

**VIEWS OF WOMEN REGARDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN THULAMELA
MUNICIPALITY, LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

By

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DECLARATION

I, Netshongolwe Rabelani, hereby declare that the dissertation submitted by me, titled “**Views of women regarding gender-based violence in Thulamela municipality, Limpopo province**” submitted by me, has not been submitted previously for a degree at this or any other University, that it is my own work in design and in execution, and that all reference material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.

Signature: ...Netshongolwe .R.....

Date:17 August 2024

DEDICATION

I would love to dedicate this project to every woman who has been a victim of GBV in the Thulamela municipality and to my two late brothers Ronnie Netshongolwe and Tshilidzi Juniour Netshongolwe, may your souls continue to rest in peace. To my lovely family, my Mom, Dad and my brothers Khathutshelo and Rendani, continue to be my support structure and pillar of strength.

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ABSTRACT

Background: South Africa is identified to be one of the most unsafe countries for women because of its high prevalence of Gender-Based violence. About 10.516 rapes, 1.514 cases of attempted murder and 14.401 assaults against female victims were recorded in 2023 (Mpako & Ndoma, 2023). Gender Links has reported that more than two thirds of women in Limpopo have had an experience on some form of gender-based violence in their lifetime, including partner and non-partner violence. Therefore, the aim of the study was to explore the views of women regarding Gender based violence. The objectives were: to explore the views of women on gender- based violence against women, to explore the social impacts of GBV towards women, to describe the effects of GBV on women as victims of GBV and to explore the potential measures that may reduce GBV against women.

Methods: The study was qualitative in nature and utilized exploratory research design to explore the views of women regarding gender-based violence. The study was conducted at the five villages with the Thulamela municipality, Thohoyandou, Lwamondo, Tshisaulu, Itsani, Muledane. A sample of 20 Tshivenda speaking women aged between the ages of 25 to 50 were selected using purposive sampling method. Semi-structured interviews and an interview guide was used during data collection process, and the study employed thematic analysis for the purpose of data analysis. Pre-testing of the interview guide was done using two participants who fell within the inclusion criteria of the study but were later excluded in the actual study. Trustworthiness of the study was assessed using credibility, conformability, dependability and transferability. Furthermore, the study adhered to the following research ethics; institutional ethics, informed consent, confidentiality, avoidance of harm, voluntary participation, publication of results and acknowledgement of others works.

Results: The findings of the study found that GBV is indeed prevalent in the Thulamela municipality. The study found psychological, social and physical impacts of GBV on women as victims of gender-based violence. The following impacts were identified: stress and depression, trauma, suicide, alcoholism, anxiety and mood disorder, low self-esteem, feelings of worthlessness and shame. Furthermore the study suggested that changing certain societal norms and expectation like normalising divorce might help reduce GBV against women.

Recommendation: based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that communities are to change certain societal expectations and norms and teach females to be more independent financially to reduce the number of females who become victims of GBV. The study further recommends that the department of justice along with the department of correctional services to give longer sentences to perpetrators of GBV.

Key words: Gender based violence, trauma, and societal norms

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

DV	Domestic Violence
EU	European Union
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
IPV	Interpersonal Violence
NCADV	National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
OXFAM	Oxford Committee for Feminine Relief
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
SA	South Africa
SAPS	South African Police Services
STDs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
TVEP	Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
US	United States
VAW	Violence Against Women
VAWA	Violence Against Women Act
WHO	World Health Organisation

1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

Gender-based violence can be defined as violence occurring amongst males and females due to power inequality amongst the two genders that often leaves females at the receiving end of the violence. This kind of violence is precisely directed to a person depending on their sexuality (Benoit et al, 2015). In the sub-Saharan Africa, 10.5% of young females get into marriage before they reach 15 (Faria, 2021). Nduna and Tshona (2021) further added that in South Africa, particularly in Limpopo province, nearly 77% of females are reported to have gone through a type of emotional, physical, and sexual violence. The background, problem statement and rationale are presented on the current chapter. Additionally, the significance, aim, objectives, questions and delimitations of this study will be clearly outlined and key terms will also be defined to enhance clarity to the reader.

1.2 Background to the study

Gender-Based Violence against females is an epidemic that affects females of all stature and ages on variant locations, domains of life and surroundings. This has both social, emotional, psychological as well as physical effects on the victim (Thobejane, 2019). It is reported that most young females are victimised within their families or by their family members (WHO, 2018). In the United States, it is projected that in a period of 12 months at least 10 million of individuals go through domestic violence (Lawrenz, 2023). In every 4 females, at least 1 of them becomes a victim of IPV physically, sexually which includes contraction of STDs and also develop PTSD (World J Psychiatry, 2021). In Oklahoma, 49% of the female population is subjected to domestic violence with IPV during their lifetime. Oklahoma has the uppermost stats of females who are murdered by males in the United States (Maupin & Keitt, 2023). Women still continue to be victims of GBV amongst other states in the U.S. with Kentucky having 45.3% of female victims of Domestic Violence and Missouri having 41.8% on Intimate Partner Violence and physical violence female victims. About 43.8% Nevadan women have become victims of Domestic Violence in their life time while about 42.6% women in Arizona are violated physically and sexually by their intimate partners. During the month March 2022, the U.S president reauthorized an act to eliminate violence towards women (VAWA). It has been reported that cases of DV and sexual assault appreciably went down after the reauthorisation of VAWA and accessibility to services to assist survivors improved (NCADV, 2022; The White House Briefing room, 2022).

During the COVID-19 lockdowns imposed in the Southern African countries, some homes across the region became enclaves of cruelty, rape and violence for women and girls trapped with abusive family members and have nowhere to report or escape the danger (Amnesty International, 2021). In Zambia, a total of 4 042 cases of GBV were reported countrywide during the third quarter of 2021, 100 rape cases were reported, and 16 attempted rape cases were recorded during the same period (Lusaka times, 2022). Under physical abuse, the country recorded 2 427 cases and 1 849 victims of those reported cases were women. During the same period, about 20 murder cases were reported and 12 out of those 20 cases were female victims. As a way of stopping and preventing GBV, Zambia came into partnership with USAID in an attempt to prevent and stop gender-based violence in the country. The USAID STOP GBV projects use community mobilisation programs that promote gender norms change and strengthen the capacity of local systems to respond to GBV and support one-stop GBV response care (USAID, 2020; Zambia Police stats, 2021).

A study conducted by Giovetti (2019), indicated that gender stereotypes are often used to justify GBV, especially violence against women, conveniently citing the oft-advanced excuse that cultural norms often dictate that men are aggressive, controlling, and dominant while women are docile, subservient and rely on men as providers. However, these norms can foster a culture of abuse outright such as early and forced marriage. WHO (2021) further added that Gender Inequality and norms on the acceptability of violence against women are the root causes of violence against women.

In 2021, Statistics South Africa released a report, Crimes Against Women in South Africa, indicating that one in five women (21%) had experienced physical violence by a partner. South Africa is notorious for its high levels of gender-based violence. The SAPS statistics for reported rape cases for 2019/2020 is 42 289 and for sexual assault is 7 749 amid huge under-reporting of rape (Department of police, 2020). During the Covid 19 lockdown period, the SAPS reported receiving 2 300 calls for help related to gender-based violence (Montsho, 2021). In May 2020, Gauteng police opened 1 426 cases linked to gender-based violence and domestic abuse following the implementation of Level 5 lockdown. The majority of cases were reported in the Johannesburg police area, followed by Tshwane, Sedibeng, the West Rand and Ekurhuleni (Seleka 2020). Similarly, a community-based prevalence study conducted in three provinces of South Africa found that 26% of women in the Eastern Cape, 28.4% of women in Mpumalanga and 19.1% of women in the Northern Province (Limpopo) had been physically assaulted in their lifetime by a current or ex-partner (Nemasisi, 2017). Gender-based violence remains a problem in Limpopo. In 2020, the Social Development Department was reported to have handled 673 cases of GBV by September during the lockdown period (Mamokgere,

2020). In 2021 the Thohoyandou police station in Vhembe district recorded the second highest number of rape cases during July and September 2021 (SAPS Media statement, 2021).

Although the South African government has campaigns like the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence towards women and children, there is, however, still an increase in GBV cases every year. In February 2022, President Cyril Ramaphosa approved the amendment of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and related matters) Amendment Act Amendment bill; the Criminal and Related Matters Amendment Bill, and the Domestic Violence Amendment Bill (SoNA, 2022). According to SA news (2022), the implementation of this legislation will go a long way to ensuring that cases are successfully prosecuted, that survivors are supported and that there are more effective deterrents in place. However, it is important to educate and make awareness on the root causes of GBV against women rather than focusing on the aftermath of GBV. Having adequate knowledge on GBV and how it affects the victims will assist individuals and society in general to change certain gender roles and stereotypes that perpetuate GBV against women and practice gender equality. The present study seeks to focus on the views of women regarding gender-based violence in the Thulamela municipality where there is a high rate of GBV cases, to explore GBV from the participants' view point.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The alarming prevalence of GBV in South Africa has drawn persistent calls for serious and protracted interventions by the general public. Regrettably, public awareness initiatives such as the annual Department of Social Development's (DSD's) "sixteen days of activism for no violence against women and children" appear to be not having enough impact. According to Safer Spaces (2015), the South African government and civil society has committed to take forward the awareness and vision of the 16 Days of Activism for no Violence against Women and Children Campaign and expand it to be year-round, well known as the (# 365 Days of Activism Campaign). Previous studies have underscored that a significant proportion of women in the Thulamela municipality are subjected to gender-based violence (Thobejane, 2019). Despite the efforts from both governmental and civil society sectors to address the issue of gender-based violence through various interventions, the persistence of gender-based violence remains a pressing concern. However, it has been observed from the SAPS Media Statement (2021) that GBV cases are on the rise within the country with Thohoyandou SAPS reporting the second-highest number of rape cases from July to September 2021. Exploring the views of women regarding gender-based violence in the Thulamela municipality would therefore be of substantial benefit to the wider South African society.

