

Project Name: HeCareZA
**Report Name: The State of Child
Predation on South African Social Media**

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1. Introduction

This report examines online child and teenager predation in South Africa from the period of 1 June 2024 to 31 May 2025. It seeks to understand perspectives about dating and age-related patterns; teenage pregnancy and intergenerational dating; as well as the perpetuation of child pornography, child fantasy and/or content sexualizing minor children.

The objective is to provide the broader South African public with a greater understanding and awareness of the type of narratives as well as provide insight into the perpetuation of content sexualizing minors online. The report seeks to stimulate conversation as well as expose harmful sentiments and provide policymakers, civil society and government with insights into the extent of the problem and provide recommendations applicable both online as well as offline.

2. Executive Summary

Predation of Minor Children

- An overview of the 'narrative analysis' category indicates that the conversation centred around child pornography and statutory rape arrests, teenage pregnancy with further conversation around the culture and religion.
- Accounts noted that the government and law enforcement do not treat teenage pregnancy and statutory rape serious enough, calling for intervention at the point that teenage pregnancy is discovered.
- In respect of religion, a church was singled out for endorsing marriage between older men and young girls due to a post going viral. It should be noted that the marriage was not illegal in terms of South African law, however, comments were centred on the ethical and morality of the marriage.
- Culture was intertwined in the conversation, with accounts stating that current dating practices promote promiscuity from a young age and that marriage instead, should be regarded as the morally superior alternative.

- Beyond moral and ethical discussions being raised, several accounts explicitly endorsed statutory rape and / or relationships with children.

Proliferation of Child Sexual Abuse Material on Social Media

- A few accounts on X are responsible for the proliferation of CSAM or fantasy CSAM.
- Several accounts were identified that focused solely on the posting of images or videos of young children or school-going children which images and videos sexualized the children and / or were pornographic in nature.
- While certain accounts did engage the posts, the vast majority of accounts either following or that saw the posts failed to engage. Many of these accounts, however, remain active and post frequently.

3. The Predation of Minor Children

Several theoretical systems have been advanced in scholarly research in order to understand the occurrence of child sexual abuse. Finkelhor's (1985) Precondition Model represented the first step in understanding what the necessary conditions are in order for child sexual abuse to occur. Finkelhor posits that there must exist: (i) motivation to sexually abuse the child, (ii) some method/trait which overcomes internal inhibitors, (iii) factors predisposing to overcoming external inhibitors and, (iv) factors predisposing to overcoming child's resistance¹. The first two preconditions relate to intrinsic a non-exclusive list of beliefs, values, characteristics, conditions that an individual may have or that society may impart on them, while the latter two preconditions refer to extrinsic situational and victim-related factors that may influence the commission of sexual abuse on the child.

Since Finkelhor's seminal work in the field of the theoretical underpinnings of child sexual abuse, several scholars such as Hall & Hirschman (1991) and Marshall &

¹ Finkelhor, D., 1984. Child sexual abuse. *New York*, pp.101-15.

Barbaree (1990) have advanced theories of their own. Ward & Siegert (2002) proposed a theory knitting pathways model which integrated the afore theories. The Pathways model suggests that child sexual abuse is generated by four psychological mechanisms present in perpetrators: (i) intimacy and social skill deficits, which refer to internal models of relationships and emotional availability; (ii) distorted sexual scripts, which are the mental representations individuals acquire during development that shape the interpretation of intimate encounters and guides future encounters; (iii) emotional dysregulation, that involves the control of affective states in the service of individuals' goals and (iv) cognitive distortion, which refers to maladaptive beliefs and attitudes². The authors further posit that social learning, biological and cultural factors influence the mechanisms and how they function in individuals.

Several scholars, including Ward & Siegert, have critiqued Finkelhor's work, for example, that the author does not advance a rationale explaining where the motivation to sexually abuse a child stems from³. Despite the criticism and further development of his work, this report relies on Finkelhor's systemic analysis due to its suitability for transference to online deviance. It must be noted, however, that the genesis of the theory lies in formulating a theoretical framework for the perpetration of child sexual abuse acts in person and, as such, certain aspects may be out of place as a comprehensive theory for the perpetration of child sexual abuse online. It further fails to account for contextual factors within South African society.

In this regard, Lekalakala (2023) identified four themes on how perpetrators make sense of sexual abuse of young children in South Africa namely: (1) virgin cleansing myth; (2) denial of responsibility; (3) sense of entitlement to sex and (4) sexual interest in young children⁴. In respect of the virgin cleansing, the author concluded that sexual violence against children in order to cleanse HIV/AIDs was not found to be a valid justification, nor did any perpetrators advance the virgin cleansing myth as a rationale

² Ward, T. and Siegert, R.J., 2002. Toward a comprehensive theory of child sexual abuse: A theory knitting perspective. *Psychology, crime and law*, 8(4), pp.319-351.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Lekalakala, E.K., 2014. *An examination of perpetrator explanations for sexual abuse of young children in South Africa*. Open University (United Kingdom).

behind their acts⁵. Perpetrators were more likely to deny their acts as harmful and immoral and, in some cases, perceive themselves as victims who were “corrupted” into the act by the child or that they “lost control”⁶. In the second theme, therefore, perpetrators linked their behaviour to the intrinsic factors such as their belief systems or internal rationalisation of the behaviour. It should be noted that even where perpetrators were ‘corrupted’, the deviant act remains intrinsic to the perpetrator.

Entitlement to sex is a recurring theme in sexual abuse research, where certain perpetrators believe that women are to tend to men’s sexual desires, as and when they want⁷. This belief stems from socialisation and normative behaviour that legitimises gendered sexual power. It was further noted that certain perpetrators sexually abuse young children where adult women are not accessible to them. The rationale advanced is similarly intrinsic but is shaped by societal norms and through socialisation of gender dynamics and power. Prior victims of sexual deviance, such as being sexually abused at a young age, indicated that they had sexual interest in minors and often perpetrated sexual abuse to children at the same age as when they were abused. In addition, perpetrators expressed that children are easier targets due to the economic and power imbalance.

Statutory rape, teenage pregnancy and the grooming of minor children continues unabated in South Africa. In 2010/2011, 41.3% of the total offences on children reported to the police consisted of rape while sexual assault accounted for 6.9%. In 2022/23, statutory rape constituted 38.3% while sexual assault climbed to 7.6%⁸. It is commonly accepted that these figures are contested and may be higher due to a myriad of reasons, such as underreporting from survivors or, indeed, inability to report due to survivors being as young as a few months old⁹.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid. See also Jewkes, R., Sikweyiya, Y., Morrell, R. and Dunkle, K., 2010. Why, when and how men rape-understanding rape perpetration in South Africa. *SA Crime Quarterly*, 2010(34), pp.23-31.

