence, sexuality education, and perceptions of sexual empowerment. This breadth allows for a nuanced understanding of the topic.

The discussion effectively integrates findings with existing literature, enhancing the contextual understanding of the results. By referencing previous studies and theories, the article strengthens the credibility of its findings and contributes to the academic discourse on sexual empowerment.

The inclusion of direct quotes from participants enriches the narrative, providing insight into their perspectives and experiences. These quotations lend authenticity and vividness to the presentation of findings, making them more relatable and compelling.

### Areas for Improvement:

- While the section provides valuable insights from the eight participants, the sample size might be considered limited for drawing broad generalizations. Additionally, the participants all belong to the same demographic group (heterosexual Black women), which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Including a more diverse range of participants could strengthen the study's external validity.
- The section could benefit from additional information regarding the interview process and data analysis techniques employed. Providing transparency about the research methodology enhances the credibility and replicability of the study, allowing readers to assess the rigor of the research process.
- The discussion touches upon the influence of religion and culture on attitudes towards sexuality, particularly regarding self-pleasure. However, further exploration of these factors and their implications for sexual empowerment could enrich the analysis. Including perspectives from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds would offer a more comprehensive understanding of the subject.

## 6. Discussion

The discussion adeptly explores various factors influencing sexual empowerment, including traditional gender norms,

social media, peer influence, and sexuality education. By addressing these factors comprehensively, the study adds depth to the understanding of sexual empowerment dynamics.

The integration of previous research findings throughout the discussion section enhances its credibility and provides a broader context for interpreting the study's results. This approach enriches the discussion by placing the current findings within the existing body of knowledge on sexual empowerment.

By focusing specifically on heterosexual black women in Johannesburg, the study acknowledges the intersectionality of gender, race, and location in shaping experiences of sexual empowerment. This intersectional lens adds nuance to the discussion and highlights the unique challenges faced by the study's participants.

### ***Areas for Improvement:***

While the discussion acknowledges the influence of culture and religion on perceptions of sexual empowerment, there could be a deeper exploration of how cultural and religious norms intersect with gender dynamics. Providing more nuanced insights into these intersections would enrich the discussion and offer a more holistic understanding of the complexities involved.

While the discussion outlines the factors influencing sexual empowerment, it could benefit from a more explicit discussion of the practical implications for interventions or policy initiatives aimed at promoting sexual empowerment among heterosexual black women in Johannesburg. Providing concrete recommendations based on the study's findings would enhance its relevance and utility for practitioners and policymakers.

**Limitations and Future Directions:** Although the discussion section effectively synthesizes the study's findings, it could be strengthened by a more explicit discussion of its limitations and suggestions for future research. Identifying potential limitations, such as sample size or methodological constraints, would add transparency to the study's findings and guide future research endeavors in this area.