According to the Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Programme (TVEP), the Vhembe District Municipality was the centre of the highest reported cases of domestic violence in Limpopo Province in the first quarter of 2012/2013 with 2 553 GBV reported cases (Rikhotso, 2022). In 2019, Health-e News reported that in the Vhembe district, more than 13 000 gender-based violence cases were opened, ranging from rape and domestic violence to murder (Mukwevho, 2021). Rikhotso (2022) added that a study involving 268 sampled women who consecutively received a protection order in the Vhembe district indicates that 40.7 % of these women reported sexual violation once or more during their intimate partner relationships in the preceding three months. Another 58.2% of these women were found to have been stalked by their intimate partner. About 94% of these women reported psychological abuse, while physical violence was reported by about 93.7 % and danger by 99.3 % of the sampled women participants. To single out a particularly outrageous incident, in November 2018, a 23-year-old woman was brutally stabbed to death by her 26-year-old boyfriend, merely for refusing to consent to his sexual demand (Sowetan, 2017).

1.4 Rationale of the study

Several studies have been conducted on gender-based violence worldwide but only a few were done in the Thulamela municipality. The researcher was motivated to conduct the study because none of the GBV studies that were done in the Thulamela municipality placed their focus on the causes and effects of GBV on women. The current study explores GBV from a unique point of view that differs from other previous studies. It explores the views of women regarding GBV from the female perspective. More GBV related cases are reported in the Thulamela municipality and the researcher thought it is important to conduct a study on the views of women regarding GBV based in Thulamela municipality. The researcher chose to focus on women's perspectives of GBV due to the observation that women are most likely to be victims of GBV compared to men. This has been observed from SAPS statistics on GBV.

1.5 Significance of the study

Human behaviour is guided by gender roles that are instilled in us from a younger age; most males who are perpetrators of Gender Based Violence use these gender roles as an excuse for their violent behaviour. Many women who are victims of GBV tolerate these violent behaviours all in the name of being a "woman" as they are expected to respect and be subordinate to men. This study is important as it explores the views of women regarding gender-based violence and how it affects them. The findings of this study may add to the pool of knowledge, which means that the community at large will have deep knowledge and a better understanding on women's views on GBV. The government and policy makers might also benefit from this study and it might also help them in implementing new policies that may assist

in preventing GBV towards women and changing old policies that may encourage gender inequality and perpetuate GBV. This study may help women understand that being a woman does not mean they should tolerate abuse and allow men to violate their rights and make them feel inferior. Both men and women may gain enough knowledge and education on GBV and how it affects them and their children, this includes abandoning parenting styles that encourage gender inequality so that we can have a future GBV-free nation.

1.6 Aim of the study

- The purpose of this study was to explore the views of women regarding gender-based violence.

1.7 Objectives of the study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- To explore the views of women on gender-based violence against women
- To explore the social impacts of GBV towards women
- To describe the effects of GBV on women as victims of GBV
- To explore the potential measures that may reduce GBV against women.

1.8 Research questions

These research questions were generated in a quest to achieve the study objectives:

- What are women's views on gender-based violence against women?
- What are the social impacts of GBV towards women?
- What are the effects of GBV on women as victims of GBV?
- What might be the proposed measures that could reduce GBV against women?

1.9 Delimitation of the study

The study only focused on females and their views on gender-based violence; therefore only females between the ages of 25-50 currently residing within the Thulamela municipality in the Vhembe district, Limpopo were the study participants. The researcher chose this age group due to the observation that most women within this age group were most likely to be involved in intimate relationships and would have experienced some form of GBV within their relationships or marriages or rather know someone who has experienced GBV in their lifetime.

1.11 Definitions of key terms

Gender stereotypes

Breda (2020) defines gender stereotypes as beliefs that people have about the characteristics of males and females. These expectations are often related to the roles that the sexes fulfil in culture. In this study, gender stereotypes will also refer to beliefs that people have about the characteristics of males and females.

Gender- based violence

Gender-based violence is violence that is directed at an individual based on his or her biological sex or gender identity. It includes physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and psychological abuse, threats, coercion, and economic or educational deprivation, whether occurring in public or private life (Meghan Ott, 2017). In this study, Gender-Based Violence will refer to violence specifically directed to women.

Culture

Culture is the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterise a society or a group (Smith, 2019). In this study, culture refers to the way of living that characterises a group of people or society.

Gender norms

Gender norms are the social rules and expectations that keep the gender system intact (Cislaghi, 2019). In this study gender norms also refer to social rules and expectations that keep the gender system intact.

1.12 Layout of the thesis

Chapter 1

This chapter provides the background of the study, problem statement, significance of the study, aim of the study, objectives of the study. Research questions, rationale, delimitation of the study and definitions of the key terms will also be outlined in the chapter.

Chapter 2

This chapter presents the theoretical framework that underpins the study.

Chapter 3

This chapter provides relevant literature from different sources related to Gender-Based Violence towards women, this includes causes of GBV, effects and potential measures that can reduce GBV towards women.

Chapter 4

This chapter presents the research methods and all related procedures that were utilised in conducting the current study.

Chapter 5

This chapter presents the findings and the analysis of the study. The demographic profile of the participants is also presented in the chapter.

Chapter 6

This chapter provides a discussion on the findings of the study and also links the findings to other studies on broadly similar topics.

Chapter 7

This chapter presents the summary of the study, limitations, and implications for future research, recommendations and the conclusion of the study.

1.13 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the study by outlining an overview of the study, problem statement, the importance of the study, aim of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, and delimitations of study. Additionally, this chapter also summarised the rationale of the study and concluded with definitions of the key terms as well as outlining the layout of the study. The next chapter discuss the theory that addresses the views of women regarding Gender-Based Violence.

2. CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a theoretical perspective on the development of gender-based violence. There are numerous theories that address the development of female oppression (including gender-based violence). However, this chapter will only focus on a specific theoretical framework. Directed by the study, the researcher only selected a specific theory to use as a guide.

2.2 The theoretical framework

There are three main contributing factors to gender roles, mainly culture, gender norms and schema (Cherry, 2020). Children learn about male and female roles from the culture in which they live. Every culture has its own unique behavioural expectations for both men and women. What is acceptable from a woman/man also differs from culture to culture (Cherry, 2020). In most cultures, these expectations are associated with female oppression by men and the acceptance of violence against women. Culture is essentially a huge contributing factor to gender-based violence alongside patriarchy. When the system of patriarchy manifests itself within the family, a man feels that beating his woman is his inalienable right because by so doing, he is viewed as a disciplinarian (Thobejane, 2019). This study will be guided by the Gender Schema Theory. The researcher chose this theory because it puts emphasis on the development of both gender roles and gender-based violence from a cultural perspective. The selected theory is discussed next.

2.2.1 The Gender Schema Theory

The Gender Schema Theory was introduced by psychologist Sandra Bem in 1981 and asserted that children learn about male and female roles from the culture in which they live. According to the theory, children adjust their behaviour to align with the gender norms of their

culture from the earliest stages of social development (Cherry, 2020). Cherry (2020), further adds that Bem's theory was influenced by the cognitive revolution of the 1960s and 1970s as well as her desire to remedy what she believed to be shortcomings in the psychoanalytic and social learning theories of the time. Bem suggested that Freudian theories were too focused on the influence of anatomy on gender development and she instead proposed that a child's cognitive development combined with societal influences largely influence the patterns of thought (schema) that dictate "male" and "female" traits (Cherry, 2020).

According to Bem's theory, people fall into one of four gender categories:

- Sex-typed individuals- these are individuals who identify with their gender and process information through the lens of that gender schema.
- Cross-typed individuals- these ones process information through the lens of the opposite gender.
- Androgynous individuals- these ones exhibit both masculine and feminine thinking.
- Undifferentiated individuals- they do not show consistent use of sex-typed processing

In the context of this study, gender schemas have an impact not only on how people process information but on the attitudes and beliefs that direct "gender-appropriate behaviour". For example, a child who lives in a very traditional culture might believe that a woman's role is in the caring and raising of children, while a man's role is in work and industry (Canavello, 2020). Through these observations, children form gender schema related to what men and women can and cannot do. It also dictates a person's value and potential in that culture. For example, a girl raised in a traditional culture might believe that the only path available to her as a woman is to get married and raise children. By contrast, a girl raised in a more progressive culture might pursue a career, avoid having children, or decide not to get married.