⁸ Statistics South Africa. 2023. Child Series Volume III. Accessed on 3 June 2025. Available at: <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/92-02-03/92-02-032023.pdf>.

⁹ ‘Center for Justice and Crime Prevention’. The Optimus study on child abuse, violence and neglect in South Africa (2015) 101. See also Mpanza, F.M., 2021. *The Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse in South Africa* (Doctoral dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College).

Breaking down by demographics, females are disproportionately victims of sexual assault and rape as well as kidnapping (referred to collectively herein as “gendered crimes”) which could lead to forced prostitution or child trafficking¹⁰. Having regard to age, there is a clear spike in gendered crimes once children reach the age of 9 and older. Rape and sexual assault against children, however, start rising as young as 1 years old and experience a spike from 9 years and older¹¹. Sexual assault and rape, therefore, predominantly affect teenagers.

4. Research Overview

From 1 June 2024 to 31 May 2025, our keywords and phrases identified around 64,380 mentions related to child predation (see *Figure 1*). The mentions were reposted around 184,170 times, indicating that the conversation was driven by reposts or sharing of content. A total of 24,220 unique authors created original posts or comments (not including those that shared or reposted content), representing an average mention volume of 2 posts per account. The CABC classifies this mention count within the normal range, suggesting an organic conversation lacking any purpose-driven and coordinated networks looking to spread mis- and disinformation or harmful content.

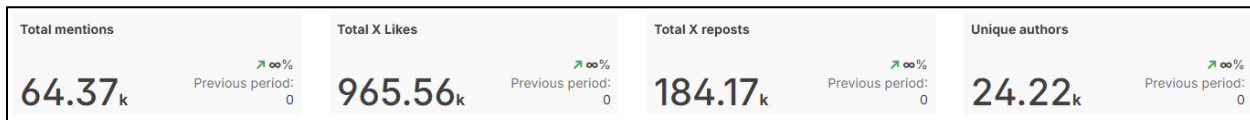


Figure 1: Metrics associated with the overall, unfiltered conversation

Breaking down mention volume over time, by weeks of the period, provides insight into narratives and events that saw heightened conversation around gender norms (see *Figure 2*).

¹⁰ Supra note 8.

¹¹ Ibid.

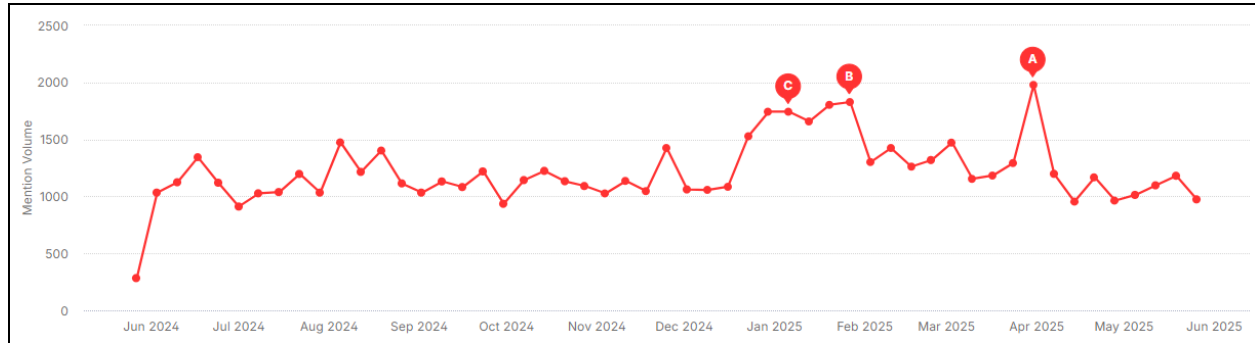


Figure 2: Volume over Time graph for the entire conversation

These peaks are explored below in order of magnitude commencing with Peak A, thereafter Peak B and finally, Peak C.

- Peak A (31 March 2025 - 6 April 2025):
 - Peak A was driven by conversation surrounding the alleged rape of a seven-year-old minor child. This case garnered significant national attention with several news outlets reporting on the story as well as conversation surrounding the alleged rape acquiring virality on various social media platforms in South Africa [\(1\)](#); [\(2\)](#); [\(3\)](#).
- Peak B (30 December 2024 - 12 January 2025):
 - There were no distinct drivers for Peak B. Our analytics tool found isolated conversations surrounding the themes of this report.
 - However, nine of the top ten highest reach posts within Peak B concerned teenage pregnancies in the country as reported by various news outlets [\(1\)](#); [\(2\)](#); [\(3\)](#).
- Peak C (27 January 2025 - 2 February 2025):
 - Peak C was primarily driven by an eNCA post stating that the “Sex Offenders registry made public after years of advocacy”. Hundreds of accounts reposted the eNCA post in support of the move by government and noting that the registry has long been sought [\(1\)](#); [\(2\)](#); [\(3\)](#).

- It should be noted that at the time of writing, the registry is still not publicly available due to concerns that the publication of such a list might infringe privacy laws in the country (1).

Highest Reach Posts

Depicted below are the ten posts that obtained the highest reach¹² in our dataset. Nine of the posts depicted in the table stem from news outlets, accounts stylized as media platforms or public figures or is a response to a news outlet. One post below refers to a church where a 55-year-old man married an 18-year-old girl, which is dealt with comprehensively below.

Number	Content	Author	Link
1	BREAKING Marcell M Meyer from KZN who was working on a farm in the state of New York has been arrested in the United States for allegedly distributing child pornography, including to an undercover US agent who posed as a 13-year-old girl.	News24	https://x.com/News24/status/1908089127909617681
2	JUST IN: 35-year-old Darry Wilken is appearing before the Randburg Magistrates Court this hour after police found an estimated 10 million images and videos of child pornography at his Midrand home.	EWN	https://x.com/ewnreport/status/1881288532926587258
3	A 55-year-old man married an	Private Account	https://x.com/Fonyok

