

## NEWS RELEASE

### Research by UP master's graduate seeks to provide justice to victims of sexual assault



*Maikeleng Ledimo at UP's 2025 Autumn Graduation.*

PRETORIA - University of Pretoria (UP) graduate Maikeleng Ledimo will be graduating in May with a master's in [Nursing Science](#) (Research). Her research focuses on the importance of accurately completing the J88 form – a medico-legal document used to record the findings of a medical examination in cases of assaults and sexual offences. This form is often used as evidence in court.

“My interest in this topic emerged from repeatedly witnessing cases where perpetrators of sexual violence either avoided serving any significant sentence or received only the minimum penalty,” she says. “In many instances, offences against women – including sexual violence – were not prosecuted effectively due to a lack of crucial evidence, which often stemmed from improperly completed medico-legal documents. This recurring issue underscored the need for precision and thoroughness in completing the J88 form.”

Her research highlighted several problems that have found their way into sexual assault cases.

“Several critical issues resonate with recent high-profile cases, such as the Cwecwe case, where inadequate documentation was cited as a major factor affecting the prosecution’s ability to secure substantial sentencing, and the Omotoso case, which brought public attention to systemic deficiencies in the way medico-legal evidence is gathered.”

Additionally, her research has shown that an alarming number of medical professionals fail to accurately complete the J88 form due to limited guidance and training, and that less than 50% of healthcare professionals feel confident in completing the J88 form accurately.

“A Gauteng-based study revealed that more than 60% of J88 forms reviewed for court use were found to have errors or omissions that compromised their legal value,” Ledimo says.

So how can this problem be addressed?

“I hope that my research will serve as a catalyst for tangible improvements in both healthcare documentation practices and judicial outcomes in cases of sexual violence,” Ledimo says. “I also hope it will lead to the consistent, accurate completion of the J88 form by healthcare professionals.”

Those are not the only outcomes that she would like to see. Ledimo hopes her research will strengthen prosecution cases, thereby solving the recurring problem of sexual offenders receiving either minimal or no sentencing for their crimes due to insufficient evidence; foster dialogue between policymakers, legal practitioners and healthcare educators regarding the importance of accurately completing the J88 form; and equip healthcare providers with the skills to navigate both the medical and legal contexts of sexual assault cases; this includes taking a trauma-informed approach to victims of sexual assault.

Ensuring that victims get justice is a personal matter to Ledimo, who herself is a survivor of gender-based violence.

“I would like to make a significant contribution to criminal justice reform, ensuring that vulnerable populations receive the protection and recognition they deserve,” she adds.

Her journey at UP began in 2015, when she embarked on an undergraduate degree in nursing. She served in various leadership positions, including as a class representative, as part of faculty house leadership and as part of the [Student Representative Council’s Transformation](#) and [Student Success portfolio](#). Ledimo’s journey has been one of “resilience, purpose and becoming”, she says. During her time at UP, she’s become a wife, mother and owner of a healthcare business.

As for the future, she says she’d like to internalise her journey and reflect on her experiences.

“This was an emotionally charged experience due to the sensitivity of the crimes investigated. I wish I had reported the gender-based violence and intimate partner violence that I had been subjected to; I wish I hadn’t subjected myself to the victim blaming, and spared the perpetrator. I will definitely think long and hard about the PhD, but for now, I’ll allow myself to go through all the emotions.”

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## **ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

The University of Pretoria (UP) is one of the largest contact and residential universities in South Africa, with its administration offices located on its Hatfield Campus in Pretoria. This 115-year-old institution is also one of the largest producers of research in South Africa.

Spread over seven campuses, it has nine faculties and a business school, the [Gordon Institute of Business Science](#) (GIBS). It is the only university in the country with a [Faculty of Veterinary Science](#), which is ranked the best in Africa. UP has 120 academic departments and 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than 56 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes. It has the most academic staff with PhDs (70%), NRF-rated researchers (613).

The 2025 Times Higher Education subject rankings placed UP first in South Africa in the fields of [Accounting](#) and [Finance](#); [Architecture](#); [Electrical and Electronic Engineering](#); Law; Sport Science; and Veterinary Science. UP's Faculty of Law has been ranked as the top law school in Africa for a remarkable eighth consecutive year.

Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) ranked the University among the top five in Africa, as part of their [2024 World University Rankings \(WUR\)](#). UP was the only South African university featured in the [2023 World University Rankings for Innovation \(WURI\)](#), falling within in the 101-200 range of innovative universities.

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