Many of these influences are overt, while others are more subtle. For instance, even the placement of gender titles in vocabulary "how men and women are meant to behave" inherently places women in a secondary position by rule (Canavello, 2020). All these influences add up to how gender schema is formed. Within this construct, men and women are tacitly aware of the consequences of not adhering to the cultural norm (Canavello, 2020). A woman who decides to pursue a career for instance, might be considered "uppity" in traditional culture or be considered "unfair" or "disrespectful" to her husband if she does not take his last name.

This is one of the reasons why some men may use violence as a way of discipline or making sure that a woman stays within “her lane”. The Gender Schema Theory provides a useful framework for understanding how knowledge structures of gender are formed, however it has not avoided all criticism. This theory just like any other theories has its own weaknesses. One weakness of the theory is that it fails to account for the ways biology or social interactions impact gender development. In addition, the content of the gender schema remains unclear. While the theory is meant to account for the process, not the content of this schema, it is difficult to measure with no content. Despite the worldwide shift towards greater acceptance of non-traditional gender roles, individuals perceived to have non-conforming gender expression continue to be victimised and subjected to discrimination. Non-conforming gender expression, or conveying feelings of masculinity or femininity through one’s appearance and behaviour in a way non-concordant with the ways society has assigned to one’s biological sex, has been linked to a myriad of negative outcomes including verbal and physical victimisation, parental and peer rejection, childhood bullying, and suicidality. However, the Gender Schema theory helped the researcher to understand the development of gender roles from a cultural perspective.

2.3 Conclusion

This study adopted the Gender-schema theory by Sandra Bem to explore the views of women regarding Gender-based violence. This theory explains how gender schema can influence GBV and how both men and women’s behaviour is shaped by these schemas. The next chapter reviewed the literature on the views of women regarding gender-based violence.

3. CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. INTRODUCTION

According to Fink (2014), a literature review examines books, research studies, and any other sources relevant to a particular problem, field of study, or theory and, in doing so, offers a description, summary, and critical evaluation of these works in relation to the research problem under investigation. Therefore, this chapter starts by providing the foundation of knowledge on GBV as defined in the literature, presents the historical account of GBV in South Africa, and further reviews the trends and patterns of GBV, causes and effects of GBV as well as reviewing the prevalence of GBV in European countries.

3.2 GBV defined

Otti (2021) defined gender-based violence (GBV) as a form of violence committed against a person based on his or her biological sex gender identity. Threats, coercion, economic or educational repression, as well as physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and psychological abuse are included in all typologies of GBV (Otti, 2021). Gender-based violence can happen in either public or private life. Researchers (George, 2020 and Mazza, 2020), and organizations (ILO, 2019) have given several definitions of GBV. It is a generic word that is used to describe violence that arises from uneven power connections between the sexes within the setting of a particular society as well as from the normative roles that each gender is expected to play (Mazza, 2020). The focus of this section to review previous studies and identify literature gaps that exists regarding the experiences of women on and girls as victims of GBV, but this is not to say that men and boys are not also sometimes victims. Statistically, however, females are more likely to be victims than males (Selin et al., 2021).

The most commonly used definition of GBV is found in the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, which states that it includes any act of gender-based violence that causes or is likely to cause physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, as well as threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrarily denying people their freedom (UN Women, 2020). Violence against women is also defined by Moolman (2016) as including, but not limited to, the following: physical, sexual, and psychological abuse that occurs in the family [and in the community], such as assault, sexual abuse of female children, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation, non-spousal violence, and violence related to exploitation, such as sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution and violence perpetrated or condoned by the state.

According to the UN Population Fund (2020), women and adolescent girls are the main targets or victims of GBV. However, in addition to being highly at risk of GBV, they also adverse effects than men do. Women have limited options and resources available to them to flee or evade violent circumstances and seek justice as a result of gender discrimination and their lower socioeconomic status. Additionally, women and adolescent girls experience negative effects on their sexual and reproductive health, such as forced and undesired pregnancies, unsafe abortions that result in fatalities, traumatic fistula, and increased risks of STIs and HIV (UN Women, 2020).

3.3 Historical account of GBV in South Africa

Human Rights Watch has dubbed South Africa the "rape capital of the world" due to the country's high rates of domestic violence, rape, and other gender-based crimes. When it comes to equality, South African women are confronted with significant obstacles because of the country's history of apartheid-era oppression (George, 2020). The long battle against South Africa's apartheid rule, which had its roots in the dominant European colonization of the country, was finally put to rest in 1994 when the country had its first democratic elections (Meyiwa et al., 2017). Perhaps for the first time in the history of the country, equality and democracy appeared to be attainable realities.

Before apartheid was abolished, cultural and judicial norms justified violence committed by the ruling class against those who were marginalized. Meyiwa et al. (2017) reiterated that racial policies that granted white South Africans rights and status that their Black

contemporaries were consciously denied or were the most blatant manifestation of the injustices of apartheid. However, these disparities and methods of dominance pervaded every social minority, including women. During apartheid, there were very few social and legal frameworks in place to safeguard women from gender-based violence, and the judicial system that did exist generally did not work in the victims' favour. Since the South African government at the time only recognized rape if the perpetrator used his penis to penetrate the victim, Armstrong's (1994) apartheid-era research discovered a high prevalence of rapes against older women using bottles and tin cans as penetrative weapons; the harshest legal charge that rapists who used objects could receive was assault. Judges had to base their decisions on their own biases because the South African Department of Justice had not developed sentencing standards for rape or other types of sexual assault. For many years, the "Cautionary Rule" obliged the courts to evaluate the veracity of women's rape claims that were not backed up by tangible evidence or eyewitness accounts.

Due to the widespread mistreatment of women, only 53% of rape cases were successfully prosecuted in 1992, compared to 86% of non-sexual assault cases (Manby and Nowrojee, 1995). According to Stauffer (2015), this led to a subjective court system where sexual assault charges varied greatly and women's accounts of their personal assault experiences were not taken seriously. Furthermore, authorities condoned the use of physical violence against wives by their husbands. Domestic violence was prevalent and essentially unpunished at the time because wife-beating was both normal and legal (Stauffer, 2015). Meyiwa et al., (2017) posits that despite the social gains, effective policies to protect women and victims of GBV remains problematic. Although various government and social ventures have put efforts and programs in place to address the scourge of GBV, cultural gender inequality still evidently persists in South Africa (Gorge, 2020). Therefore, this study seeks to tap into the views, knowledge and perceptions of women towards GBV in the context of rural South Africa.

3.4. Prevalent forms of GBV

There are many different forms of violence, ranging from intimate partner violence to non-intimate partner violence. All these types of violence can be – and almost always are – gendered in nature, because of how gendered power inequalities are entrenched in the society. GBV can be physical, sexual, emotional, financial or structural, and can be perpetrated by intimate partners, acquaintances, strangers and institutions.

3.4.1 Intimate partner violence

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is defined as abuse or prejudice that takes place in a romantic relationship (Mthembu et al., 2021). Both former spouses and dating partners are considered to be an "intimate partner" in this context. The occurrence rate and level of severity of IPV are both different. It might range from a single violent incident that might have long-lasting effects to repeated, severe incidents that endure for years. WHO (2013), defines IPV as any act of physical or sexual aggression or harm, sexual coercion, controlling behaviours, or psychological or emotional abuse by a current or former partner or spouse within an intimate relationship.

The burden of IPV has increased over the past ten years despite multiple intervention attempts (Selina et al., 2019). According to the World Health Organization's (2013) report, the global rate of IPV among women who have never been in a relationship is roughly 30%, with comparable percentages predicted for sub-Saharan Africa. According to StatsSA (2017), South Africa is one of the nations where women experience IPV at the highest rates in the world. IPV among adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) is garnering more attention as a result of its pervasiveness and serious health repercussions, according to a growing body of research.

The South African government has committed to addressing the causes and effects of violence against women by gathering essential data to guide prevention efforts in response to the growing problem of IPV (Department of Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities, 2020). A lack of reporting still poses a problem despite these progressive adjustments, and the government's response is inconsistent and inadequate. In order to inform lasting prevention efforts, a better knowledge of the burden of IPV and related factor risk is essential to obtaining a more accurate picture of the true burden and its impact within populations. On the population-based prevalence and risk factors for IPV in South Africa, however, there is scant evidence (Mthembu et al., 2021).

3.4.2 Interpersonal violence

Interpersonal violence happens when one person abuses their position of power and influence over another by making threats or taking action that is physical, sexual, or emotional, controlling their finances, isolating them, or using other coercive methods. The most prevalent

kinds of interpersonal violence that college students encounter are sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, and stalking. A partner, ex-partner, friend, or stranger are all capable of committing interpersonal violence. Most of the time, the victim is familiar with the perpetrator. Any person can experience interpersonal violence, regardless of their gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, religion, ability, age, or country of birth.