¹² Reach is _____

	18-year-old, this is wrong Shembe people.		aPondoka/status/1925553762094968897
4	DNA clears man accused of statutory rape of 13-Year-Old A 28-year-old man who was arrested in December 2024 in Seshego, on charges of statutory rape has been exonerated following DNA testing. The results revealed that he is not the father of the baby, despite initial allegations that he had impregnated a 13-year-old girl. The man had been in custody since the girl gave birth at Seshego Hospital during Christmas, with the accused consistently denying any involvement with the minor. Following the DNA findings, the man has been granted bail. The case is now scheduled to continue on May 4, 2025, for further legal proceedings.	MDN NEWS	https://x.com/MDNNews/status/1896566961716314413
5	Nearly 8,000 teen pregnancies shock eThekweni. A staggering 7,627 girls aged 10 to 14 gave birth in eThekweni, KwaZulu-Natal, from April 2024 to April 2025, with the youngest mother just 10 years old, according to data presented at	MDN NEWS	https://x.com/MDNNews/status/1927277687191609830

	<p>the Durban ICC Teenage Pregnancy Indaba on May 20. Deputy Mayor Zandile Myeni called it a “public health crisis,” noting 154 births among girls aged 10-14 and 582 monthly abortion seekers. High-risk areas include Inanda, KwaMashu, and uMlazi. Experts demand better sex education and prosecution of statutory rape to curb the alarming trend.</p>		
6	<p>Former Pretoria teacher and principal Martin Kotze, accused of sexually grooming young boys and sending them explicit videos and pictures of himself, has died by suicide.</p>	News24	https://x.com/News24/status/1904522659984973941
7	<p>We welcome the arrest of a 28yrs old suspect for statutory rape, alleged to have fathered a baby of a 13yr old child who delivered on Christmas Day in one of our hospitals We thank @SAPoliceService for their swift response when we reported the case. Let's set an example</p>	Dr Phophi Ramathuba	https://x.com/PhophiRamathuba/status/1872349571365642601
8	<p>BREAKING NEWS: A 35-year-old man is behind bars following a crackdown on child pornography. 10 million images and videos</p>	Newzroom Afrika	https://x.com/Newzroom405/status/1880201828044009770

	were found at a house in Midrand, Johannesburg.		
9	Post: "BREAKING: Orania teacher arrested for allegedly having sex with a minor" Quote: "You cannot have sex with a minor News24. Rape. The afrikaner teacher has been arrested for RAPING a minor"	Private Account	https://x.com/MissS_S/status/1899154367405765048
10	Sex offenders registry made public after years of advocacy	eNCA	https://x.com/eNCA/status/1885985840532271230

Table 1: Top Ten Highest Reach Posts

5. Narrative Analysis

This section of the report investigates the narratives surrounding child predation and necessitated a broader approach to data collection. Conversation around child predation and dating minor children, particularly those in agreement or perpetrators, are infrequently explicit. Instead, insight is gathered from perspectives on, for example, teenage pregnancy, age-gaps in relationships as well as statutory rape. With reference to Finkelhor's precondition model, these views are intrinsic factors that may determine an individual's propensity to commit sexual abuse against a child or indeed, indicate individual / societal perceptions in respect of such abuse.

This does not necessarily mean that an adult that perceives teenage pregnancy as "normal" will go on to commit sexual abuse against a child, however, it does provide insight in respect of prevailing attitudes held by individuals in the country as well as the narratives perpetuated online (and offline) as to why child predation occurs and, with respect to this report, the normalisation of child sexualisation online.

5.1 Data Overview

The narrative analysis category returned a subset of the overall conversation containing approximately 54,280 mentions which was reposted around 156,090 times. Approximately 19,770 unique accounts contributed to the conversation (See Figure X).

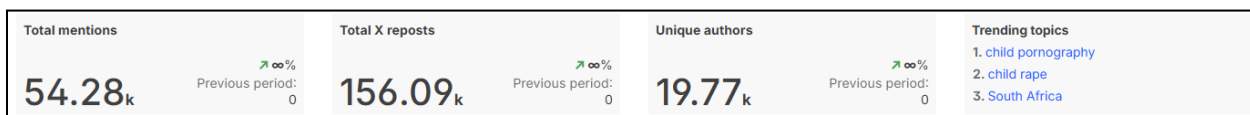


Figure 3: Metrics associated with the subset “Narratives”

A word cloud of the top 50 phrases, keywords and hashtags coloured by volume indicates that the most common words used include child, abuse, people, women and girls.

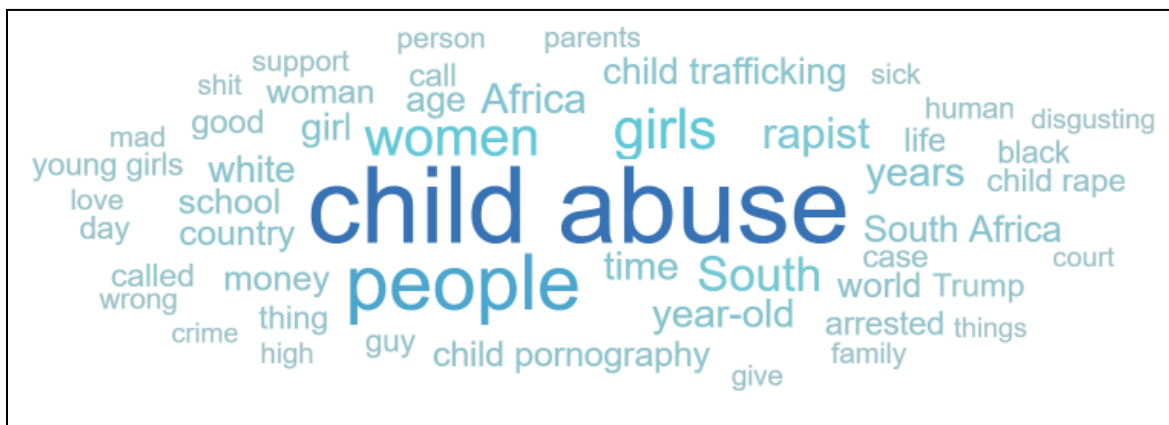


Figure 4: Word Cloud indicating top 50 words used in conversations

The topics wheel, illustrated below, characterises the major topics within the central circle and subtopics around the periphery, and suggests that the conversation around child predation focused on pedophilia, sugar daddies, statutory rape (see Figure X).