Over 520 000 individuals die from interpersonal violence annually on a global scale. There are severe long-term physical, psychological, economic, and social effects of nonfatal violence that are also quite gravely (WHO, 2013). With 90% of violent deaths occurring in low- and middle-income countries, the burden is unequally spread, and within countries, the socioeconomically weak are more vulnerable. Interpersonal violence has traditionally been viewed as an inevitable occurrence, and an evidence-based approach for prevention has just recently been propagated (Sethi and Butchart, 2017). A growing body of research is available on primary prevention, which can stop violence, which is frequently cyclical in nature. According to Sethi and Butchart (2017), one of issues that society faces is gaining the political support necessary to address the present levels and norms of violence, as well as risk factors like poverty and alcohol abuse that encourage interpersonal violence in all of its widespread manifestations.

3.4.3. Masculinity and GBV

According to Connell (quoted in Dewing, 2007), masculinities have to do with expectations about how males ought to act in a certain society. Dominance, rivalry, assertiveness, physical prowess, bravery, aggression, risk-taking, heterosexuality, and homophobia represent every facet of masculinity. GBV, however, serves to legitimize male dominance over both women and other males. On the other side, femininity has been portrayed as being dependent, subservient, and conforming. According to the gender distribution of labour, males generally hold positions as the primary source of income for the family and women typically hold these positions (Amato, 2013). The latter group still encounters significant obstacles when attempting to participate in political and socioeconomic decision-making processes. The historical practice of denying education to women out of fear that they would become outraged and disrespectful to their husbands is still prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa. As a result, women were and occasionally still are perceived as weak in leadership abilities. Maleness and the notion that males make better leaders than women have historically been linked to leadership (Chitando, 2007). However, other research shows that women are superior to men as leaders.

This is because women are more approachable than men due to their caring traits including kindness, patience, and good listening abilities (Maqubela, 2013).

Masculinities and GBV include social behaviours that uphold and reinforce the idea that men and women are different and that women are subordinate in societies. Masculinities have an impact on GBV against women and other men through socialization. By promoting patriarchy and societal gender norms, patriarchy also serves to sustain exploitation. According to Thobejane (2014), domestic violence incidents in South Africa have been predominately driven by a patriarchal system that shows up in terms of culture and customs. Thobejane (2014) adds that women are socially constructed to be weak, minors, homemakers, emotional, executors of men's decisions, and followers in femininities. All of these, however, have been constructed socially by the global patriarchal cultural system's social determinants.

3.4.4. Domestic violence

The most prevalent type of GBV between partners is domestic violence. It frequently entails physical violence or threats of violence. Sexual assault, physical abuse, coercion, and sexual harassment are some forms of this violence that may occur (Piper and Mark, 2015). According to the WHO, 27% of women in relationships who are between the ages of 15 and 49 have reported experiencing physical or sexual abuse from their spouse. According to estimates, the lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence ranges from 20% in the Western Pacific, 22% in high-income countries and Europe, and 25% in the WHO regions of the Americas to 33% in the WHO African region, 31% in the WHO eastern Mediterranean region, and 33% in the WHO Southeast Asia region (WHO, 2021).

Why doesn't (s) he leave is a question that is frequently posed in regard to domestic violence. Domestic violence is a multifaceted phenomenon that frequently extends to physical, psychological, emotional, and economic forms of abuse, therefore there is no easy way to respond to this matter in question. It could frequently result in "battered woman syndrome," in which a woman in an abusive relationship begins to feel helpless, unworthy, and powerless [in an] abusive status quo as it is (Deane, 2018). This syndrome, however, ignores other explanations for why women continue to be in violent relationships and does not explain why some women kill their abusive partners. Such factors might include monetary reliance on the abuser, pressures from society, and a lack of alternatives, such as abuse victim shelters (UN, 2021). Domestic abuse usually includes detaching ties with friends and relatives, taking away

things, controlling kids, and threatening retaliation against the victim, the kids, or other family members. Furthermore, getting out of an abusive relationship is frequently not only challenging but also potentially dangerous due to widespread social pressures about the structure of a family, such as the idea that "some kind of father is better than no father for your children". The so-called "Cycle of Violence" offers yet another explanation for why people continue to be in abusive relationships (Otti, 2021).

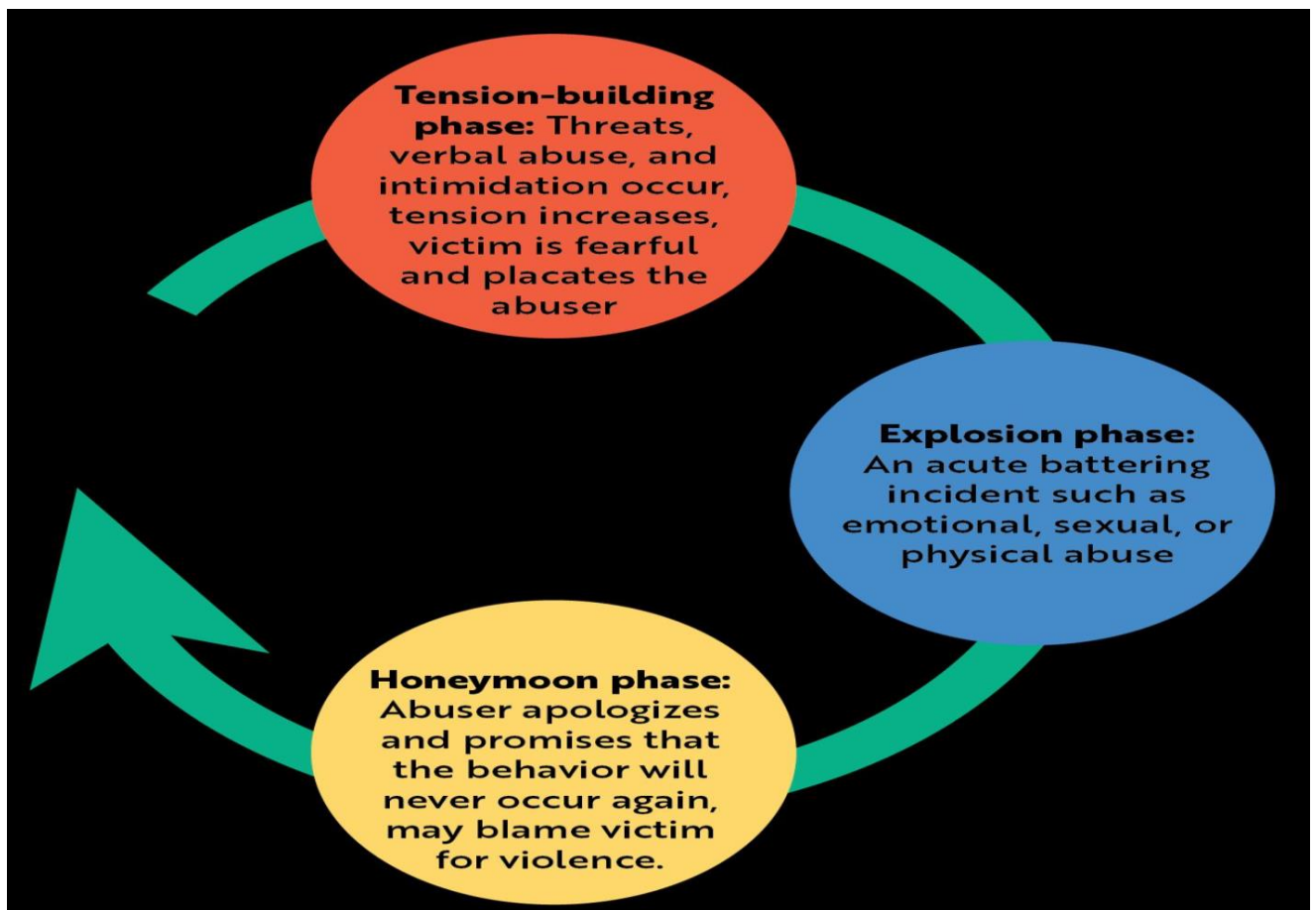


Figure 1: Cycle of abuse

Source Deane (2018)

This cycle of abuse involves both instinctive and reactive as well as determined and planned behaviour. Through assurances and denials, it seeks to maintain the relationship with the victim. The fundamental cycle entails a violent outburst, which is followed by a so-called "honeymoon period" marked by a sharp improvement in the abuser's behaviour (Gibbs et al., 2018). Since victims usually compare this time to the early stages of a relationship, it is known

as the honeymoon period. The abuser typically apologizes extensively for their actions, makes commitments to do better, and in some cases even offers gifts. This phase, however, is transitory because its sole purpose is to reassure the victim's concerns about the future of the relationship. Since no one loves to recall unpleasant situations, the victim tends to participate and is involved at this point. The victim so appreciates the supposed adjustments and promises offered. However, the previous power structure is reinstated after the victim's concerns have been cleared up (Otti, 2021).

The UN (2021) women's rights committee has found that South Africa's low rates of prosecution and conviction in domestic violence cases, along with the police's numerous failures to serve and enforce protection orders, exposed survivors to repeated abuse and led to the violation of women's fundamental rights. Many women and girls in South Africa, especially in rural areas, are victims of harmful practices, including child marriage, abduction for marriage ("ukuthwala") and polygamy or polygamous unions that often give rise to domestic violence.