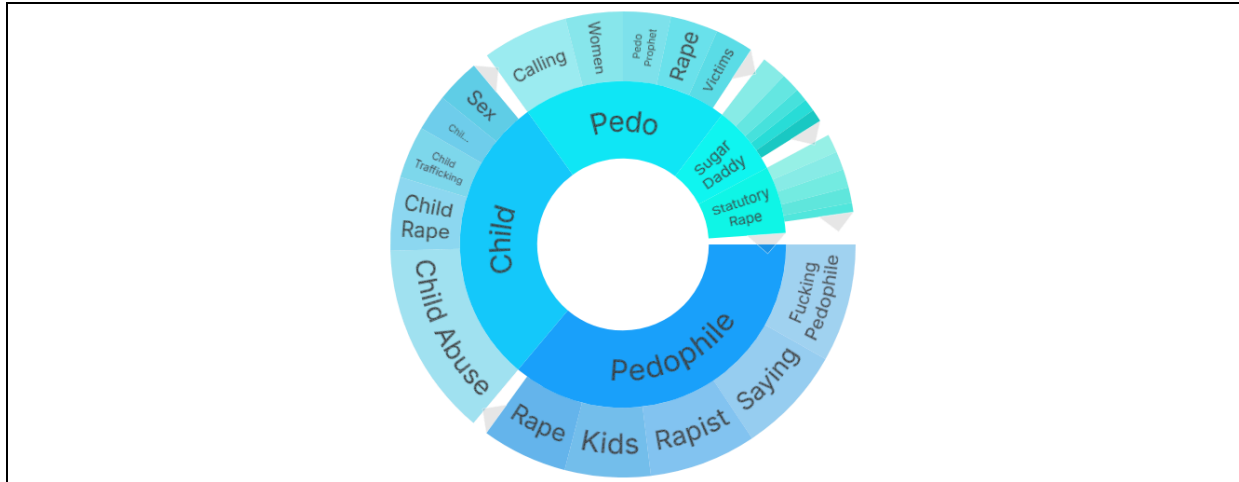


Figure 5: Topic wheel of the Narrative conversations

The trending topics visualisation showcases phrases, hashtags and keywords forming the themes of conversation throughout the reporting period. The majority of the keywords are condensed off-centre and trending, suggesting that the reflected keywords were used consistently throughout the reporting period with keywords such as child pornography and child rape being used more frequently and consistently in mentions from June 2024 to May 2025. The latter two terms are explored more fully below.

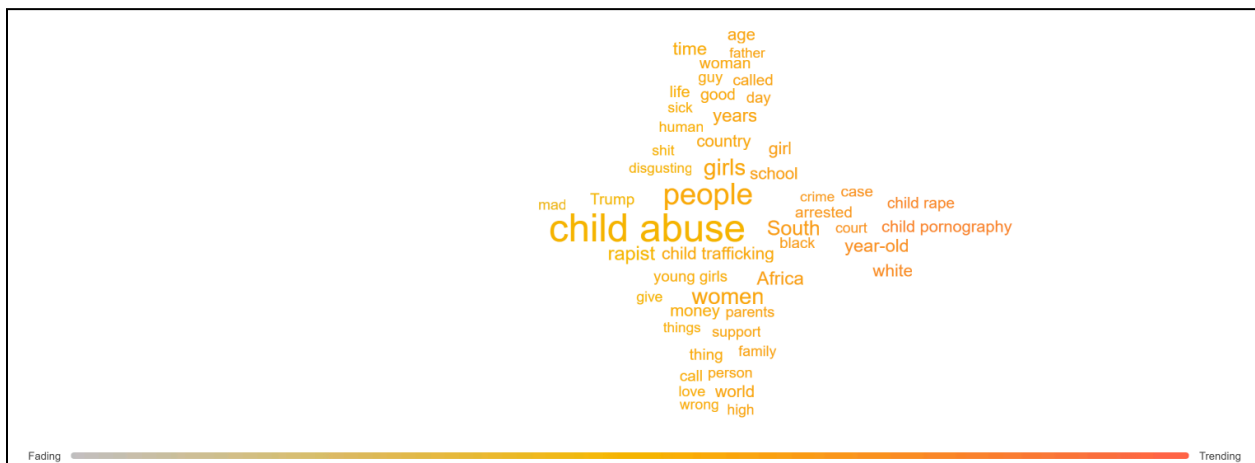


Figure 6: Trending graph showing terms trending and fading

Popular Posts and Topics

Teenage pregnancy and child pornography emerged as key topics within the conversation due to sustained media coverage on firstly, the high rates of teenage pregnancy in the country and secondly, arrests made in respect of child pornography rings operating by nationals of the country (see Figure 7).



Figure 7: Posts depicting teenage pregnancy and child pornography distributor arrest

Certain individuals responding to news of the arrests of the statutory rape suspects highlighted that government and the police do not treat predators as criminals as well as calling for increased arrests where men impregnate children. One author further noted that statutory rape has been normalised in South African society.

Another notable point of discussion concerned the impact of religion on teenage pregnancy, with some individuals alleging that certain churches endorse young girls marrying old men. This is explored further below. There is also the perception that young girls engage in sexual relationships for financial incentives. This incentive may come directly from the older partner, or indeed, through the state's social welfare system that provides mothers with a social grant of R560.00 per month.

In respect of the post surrounding the distribution of child pornography, the conversation tended heavily towards race-baiting. It should be noted that race-baiting posts were similarly found in teenage pregnancy, however, dominated the discussion in the latter discussion. Under both posts, comments that centred on race attempted to label pedophilia as a 'black' or 'white' issue.

We're running campaigns about potholes while our girls are being preyed on. These aren't "teenage love stories," these are crimes. It's time we start treating predators like the criminals they are, not just shaking our heads and moving on.	Stop giving government sanctioned breeding incentives and teach them to keep their legs closed.
It's not surprising since these kids are groomed to be wives of those old men in those cult churches these kids are raped actually 🧑🏿🧑🏿	Break it down by race. Everything else in this god forsaken land is about race, so tell us which race embraces pedophilia.
Add to the list of things we have been desensitized to, and have been normalised. Children raped resulting in some getting pregnant. Daily murder rate equivalent to a war zone. Mafias ruling construction, transport, water. Corruption - endemic. Increasing unemployment.	What is it with Afrikaaners and child ponorgraphy? This is extremely disgusting 🤢
This "statutory rape" must be contextualised though.. because, it is often poverty at home that forces a big number of these girls to get into relationships with older men. It is a survival issue for them and sometimes their families too..	Child pornography is very bad. I am just questioning News24's race baiting while multiple black girls are being raped as well speak. Can't you see that this post actually undervalues black people Pedophilia & rape is a construct of whites....ask the negro women Sarah baartman Why you reporting on this, but ignoring the 150 rapes that happened yesterday? Or that SA has the highest rate of child rape, or school children pregnant? Racist24.

Figure 8: Responses to teenage pregnancy and child pornography posts

Statutory rape also emerged as a core feature in the conversation and centred around reports of statutory rape prosecution and arrests. In addition, conversations surrounded the publication of the National Register For Sex Offenders.

<p>We welcome the arrest of a 28yrs old suspect for statutory rape,alleged to have fathered a baby of a 13yr old child who delivered on Christmas Day in one of our hospitals We thank @SAPoliceService for their swift response when we reported the case. Let's set an example ❤️💔👊🏿👊🏿</p> <p>8:31 PM · Dec 26, 2024 · 627K Views</p> <p>💬 336 ↻ 2.8K ❤️ 12K 📌 242 🔗</p>	<p>Father jailed for life for raping daughter</p> <p>On 26 March 2025, Stefny-Ann du Preez (22) witnessed the man who raped her repeatedly when she was only 15, her own father, Lourens Fourie, being sentenced to life in prison in the Mbombela regional court.</p> <p>Stefny-Ann waited 2 622 days for justice. Fourie was sentenced to three years for child abuse, five years for grooming, and life in prison for rape.</p>
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Figure 9: Posts concerning statutory rape

Various responses were recorded under the alleged statutory rape post, with several accounts commending the action taken by the police, however, calling for further action by SAPS such as confirmation through DNA testing, investigating the parents both for parental neglect and potentially committing such crimes (see Figure X).

Police must be sent to all hospitals & homes of the underage kids who gave birth	I bet you the mother or whomever is the guardian of the 13 year old knew about the relationship & never objected. Now that it's out for the whole country to see, they're acting innocent. I bet you the guardian of the child is complicit in this whole matter. Charge them too.
It's high time parents take responsibility for their lack of parental enforcement	DNA takes 2 weeks, perform it, after that it confirms they are the father, release him into the care of the community for questioning. That thing does not need court trials and prison will not help him with anything.
I won't be surprised after DNA suspect is not even the father ,a close relative is the father closer staying in the same house,it's always the case	

Figure 10: Responses to left-most statutory rape post.

Other accounts questioned the effect of the arrest, noting that the child will potentially lose both a caregiver and the support from the father. One account noted that the child engaged in sexual activity willingly and presumably, should not be sentenced. These sentiments are rooted in or are reminiscent of 'whataboutism' and/or victim blaming.

Who's going to support the baby when you arrest him?	The 13y/o had sex with him willingly
What if they were in love? And now u want to arrest the father who will support and take care of the child?	Umtwana usezokondliwa ngubani
arresting the boyfriend will live the child fatherless and the girl will become a single parent 😞 not arresting the boyfriend will promote statutory rape in south Africa 🤔 No solution here	So the child will grow without a father....fatherless nation promotion
	10:44 AM · Dec 27, 2024 · 5 Views

Figure 11: Further responses to left-most statutory rape posts.

In regard to the conviction of a father that raped his child, and similar to the narratives surrounding statutory rape and teenage pregnancy, the conversation slanted heavily along racial lines with individuals directing the author of the post towards black crimes being committed. It should, however, be noted that posts noting the racial identity of the perpetrator were similarly prevalent and called 'incestual child rape' as a white issue.

259 other victims, guaranteed to be 99% black! Care to mention them? Or are only white rapist and victims important to your agenda and empathy?	Oops, there is a rape culture in SA. In fact, it's a national sport in townships. But keep digging. You will probably find a handful of white morons that want to blend in.
Ooo nooo! Pointing out another white crime that happened 8 years ago!! Nooo not this, anything BUT this!! 😞😞😞😞	Why are whites always doing this to their own children 🤖
Do you think we're stupid? We know what you're trying to coverup 😞😞	May he rot in jail, life isn't enough, but Once again BIANCA !! !! !! ? ? ? . Where is your great investigation "skills" when it comes to the black on black, rapes, murders, GBV etc. You don't prove anything by posting this because majority whites hate these type of whites !!
It does not matter if you are black brown or green. Rape is wrong. You get good blacks and bad blacks good whites and bad whites. This is not a political thing its a wrong thing. And unfortunately there ar more black men than white men in SA.	

Figure 12: Responses to right-most statutory rape conviction.

Significant attention was further drawn towards the Shembe church which raised questions concerning the current culture concerning dating and relationships within South Africa. The posts allege that the Shembe church for either endorsing or

encouraging relationships between women as young as 18 and older men (see Figure 13). Spokesperson for the church, Thokozani Mncwabe, has responded to the allegations by reiterating that the girls are above the age of 18 and what individuals see on social media is not the actual wedding, but the beginning of the process¹³.



Figure 13: Posts concerning Shembe church and marriage

Several individuals questioned the age difference between the husband and wife reflected above. Several individuals alluded to the fact that the partner may be legally allowed to marry, however, that morally it is wrong. Reference was also made to the power differential between the parties as well as noting that the child may experience emotional and psychological abuse. However, counter narratives such as sole responsibility cannot be placed on the church as well as that such relationships are okay.

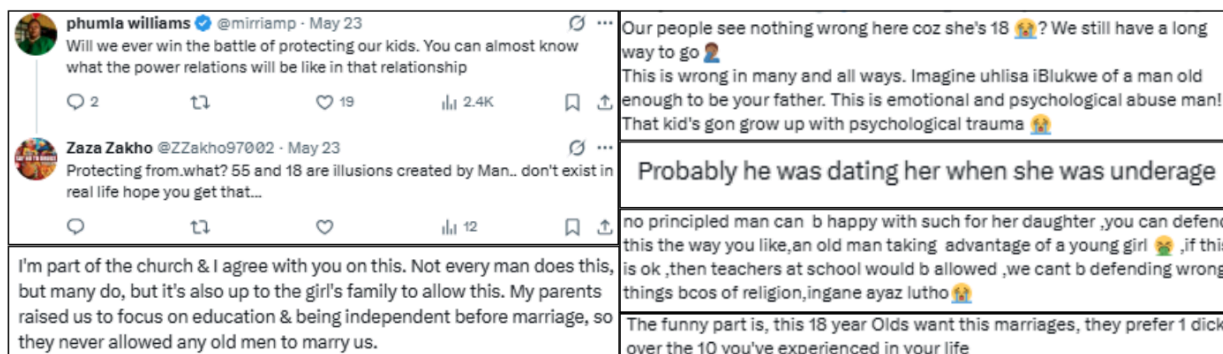


Figure 14: Responses to Shembe posts

¹³ <https://sundayworld.co.za/celebrity-news/shembe-slams-naledi-over-older-men-courting-maidens-post/>.

Accounts that seemingly endorsed the marriage argued that marriage at a young age is preferred to engaging in a culture of young woman / girls being promiscuous and having multiple children with different men or becoming single mothers (see Figure 15).