3.4.5. Physical violence

This type of GBV include shoving, kicking, punching, and other physical violence. Physical aggression often involves the use of weapons like knives and other pointed objects (Mthembu et al., 2021). Beating, burning, kicking, punching, biting, maiming, killing, or the use of items or weapons are all examples of physical violence. Some classifications place human trafficking and slavery under the heading of physical violence due to the initial coercion that is frequently present and the fact that those involved frequently become the targets of additional violence as a result of their enslavement.

According to Nqopisi (2017), physical violence is any act intended to inflict or really causing pain and/or physical harm. As with other acts of violence, the primary intent of the perpetrator is not just to inflict bodily harm on the other person, though this may not always be the case, but also to restrict their right to self-determination. Through physical abuse, the perpetrator makes it clear to the victim that "I can do things to you that you do not want to happen." Such violence exposes societal power disparities or may be used to coercively advance certain demands on a regular basis. Domestic violence, which is the term for physical abuse in close relationships, is a problem in every nation, including South Africa (WHO, 2021).

3.4.6. Emotional violence

Verbal abuse, calling someone a name, and demeanour abuse are common components of emotional violence. Acts of humiliation, contempt, and embarrassment are involved. One's feeling of self, self-worth, and confidence are all impacted by these behaviours (Nqopisi,

2017). Mthembu et al. (2017) define psychological violence as any circumstance that negatively impacts a person's values, qualifications, self-confidence, or mental structure. Examples of such scenarios include humiliation, disrespect, discrimination, ridicule, obstruction, display, and forcing (to a work). According to Zgentürk et al. (2012), all forms of action imply emotional violence when they are used to isolate someone from society with the intention of dominating or punishing them, to take advantage of and degrade them emotionally, or to apply constant psychological pressure.

Zgentürk et al. (2012), further assert that all forms of behaviour are emotional violence used to isolate a person from society with the intention of controlling or punishing, to take advantage of and degrade them emotionally, and to apply consistent psychological pressure. İşiloğlu (2006) defines it as all of the acts impairing the mental health implemented without physical pressure that are neglecting emotional needs such as affection and support, denying of beliefs attributed to religion, race, language, cultural group or history or forcing to act against them, humiliating and hurting pride in front of others, threatening physical violence, restricting the freedom of the person to express their feelings and thoughts, prohibiting the conversation and communication with relatives, restricting the freedom of dressing as desired.

Çetiner (2006) reports that there is a close relationship between psychological/emotional violence and physical violence, and the degree of physical violence is directly related to the degree of emotional violence, and although physical violence decreases, psychological/emotional violence usually continues and it continues to be as a threat of the physical violence. For this reason, approximately three-quarters of women who experience physical violence feel that emotional violence has a more negative effect than physical violence. Şahin and Türk (2010) contend that psychological violence is more dangerous than physical violence because psychological violence may have permanent psychological and psychosomatic effects. Westhues (2002) emphasizes that violence is experienced at a more intense level than it is known, or that a greater number of people than it is anticipated are exposed to violent attitudes and behaviours with them being aware or not. Although there are no physical symptoms, emotional violence is one of the most difficult to treat health problems.

3.4.7. Economic violence

When the abuser has full oversight over the victim's finances and other economic resources or activities, this is considered economic violence. Economic violence against women occurs when a male abuser maintains control over the family's finances, dictating how the money is

to be spent or saved without taking the needs of the women into consideration, leaving the women in total financial dependence. Women may be forced to beg or [are] placed on a strict allowance (United Nations Fund for Women [UNIFEM], 1999). Women may have a comfortable lifestyle, and their children may have a luxurious lifestyle, but they are not in charge of the family's finances or the decisions regarding how they should be spent. As the violence continues, women receive less money. Men may abuse their financial advantage to rule over women. According to the Prince Edward Island Woman Abuse Protocols (2000), economic violence can also take the form of stealing women's money, denying them independent access to money, excluding them from financial decision-making, and damaging their property.

It also includes actions like declining to make a financial contribution, denying access to food and other necessities, keeping women from starting or finishing their education or from finding a job, whether it be formal or informal, and restricting access to agricultural and medical resources (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2000). Furthermore, it may take the form of restrictive access to financial services like cash and credit, unequal pay for work that is on par with that of men in terms of value, and discriminatory laws governing inheritance, property rights, use of communal land, and maintenance following divorce or widowhood (Heise, Ellsberg, & Goheemoeller, 1999). Economic violence has poverty as both a cause and a result (Chen, 2005; World Health Organization [WHO], 2013). Women unfortunately experience poverty at a higher rate than males (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2005). 70% of the 1.5 billion poor people in the planet are women (Chen, 2005). Economic discrimination against women is a result of this. Ensuring that women and men have equal opportunities to generate and manage income is an important step toward realizing women's rights under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This would also enhance their development, self-esteem, and influence both within the household and in society (Singh, 2020).

3.4.8. Sexual violence

According to WHO (2021), sexual violence is defined as the act of coercing or manipulating another person into engaging in unwelcome sexual behaviour without that person's consent. Any sexual act or attempt to get a sexual act, as well as unwanted sexual remarks or activities to traffic, that are directed against a person's sexuality using coercion by anybody, regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including at home and at work, are all considered to be sexual violence. The first form of sexual assault outlined above (coerced intercourse) is referred to as rape. Rape is the unlawful insertion of a sexual organ, an object,

or any other portion into the victim's anal or genital aperture without the victim's consent, regardless of how small the penetration may be (Singh, 2021). The invasion is carried out using force, the threat of force, or coercion, such as that which results from fear of violence, duress, detention, psychological oppression, or the abuse of power, against that person or another person, or by taking advantage of a coercive environment, or committed against a person incapable of giving true consent.

Intimate partner violence (IPV) or non-partner sexual violence (NPSV) affects roughly one-third of women globally. These human rights violations raise serious public health concerns because women who have experienced abuse often develop negative health outcomes, including problems with their reproductive systems and mental health conditions like depression, suicidality, anxiety, and substance use disorders (WHO, 2018). IPV, which can take the forms of sexual, physical, emotional, or economic abuse, is the most prevalent type of GBV. Sexual harassment (SH) and NPSV, or perpetrators who are not intimate partners, are two additional common types of GBV. According to Singh's research (2020), the psychological effects of GBV frequently vary depending on the type(s) encountered, how frequently they occur, and the victim's relationship to the perpetrator (intimate partner vs. non-partner).

3.4.9. Femicide

Pietsch and Nicole (2015) defined femicide as the killing of women and girls and described it as the most extreme form of violence on a continuum of violence and discrimination against women and girls. Various typologies of femicide have been proposed by researchers (WHO, 2018, Pietsch and Nicole 2015) in the past several decades with most distinguishing 'intimate femicide' from various other types of femicide (e.g. familial femicide and stranger femicide). Intimate femicide is also referred to as intimate partner femicide, capturing and killing of women by current or former partners. Globally, women are much more likely than men to be assaulted, raped or killed by a current or former partner and it most often occurs within relationships where there is a history of intimate partner violence. Piper and Mark (2014) contend that non-intimate femicide, which includes a variety of classes such as familial femicide, 'other known perpetrator' femicide, and stranger femicide, entails the killing of women by someone with whom they did not have an intimate partner relationship.

According to the South African Police Service (SAPS, 2020), 13 815 women over the age of 18 were killed in the five years between 2015 and 2020. That works up to around seven

murdered women per day, or 2 763 homicides annually. South Africa ranks among the five nations with the highest rates of female homicide among those where statistics are available, including nations in Central and South America like Venezuela, Honduras, and El Salvador, according to data accompanying the 2019 Global Homicide Report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2019).

3.5. Causes and drivers of GBV

The pertinent question in this sub-section is: What is the root cause of gender-based violence? The unequal power dynamics between men and women is one of the most overtly expressed factors, often done through gender-based violence, especially violence against women. It is crucial to remember that the person who has been the victim of gender-based violence is never accountable for the perpetrator's conduct. The perpetrator is the root cause of the violence. Gender-based violence in contemporary cultures cannot be explained by a single component; rather, it is caused by a variety of elements, the interaction of which is what causes the issue to arise (Mazza, 2020). The causes and conditions that support GBV are known as drivers of GBV. GBV is primarily caused by gendered power inequality, which has its roots in patriarchy.

In countries where there is a culture of violence and where male superiority is accepted as the norm, GBV (and intimate partner violence in particular) is more common (Mazza, 2020). Men's entitlement to have sex with women, the rigid upholding of gender norms and hierarchies, women's low socio-economic and political standing, and the association of masculinity with the control of women are all signs of a belief in male superiority. Many drivers, including social standards (which may be cultural or religious), low levels of women's empowerment, a lack of social support, socioeconomic disparity, and substance misuse, correspond to these issues.

3.5.1. Cultural factors

According to Otti (2020), patriarchal and sexist beliefs justify violence to ensure the dominance and superiority of men. Furthermore, cultural variables include gender stereotypes and prejudice, normative expectations of femininity and masculinity, the socialization of gender, an understanding of the family as a private space governed by men, and a general acceptance of violence as a part of public life (for example, street harassment of women) and/or as an acceptable way to resolve conflict and assert oneself. Under the presumption of entitlement

and ownership of women, religious and historical traditions have condoned the physical abuse of women. As a result, the idea of ownership legitimizes control over women's sexuality, which many legal systems have deemed necessary to maintain patrilineal line of succession (Raghavendra et al., 2019). Sexuality is also tied to the concept of so-called "family honour" in many societies.

Traditional customs in these countries, according to Gibbs et al. (2018), permit the execution of women who are suspected of sabotaging the "honour" of the family by engaging in proscribed sex or by getting married and divorcing without the family's permission. Due to the fact that LGBT+ youth tend to be targeted by acts of discrimination because they are seen as a "threat" to societal standards, sexuality norms also contribute to the high rates of homelessness among LGBT+ youth. The widespread rape of women can be explained by the same sexual norms (George, 2020).

3.5.2. Patriarchy and GBV

Men are typically more powerful than women because they have greater access to resources, decision-making privileges, and influence over those resources. The laws, policies, and rules of formal social institutions institutionalize this authority and control over resources and decisions (Verde Garrido et al., 2020). In order to achieve gender equality globally, VAWG is a top priority (Mazza et al., 2020). António Guterres, the head of the UN, claims that the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated "what we all know," namely that decades of sexism have resulted in a world and culture that is dominated by men, which has harmed everyone.

"It is clear that we cannot return to the failed policies that have led to the fragility we see around us – in healthcare systems, social security, and access to justice," he continued. The time has come to re-establish inclusive, equitable, and resilient societies (UN, 2020). There is a need to ensure that women are a dominant force at the centre of recovery as the world emerges from this once-in-a-generation disaster. According to the literature, family structure and patriarchy are two contributing factors to the fundamental cause of GBV. In many facets of women's and men's identities, centuries of hierarchy and patriarchy have established harmful norms for girls and women, contends Klaasen (2018). Women have broken free from the constraints of the past and, through their tenacious resistance to political and socioeconomic oppression, have rightfully earned a place in our great country's history. However, the sad truth is that they continue to be constrained by patriarchy, which is a different kind of shackle.

3.5.3. Intersectionality and GBV

Women and children are still being oppressed in South Africa through physical assault, rape, and socioeconomic exclusion, all of which are exacerbated by the "triple evils" of poverty, unemployment, and inequality (ILO, 2020). This violence affects society's political, economic, and social systems and is motivated by societal norms that are predominantly patriarchal. The study will focus on these dynamics while taking into account their interconnection, but it will not ignore the complex and intersectional power imbalances, including gender, racism, class, and sexuality. Since gender inequality both justifies violence and is established by means of it, the relationship between gender inequality and GBV is well understood.

The issue of gender inequality, according to the UN report (2020), might be addressed by a transformation of masculinity, including a change in attitude, particularly among men who frequently commit crimes against women and other men. The broad classifications of wealthy capitalist, developing, and ex-socialist countries indicate various pre-existing social and economic structures; these structures influence how various social groupings are assimilated into global processes (George, 2020). Although these classifications are far too general, they contain a significant deal of complexity that is based on class, gender, ethnicity, politics, culture, and local and national histories. Sexual, verbal, emotional, physical, and domestic violence are still some of the pervasive challenges that women are still disproportionately exposed to in the SADC region, along with poverty, unemployment, a lack of capital, a lack of land, and others (Mazza, 2020). Moreover, there is still a great deal that has to be done in the African Diaspora to empower women economically, socially, and politically. In Africa, from the home level to the national and regional levels, women need to be given the resources to take control of their own lives and stop being spectators because the majority still encounter challenges related to culture (Mazza, 2020). Thobejane (2014) believes that while the RSA government has made significant progress since the Beijing conference toward achieving gender equality between men and women, "we are yet to see some of its policies translated in action even within the ruling party of the day."

3.5.4. Lack of Policy Enforcement

Gender-based violence in South Africa has persisted due to a mix of the dismissive attitudes of criminal justice workforce toward sexual assault and a dearth of law enforcement. The difficulty the government has encountered in trying to enforce legislation pertaining to the issue is highlighted by the fact that there has not been any statistically significant decrease in

gender-based violence over the previous 20 years (Meyiwa et al., 2017). Following the establishment of the South African government as it is now, numerous committees and government programs aimed at improving the status of women in South African society have been established. However, high rates of gender-based violence continue to permeate South African society despite the broad-reaching nature of regulations and the purposeful observance of the national Constitution (Otieno et al., 2015).

According to Nqopiso (2017), the attitudes of local judiciary and law enforcement bodies are a significant influence in the ineffectiveness of legislation. The South African Department of Justice openly acknowledged its shortcomings as "huge bureaucratic inefficiencies, wastefulness, [and] not obtaining value for money for the resources it has deployed." According to Deane (2018), just 4% to 8% of reported occurrences of sexual crimes in South Africa result in convictions, and mainly since many rapes go unreported, the overall conviction rate for rapists and sexually abusive individuals is substantially lower (DoJ, 2019). The author suggests that, in addition to the administrative processes that define South African courts, the personal attitudes of judges and police officers may also be a factor in the low percentage of conviction (Deane, 2018).

Nqopiso's study (2017) found that 54.2% of rape victims who reported the crime to the police said no witnesses had been questioned by police. Additionally, 37.5% of respondents claimed that the police made no attempt to gather evidence regarding their assault, highlighting the problematic way in which particular law enforcement personnel might have an impact on the course of an investigation (Nqopiso , 2017).

When they are subjected to further harassment by law enforcement, victims of gender-based violence frequently become secondary victims. Women are coerced into giving testimony in front of the public against their will, and it is frequently inferred during probes and cross-examination that they were entitled to violent treatment from their rapist or offender because of their attire or behaviour (Deane 2018). Governmental action from the top down is utterly ineffective without local grassroots enforcement of laws against gender-based violence.

3.5.5. Poverty

According to WHO (2013), poverty and the plethora of social issues that come along with it both increase the risk of gender-based violence against women and the victimization of

women. In general, indicators of violence like killings, severe assaults, and gender-based violence are linked to economic sluggish and socioeconomic inequality. It has been demonstrated that poverty-stricken regions have disproportionately high rates of violence indicators such as homicide, assault, and incarceration. Data indicate that violence is more prevalent in countries where a higher percentage of the population suffers from economic deprivation (Wood, 2006), despite the fact that causation is difficult to demonstrate due to the complexity of the issue. In a statistical investigation of five nations with exceptionally high rates of violence, South Africa was found to have the highest homicide rate as well as the largest degree of income imbalance between the upper and poorer classes (George, 2020). South Africa is used as a case study to illustrate this association.

According to Gibbs et al. (2018), women who live in poverty are driven to place a larger value on having a partner who has some sort of income than their wealthier counterparts. Because of South Africa's patriarchal and heteronormative societal structure, it is possible for men to take advantage of vulnerable women sexually in order to strip them of money and other necessities (Steele, 2013). For instance, gangs and pimps traffic force young women and girls from the surrounding areas into sexual slavery in South African mining communities where the sex trade is supported by large groups of males. In addition to facing a greater risk of sexual exploitation, women in impoverished communities like slums and mining towns also have less convenient access to amenities like running water, electricity, and bathrooms inside their homes. When these women travel to and from latrines and water sources, they run the risk of being attacked, especially at night when they are more likely to be by themselves (Gibbs et al., 2018).

3.5.6. Alcohol, substance abuse and GBV

Alcohol and abuse of drugs also play a part in GBV and they have a negative impact on physical and cognitive health, which makes people less able to come together on peaceful ways to settle conflicts in relationships (Wells et al., 2018). In Cape Town, South Africa, a study by Montesanti and Thurston (2015) identified a significant correlation between alcohol use and violence, with heavy alcohol consumption associated with violent problem-solving methods. Furthermore, it was discovered that drinking with a girlfriend increased the likelihood that she would unwittingly consent to sexual activity, leading to the use of force in situations when it was not appropriate. These results are in line with Ngonga's research, which found that alcohol use and interpersonal violence are both related (Montesanti and Thurston, 2015). Men frequently use alcohol as a justification for acting violently.

According to a recent study by Shiva et al. (2021), women who experience victimization often turn to alcohol as a coping mechanism. Alcohol also contributes significantly to the continuation of gender violence. It contributes to the persistence of gender-based violence as a proximal component in addition to distant factors like relationship issues. Similar findings are also evident in female-to-male violence and among same-sex couples, even though the link between male-to-female violence and alcohol has mostly been examined. It seems that patriarchy and power disparities within societies increase the risk. When alcohol and other drugs are combined, the effects of GBV are amplified (Shiva, 2021). Examples of such substances include cannabis and stimulants.

3.6. GBV in institutions of higher education in South Africa

Instances of gender-based violence within and around campuses of higher education institutions have apparently increased in South Africa (Shiva et al., 2021). The number of incidences of gender-based violence in the nation is extremely high; the majority go unreported for a variety of reasons. As a result, only a small number of these incidents make local and/or national headlines. Due of this, it is challenging to fully understand the scope of the gender-based violence scourge in the whole country. Gender-based violence is one of the most widespread types of human rights abuses, not only in South Africa but also in other countries, although it has not drawn the same level of academic attention as other types of abuses of human rights. The result is that there is poor understanding of, and insight into this phenomenon which, in turn, constrain efforts to develop effective interventions to abate and eliminate gender-based violence (Pienaar & Bailey, 2021).