She's very lucky. She will have blessed kids from her marriage. 🍀🍀🍀
Atleast she won't be a single mother of ntoni ntoni children. Angithi yall always ridicule that! Kushuthi Uma e wrong nani Ni wrong
I need clarity. What's the issue here - getting married to an old gentleman or something else? In fact I'm asking NOT BECAUSE I condone/condemn their Holy Matrimony, but I'm asking bcus I usually see young girls running after old guys and bring the money home and no one speaks.
According to the law that you people like so much, this is legally acceptable.
So I'm A Member Of This Church.... My Mother Married My Father At 21 And My Father Was 43.....They Are Still Happily Married with Dad being 77 Years Old And Mom 53..... Don't Take The Filthy Ways Of Our Modern World And Link Them With Our Church.....
she will have kids within marriage, no bastard kids like most women have... low body count, she will have a husband to provide and protect her and she ample time to have more kids and nature them cause she's young with lots of energy. she made a good decision

Figure 15: Responses depicting marriage as a virtue

Beyond morality, the institution of marriage and *deviant* promiscuity, several individuals did not regard marriage nor the age of the child as problematic. Two posts explicitly referenced that upon a girl having her first menstrual cycle, they are ready for marriage. Phrases such as “after 12 is lunch” serve as coded language that users often use to indicate that after a girl reaches the age of twelve, men can engage in sexual relations with said girl. Two other comments indicate that certain men are not against the marriage per se, but against the age of the individual whom she married or that “young men” do not have an opportunity to first engage in sexual relations (see Figure 16).

Age ain't nothing but a number,if she is menstruating she ready, won't have heartbreak and soul ties,this culture must be brought back
She won't know the najoyment of a 🍆 in its 20s or 30s, I'm sure she's still a virgin
don't worry guys it's only for money, by this time next week, she'll be drinking savannah and in my bed(intanga yakhe) chowing his money🤔🤔🤔
A real man will always go for a brand new car, not a 70s or 80s model that has had multiple owners, driven in rough terrains and has multiple faults showing on the dashboard. A younger dog is always easier to train. Prime and virgin land doesn't require much feeding as it is likely to be fertile already.
After 12 is lunch. 🤔🤔🤔🤔
Most men on the comments are mad because she got married before they smashed and made her a single baby mama.

Figure 16: Responses endorsing underage relationships

Conversation in respect of current dating culture in South Africa suggests that there is a perception that younger girls/women dating men who have money are more acceptable in modern society. Note that this position can be contrasted to perceptions held above in respect of marriage, where accounts suggested that marriage is preferable to promiscuity.

Limpopo Premier Phophi Ramatuba has accused healthcare workers of indirectly protecting men who make teenage girls pregnant which in many cases is also statutory rape. ow.ly/IX7y50Uxlkx	Shit just be who you are man. You don't need an origin story to turn you into a pedophile
Having a sugar daddy is acceptable but marrying a King is unacceptable, yazi nina.	 Vusi.Mz @YouDunnoVusi · May 13 A young first year boy in uni sees his crush enter the passenger seat of a m5 competition he locks in works hard touches his 30s to 40s gets a luxury car does the same thing to another first year boy man it's a viscous cycle for real
When Shembe men marry younger girls, feminists call it wrong.	11:33 AM · May 13, 2025 · 321.9K Views
When a rich guy marries younger girls, luring them with luxury, feminists say it's fine.	🗨 35 🔁 1.6K ❤ 8.1K 📌 273 🔗
When a rich king marries younger girls, feminists still approve.	
What did we do to deserve these hypocrites in our society? 🤔	

Figure 17: Posts concerning culture and age-related dating patterns

6. Proliferation of Child Sexual Abuse Material on Social Media

Part one of this report considered dating patterns and opinions/views in respect of dating girls and women below their age. This section of the report dives into the proliferation of child sexual abuse material on social media, particularly X. Wortley & Findlater et al (2024) states that the proliferation of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) has seen a significant rise since the advent of the internet.

South Africa is no different, with recent estimates indicating that there is an internet penetration rate of around 74.7%. There have been several arrests made in South Africa for perpetrators selling and/or perpetrating child pornography in the country and abroad¹⁴.

Data Overview

Terms directly correlated with the proliferation of child pornography/fantasy returned around 1072 mentions. It should be noted that this number is estimated to be very low, as image and/or video content can be shared without captioning it as well as further keywords or coded keywords being used that are not reflected in our database. Nonetheless, these posts were reposted around 8448 times with merely 243 unique authors contributing to the original posts/comments. This means that each account was responsible for about 4 posts, suggesting that a few accounts are responsible for the proliferation of CSAM or fantasy CSAM.

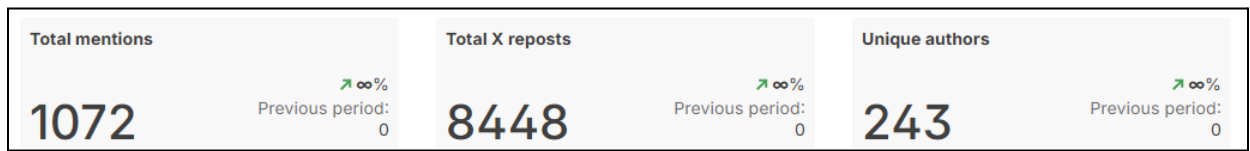


Figure 18: Metrics associated with CSAM

The volume over time graph indicates that the oscillates and varies over the year, with noticeable spikes in certain months. There was no discernible content or theme that

¹⁴ <https://www.enca.com/news/crime-sa-midrand-child-porn-suspect-court>.

initiated the spikes in the conversation, however, researchers noted the authors tended to have breaks in-between posting, posting a variety of content on a single day and then refraining from posting for some time before repeating the cycle. As such, the spikes may reflect this periodic posting pattern of authors.