Shiva et al., (2021) assert that during the 2019–2020 academic year, several high-profile instances of gender-based violence (GBV) allegedly occurred in or around South African higher education institutions. These occurrences made national headline news. This has been the case despite the fact that South Africa has a Constitution and other laws protecting human rights and forbidding violations of such rights, including GBV. A number of regional and international accords and protocols that are aimed at eradicating GBV have also been accepted and adopted by the South African government. The few "high profile" occurrences that have been covered by local and national media have sparked controversy over GBV on and around college campuses (Shiva et al., 2021).

However, the number of GBV occurrences that occur on and around university campuses across the nation is much smaller than the cases that are reported in the local and/or national news. The problem is that there is insufficient data available to give a complete picture of the scope of the GBV pandemic. GBV incidents are typically underreported. According to Anitha and Lewis (2018), the majority of events, especially those in which LGBTQI individuals are hurt, either go unreported or, if they are, are not followed up on and looked into.

3.7. Impacts of GBV on the South African economy

In addition to having an emotional and physical toll on its victims, gender-based violence also has an impact on government spending on services including health, law enforcement, social development, and child welfare (ILO, 2019). According to WHO (2013), one in three women have experienced physical or sexual assault at some point in their lives. No location is less secure for a woman than her own house worldwide (Klugman et al., 2014). Violence against women and girls (VAWG) has huge economic implications in addition to being a fundamental violation of human rights, a significant public health issue, and fatal for individual well-being. VAWG generates "economic costs" through a variety of channels, including a decrease in the labour supply, a decrease in productivity per hour worked, a decrease in investments in women's and children's human capital, as well as possibly decreased investments because of increased demand for medical and legal services. Due to higher absenteeism rates, worker turnover, presentism/decreased productivity, and the risk of reputational harm, domestic violence has a negative impact on businesses (ILO & UN Women, 2019).

The cost of violence against women (public, private, and societal) is estimated by UN Women (2016) to be US\$1.5 trillion globally. The World Bank (2018) discovered that in some countries, the cost of violence against women might reach 3.7 percent of GDP. Although domestic violence against women is most prevalent in the sub-Saharan region of Africa, empirical research on the possible economic effects of this violence is rare, primarily due to data shortages. According to one study (Kinda et al., 2018), gender-based violence costs South Africa between 0.9 and 1.3 percent of GDP yearly, whereas a different study (Raghavendra et al., 2019) indicated that violence against women and girls costs Ghana's economy about 0.9 percent of GDP.

According to a study done by Ouedraogo et al. in 2021, violence against women and girls has a detrimental impact on economic activity. The findings indicate that nightlight-based economic activity increases by 8% per capita when the number of women experiencing domestic abuse

falls by one percentage point. The findings provide empirical evidence for the mechanism by which violence against women and girls might influence economic activity, since we discover that higher levels of violence are significantly correlated with lower rates of female employment. The study's findings additionally indicate that countries without domestic violence protection laws, those with abundant natural resources, and those in which women lack the ability to make decisions, and nations experiencing economic downturns like the current pandemic crisis all have greater negative effects on economic development. Moreover, Ouedraogo et al. (2021) assert that countries with large gender gaps in partner education bear a higher economic toll from violence against women.

3.8. GBV in European countries

According to the EU Fundamental Rights Agency's 2014 assessment on violence against women (VAW), this issue is pervasive throughout the (European Union) EU. The EU cannot afford to ignore the widespread human rights violations committed against women, particularly gender-based violence that disproportionately impacts women, according to a research based on interviews with 42 000 women throughout the 28 Member States of the EU. In addition to asking about incidences of intimate partner violence (commonly known as "domestic violence"), stalking, sexual harassment, and the impact of new technologies on women's experiences of abuse, the poll also asked women about their experiences with physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. Additionally, it inquired about any childhood incidents of violence. What becomes clear is a picture of widespread abuse that has an impact on the lives of many women yet is often underreported to the authorities (FRA, 2014). The main finding of the study shows that an estimated 13 million women in the EU experienced physical assault in the year before the survey interviews (FRA, 2015).

An estimated 3.7 million women in the EU are thought to have experienced sexual violence in the twelve months preceding the survey interview. Even when committed by family members, acquaintances, or love partners, violence against women is a common occurrence in Germany. More than 100 000 women were victims of domestic violence in 2015. It will be a lot higher than the hypothetical figure (WHO, 2015). Iceland ranks first globally for having the smallest gender difference, according to the 2017 World Economic Forum Global Gender difference Index. Eurostat reports that Iceland has one of Europe's highest rates of recorded rapes per capita, despite the fact that legal definitions vary between nations, making comparisons more difficult. Icelandic feminists and gender experts contend that such rankings conceal ongoing harassment and violence against women.

According to a 2010 study, 22% of Icelandic women had experienced violence in a close relationship, while only 42% of women had been subjected to violence, threat, or physical contact of a sexual nature that caused distress. Only 22% of women had also approached organizations or institutions that offer services to victims of violence. Only 13% victims reported the last incident of violence to the police (WEF, 2017).

3.9. Gender-Based Violence in Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic

In its policy brief, the UN stated that since the COVID-19 epidemic, new data and reports from people on the front lines have showed that all forms of violence against women and girls have increased in the pandemic-affected nations. One in three women were predicted to endure violence in their lifetimes prior to the pandemic. In the previous 12 months, a current or former partner physically or sexually abused 18% of ever-partnered women and girls in the world, [aged] 15 to 49 (UN, 2020).

In addition, studies of increases in violence against women (VAW) around the world with COVID-19 indicate that several countries with reporting systems have seen increases of up to 25%. Up to 15 million additional incidences of gender-based violence are anticipated for every three months the lockdown is maintained (UNFPA, 2020). Domestic abuse, whether physical or verbal, increased from 40.6% before the COVID-19 crisis to 52.2% during the pandemic crisis, a rate of growth of 12%, according to a survey by Justice and Dignity for Women of the Sahel (JDWS, 2020) done in six Sahelian countries. Mali, Chad, and Senegal all saw rises of 10%, 30%, and 14%, respectively, while there has been a less than 10% growth in Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Niger.

According to official data (StatsSA, 2021) from South Africa, 2 320 accusations of gender-based assault were made during the first week of a level 5 lockdown, but only 148 charges relating to these complaints were lodged. These figures show a 37% rise over the weekly average of GBV cases in South Africa that were recorded in 2019 (UN, Women, 2020). In addition, there was an increase in gender-based assault instances reported during the lockdown from March 27 to April 16 in South Africa, with a total of 10 660 cases reported via phone calls, 1 503 cases via unstructured supplemental services data (USSD), and 616 cases via SMS. The Center received 674 instances on April 16 alone (Smith, 2020).

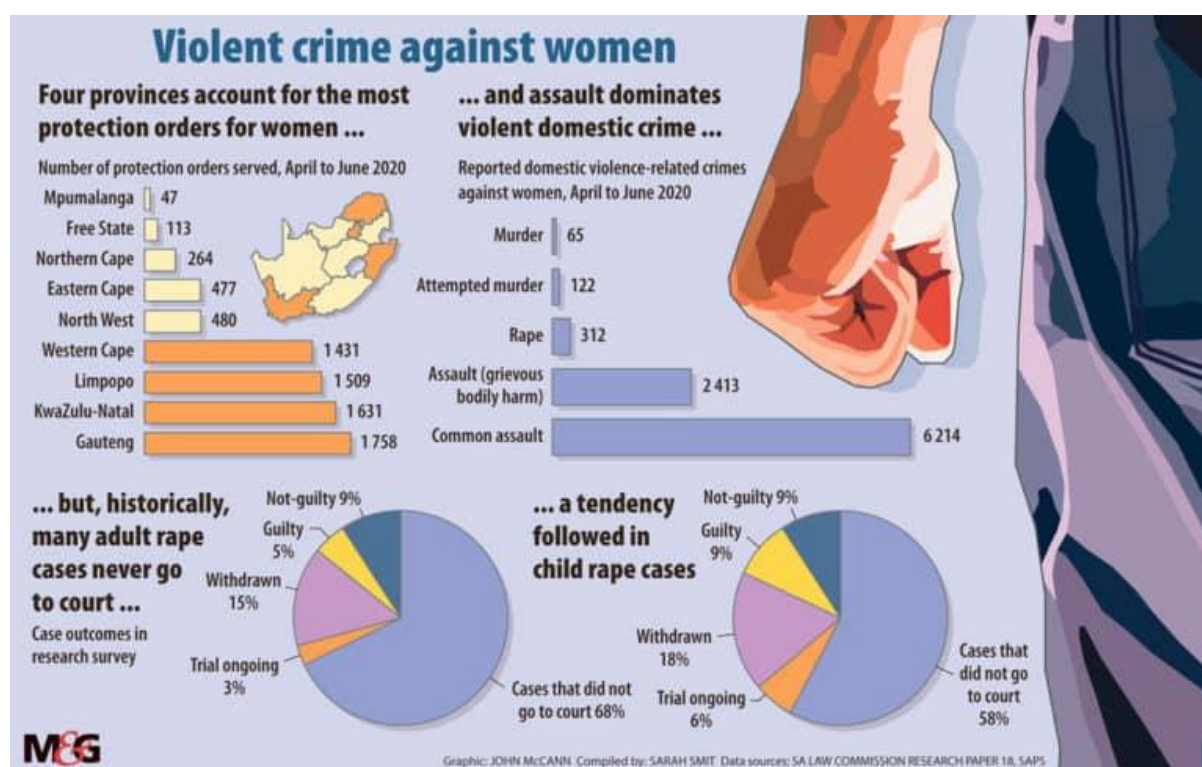
3.10. South African trends and patterns of gender-based violence

It is well-known that gender based violence in South Africa is one of the highest in the world (Abrahams et al. 2013; Jewkes, 2002; Moffett, 2006). The findings of a study by Gender Links (2012) has supported that women are more likely to be victims of gender-based violence in South Africa, while men are the main perpetrators. The study was conducted in four provinces (Gauteng, Limpopo, Western Cape and Kwazulu Natal). The women who participated in that study reported having been victims of gender-based violence and men being the perpetrators and there are also studies in which men report their own perpetration of gender-based violence (Gender Links, 2012; Abrahams, et al. (2013). On the other hand, children are also at the most risk of witnessing gender-based violence within their households as it was reflected in a South African study by Burton.