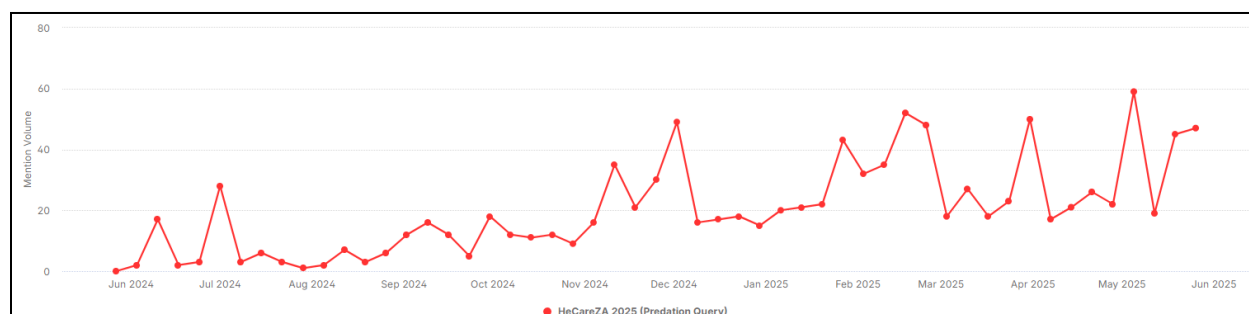


Figure 19: Volume over Time graph

Posts and Topics

In our deep dive, the research team found several posts with explicit references to statutory rape¹⁵, as well as sexual innuendos. In addition, several accounts were identified that focused solely on posting the images or videos of young children or school-going children and sexualizing the children. Below is a collection of posts from an account that focuses solely on posting children in their school clothes. The account has in and around 10,000 followers, and self-declares its location as Midrand, Johannesburg. Comments were not recorded in response to the posts, however, the account is active and posts frequently.

¹⁵ The author hereof relies on the phrasing utilized in the posts. Children below the age of 16 are unable to consent to sexual intercourse and such acts are deemed rape in South African law.

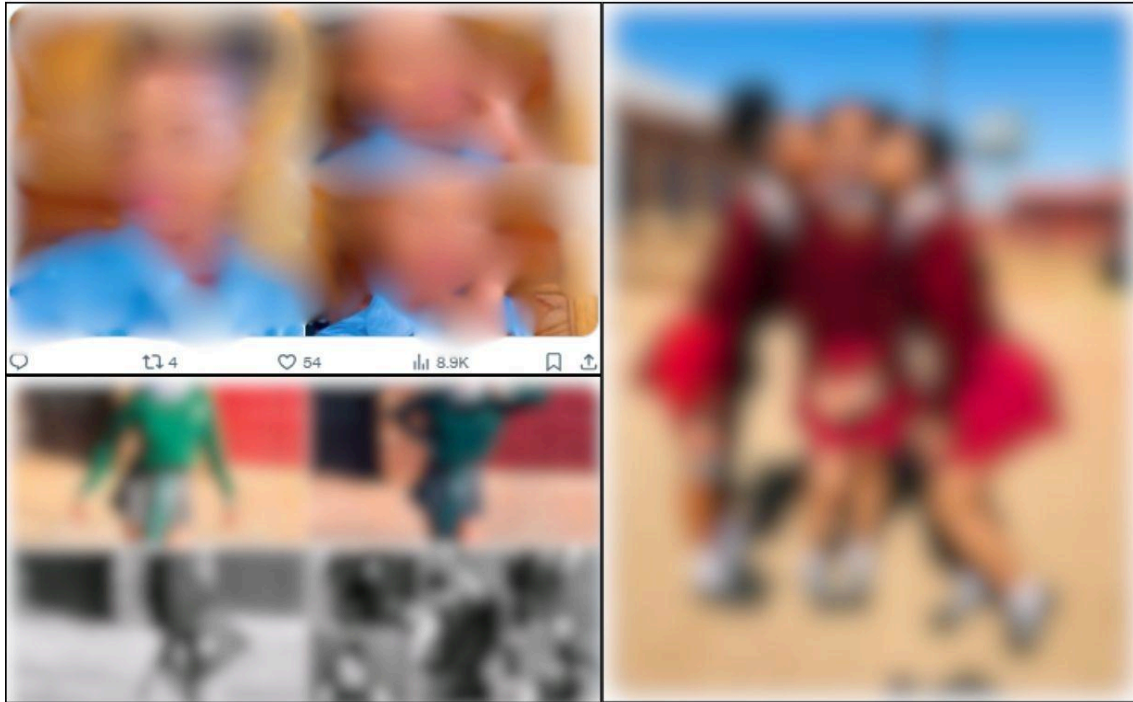


Figure 20: Posts depicting children in school clothes

Additional posts that sexualised girls that look below the age of 18 were further found as well as explicit pornography involving such girls being posted by, primarily, accounts dedicated to posting this manner of images and/or videos.

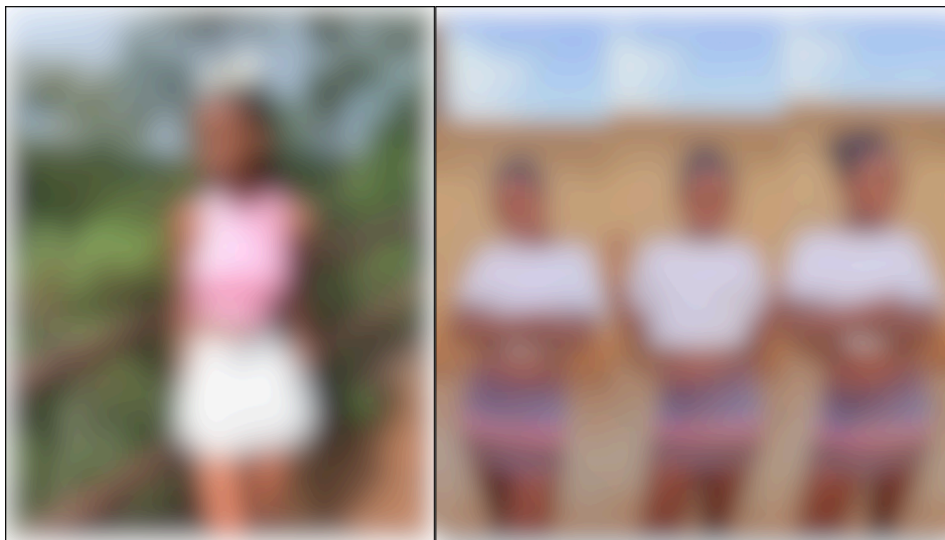


Figure 21: Posts depicting underage presenting girls

Responses commented on how beautiful the subjects were, asking the author how old the children are as well as some comments claiming that they either engaged in sexual relations with the child or they would engage in such relations with the child. It should be noted that all posts reflected above are found in accounts that are focused on child predation.

7. Discussion

Teenage Pregnancy

There does seem to be widespread agreement that teenage pregnancy remains a considerable plague in the country, however, accounts vary as to the proper manner in dealing with the issue. There are calls for immediate investigations when a teenager presents with pregnancy and to arrest the father of the child, should they be adults. On the flip side, accounts suggested that underage girls engage in sexual relationships with older men for financial incentives from the man or, in some cases, for the state welfare systems that provide grants. Concerns were raised that where a father is arrested, the child and indeed partner, lose someone to support them as well as to provide care for them, highlighting the double-edged sword that society faces in respect of teenage pregnancy. While the double-edged sword does exist, it exists solely due to the illegal and statutory rape of minor children and cannot be used as a justification.

Progress has been made in respect of the allocation of responsibility, in that, calls for men to be held accountable are more widespread. That being said, certain individuals still believe that minor children are similarly responsible by engaging in the relationships for financial gain. Individuals are further calling for accountability by immediate reporting and investigation where a minor child is impregnated which will result in increased arrests in respect of child predation.

Despite the above being noble avenues to pursue, few to none posts reflected on addressing the causal issues at play and merely sought to treat the symptoms - i.e. arresting perpetrators. This may, in and of itself, indicate that South Africans have normalised the act being committed and now seek to mitigate further risks by removing convicted perpetrators from the street.

Race Relations

A concerning finding in response to posts concerning arrests and/or identification of child predators is the deflection to race. Several posts referred to the race of the individuals who allegedly committed the crime or attempted to portray such crimes as a problem in the white community or in the black community, to the exclusion of the other. The comments were most prominent under reports of white offenders. Whether such posts were defensive in nature or in response to provocation remains uncertain.

It can, however, be conclusively stated that child predation is not more common in one race than the other. Narratives deflecting to race serve to harm children across South Africa by stigmatising a global issue as well as protecting perpetrators who do not reflect the stereotypical image. Furthermore, such comments and conversations do not provide any meaningful avenues to address child predation in the country.

Religion and Culture

The juxtaposition of religious beliefs informing morality and *perceived* modern dating culture was a key point of contestation. Certain accounts consider marriage from a young age preferable to promiscuity. Concerns were raised in respect of the age difference particularly aimed at the imbalance in power or influence where a significant age difference exists. In addition, several individuals found no issue with dating a child below the legal age bolstered by phrases such as “after twelve is lunch”.

There seems to be a perception held by certain individuals that a female has either the option to marry young or fall into promiscuity, and that one is morally superior to the other. This false dichotomy is reminiscent of victim-blaming where accountability and

indeed, stereotyping, is shifted to the female who either marries young or has multiple partners from a young age. Implicit within this narrative is the normalization of young females engaging in sexual relations which are either moral or immoral.

Sexualizing Minors Online

Represented above is a snapshot of the CSAM and/or fantasy CSAM content found on X. The content, further, seems to be quite popular with the relevant audience base as several accounts stylised similarly can be found on X and posting underage presenting females as well as girls in school attire. It is further likely that this content originates/is compiled on a different platform due to successive posting on a single day and posts containing multiple different underage presenting females images being combined.

Conclusion

This report has sought to explore child predation narratives and posts on South African social media.

It found that teenage pregnancy is regarded as a significant social ill; however, there are conflicting views on how to address it effectively. Concerns were further raised in respect of the financial gain that may be associated with minor children dating older individuals. Religion and perceived dating culture formed two key areas of the conversation with marriage being preferred over a promiscuous dating culture. Race also reared its head in the conversation with opposing groups labelling child predation as a predominantly a feature of the other's culture/practice.

Finally, in our exploration of CSAM online, we found widespread perpetuation of images/videos of school children and underage presenting females with attendant captions indicating either their age or a rough estimation thereof. Several accounts based in South Africa are stylized around this type of content and post solely images or videos of young females. Their consistent posting as well as the number of accounts engaging in perpetuating such content suggests that they do have an audience despite getting minimal engagement on their posts.

Often, their posts have significantly higher views than likes or comments which suggests that accounts view their posts however, refrain from liking or commenting. This may be due to shame or to maintain anonymity due to the social and/or legal repercussions of viewing such images / videos /content depicting child rape or the predation of children. This raises questions on the measures that social media platforms have in place to address child predation, and the responsibility on online users to hold each other accountable to report problematic content.

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Appendix

A - Methodology



Using a query designed to capture the broad conversation about interactions between men and women, this report covers February 2023. Stieglitz and colleagues (2018) identified four distinct phases in social media data analysis: (1) discovery, (2) collection, (3) preparation, and (4) analysis. Below, we describe how these phases guided our research project.

Step 1: Data Discovery

- The first step in data discovery was to draw up a list of keywords designed to isolate the broad conversation about interactions between men and women in South Africa on social media. The research and dialogue facilitation teams contributed to this list collaboratively through a shared spreadsheet. The research team focuses on quantitative analysis while the dialogue team focuses on qualitative analysis of the conversation(s).
- To create this list, the research team drew on existing knowledge combined with desktop research, a literature review and a quantitative, analytic review of social media.
- Our preliminary keyword list comprised

Step 2: Data Collection

- We “collected” the resulting data using our social media analytics platform.

Step 3: Data Preparation¹⁶

- We 'prepared' the data for analysis by refining the query. Query refinement entails sifting through the data set while looking for posts that are not relevant to interactions between men and women in South Africa. At this stage we also look at relevant posts that have not been included.
- If and when our team finds that some words could be added or removed, they are resolved by introducing additional keywords and/or exclusionary terms to the query.
- With the goal of delivering the most useful insights possible in this report, we created libraries of categories and tags to focus on the parts of online conversation that were most relevant for this project. This development of the categories and tags was based on two factors:
 1. *Prominence* - this is assessed quantitatively, using a dashboard that allows us to visualise data points, and qualitatively, using researchers' expertise, desktop research and dashboard work.
 2. *Relevance* - a qualitative assessment of whether a focus area is important enough to the strategic goals of the heCareZA project to be included. Our team makes this determination based on subject matter expertise in South African social media dynamics and whether or not further research into the focus area is likely to provide valuable information for the ongoing heCareZA Programme.

Step 4: Data analysis

- We built a dashboard in our social media analytics platform to support our data analysis. This tool produces metrics according to volume, trending topics, news stories, and unique authors in relation to the keyword list.
- Thematic analysis involves studying the emerging patterns in the data and exploring how units of meaning connect to form themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis can highlight individuals' perspectives, ideas and experiences, and can be used to generate fresh insight into the social dynamics behind human behaviour. Accordingly, we analysed the collected data thematically to interpret the data and to gain insight into dominant themes and trends.

¹⁶ New keywords and exclusions are identified both at the query and tag level on an ongoing basis.

- The goal of this analysis is to better understand what was said during the reporting period. Thematic analysis was conducted both at the query level and the tag (focus area) level.