The prevalence of GBV among South African women is considerable (Mthembu et al., 2021), despite the lack of official statistics that consistently document this situation. Based on community self-reporting surveys with small sample sizes, generalized national judgments about the scope of the issue are drawn on trends and patterns of GBV. It is challenging to do any sort of comparative analysis about the shifting trends and patterns of GBV in South Africa because these self-reporting surveys employ various research methodologies. According to a Gender Links research from 2012, 77% of women in Limpopo, 51% in Gauteng, 45% in the Western Cape, and 36% in KwaZulu-Natal have experienced GBV in some capacity (Shiva, 2021). Men were the main perpetrators of this violence. For example, 76% of men in Gauteng, 48% in Limpopo and 41% in KwaZulu-Natal admitted to perpetrating GBV (Gender Links 2012).

The prevalence of GBV in South Africa is such that close to 10 000 rapes occur every quarter. In 2019, 18% of 15 to 49-years-old partnered women and girls had experienced physical or sexual violence in the past 12 months (George, 2020). But other forms like femicide (more than 2 400 in 2017) or bride abduction (ukuthwala) are also widespread (Shiva, 2021). Despite these dramatic numbers, South Africa is not lawless. It even has one of the most progressive legislation in the world, which backbone is the Domestic Violence Act (1998). But between theory and practice, there is a huge gap. Police and Justice are severely underfunded, as are shelters and care centres. Judiciary procedures take ages to come to a verdict, beyond being expensive for most South Africans. Crystallizing these problems, the scientific police has had for several years a backlog in DNA analyses so important that it even prevented some legal procedures from being completed. As a consequence, victims do not see the criminal justice system as a credible solution to [address] domestic violence (Selin et al, 2019).

In a country with an Apartheid history and continued high-levels of poverty, this issue affects the whole nation, however, poverty increases the risk of Gender-based violence. In poorer communities, violence can be used as a means to resolve conflicts in relation to women's power and men's identity. In July of 2020, Sarah Smit compiled data from the SAPS SA Law Commission Paper 18. From that data, it was discovered that between April and June in 2020, 9 126 cases of domestic violence were reported. During those three months just under 5 cases of rape were reported a day, in total there were 312 cases of rape reported. In the same period 65 women were reported murdered, that means a woman was murdered every two days during those three months (Smit, 2020).



Source SAPS (2021)

All of these statistics only represent the reported cases, with an unknown (but likely large) number of cases going unreported. To make matters worse a staggering 68% of these reported domestic violence cases do not go to court and if they do, only around 15% actually make it to verdict (SAPS, 2021). These numbers are extremely concerning, revealing how dire the situation truly is in the country. A worrying element is that rather than improving, the statistics seem to be getting worse, especially in light of the recent global pandemic. With

these statistics, it is clear that this is a national crisis. The areas that are hardest hit by gender-based violence tend to be those that are also most affected by poverty. The correlation between GBV and poverty in South Africa is therefore irrefutable.

3.11. GBV prevention strategies: global perspective

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) have all been ratified by the South African government, and national laws have been passed to carry out the obligations imposed by these treaties in domestic law. These include the 2011 Protection from Harassment Act, the 1998 Maintenance Act, the 2012 Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act, and the 1998 Domestic Violence Act.

Three related legislation modifying pertinent laws were voted on by the parliament in September 2021. One should make it simpler for victims to get protection orders; this is the Domestic Violence Amendment Act. The Human Rights Watch observed that while there is political commitment to solve the crisis, access to necessary funding has long been an issue. The National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide attributed South Africa's history of violence and apartheid as well as government underinvestment in the issue to the country's high incidence of gender-based violence. Others have reached the same conclusion, that advancement has been hampered by fiscal restrictions and a lack of coordination amongst government agencies. When seeking to report violence, victims lack support, and they do not have sufficient access to courts and shelters. The epidemic, according to the specialists consulted, made these issues worse. Gender-based discrimination, social norms that condone violence, and gender stereotypes that feed violent cycles all contribute to violence against women and girls. The majority of current efforts to end violence against women and girls have been directed at responding to and helping victims of violence. To entirely eradicate violence against women and girls, however, prevention – addressing the structural reasons as well as the risk and protective factors associated with violence – is essential.

Violence can only be stopped by being prevented before it even starts. It calls for political commitment, putting gender equality laws into practice, funding women's organizations, and tackling the various forms of prejudiced women encounter on a daily basis. Over the past ten years, there has been a significant evolution in the evidence about prevention, including as a result of numerous projects backed by UN Women (2020). UN Women has played a key role in developing evidence-based policy and programming guidance on the prevention of violence against women and girls. As part of its prevention strategy, UN Women focuses on early education, respectful relationships, and working with men and boys, especially through, and in, the media, sports industries, and the world of work.

UN Women supports advocacy, awareness-raising, community mobilization, and educational programs, as well as legislative and policy reforms, and contributes to research on the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours of men and boys, as well as young people, in relation to various types of violence. For instance, UN Women collaborates with other UN organizations on the Partners for Prevention programme in Asia and the Pacific, which aims to reduce the prevalence of gender-based violence in the region by changing the behaviour and attitudes of boys and men as well as enhancing institutional capacity and policy (UN Women, 2020).

In addition, UN Women has created a curriculum called Voices Against Violence for those between the ages of 5 and 25 in collaboration with the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts and with the help of young people. The curriculum includes tools to help young people understand the root causes of violence in their communities, and to help educate and involve their peers and communities in preventing violence against women and girls (UN, 2021).

3.12. The South African legislative framework on violence and harassment in the workplace

South Africa reputedly has the most progressive constitution in the world, which recognizes the human and civil rights of all its citizens, including women and girls. Also, since women and girls are recognized as a disadvantaged group based on historic discrimination and inequality, the state is constitutionally obligated to put in place policies to ensure their attainment of rights (Commission, 2003). Sonke Gender Justice notes that, "South Africa has progressive laws and policies in theory to address these unacceptable levels of violence, but implementation thereof has been irresponsibly weak" (Bollback et al, 2017).

The Sexual Offences Act (SOA) (Watson, 2015), the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act (Prevention, 2013), the South African Integrated Programme of Action Addressing Violence Against Women and Children, the Judicial Matters Second Amendment Act 43 of 2013, the Protection from Harassment Act 17 of 2011, the 365 Day National Action Plan to End Gender Violence, and the South African Police Services (SAPS) Act 68 of 1902 are a few of these laws and the progressive nature of the majority of these programs is well-illustrated by the DVA. High levels of gender-based violence were acknowledged by the South African authorities both before and after the pandemic. But South African experts told Human Rights Watch that despite promises – including in a National Strategic Plan – to address gender-based violence and femicide, the government has still failed to provide necessary funding for shelters and other services.

Currently, the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (The Employment Equity Act) and the Amended Code of Good Practice and Handling of Sexual Harassment (The Amended Code) provides for how to handle sexual harassment and the various forms of sexual harassment in the workplace. The Amended Code does not cover any other form of harassment in the workplace. While there have been moves from the legislature to combat violence and harassment in the workplace, in many respects the current South African legislative framework has been seen as falling short. A 2018 study in South Africa estimated that nearly a third of women were victims of unwanted sexual advances in their workplaces.

The Draft Code of Good Practice on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the Workplace was recently published for comments as South Africa's response to the problem of gender-based violence and harassment in the workplace. When the Convention is adopted, the Draft Code, which is anticipated to be the statutory instrument that implements its provisions, will be put into effect. As a result, the Draft Code has increased the employer's responsibility to mitigate the damaging impacts of violence and harassment in the workplace. It is important to note that workplace violence and harassment go beyond sexual harassment, and the Draft Code obliges companies to take action against all types of workplace violence and harassment (Pienaar & Bailey, 2021).

The Domestic Violence Act (DVA) (1998), the Sexual Offences Act (2007), and the Prevention and Combatting of Trafficking in Human Persons (2013) Act, among others, are examples of

the robust legislative framework that South Africa has ratified in relation to GBV (Moolman, 2016). International conventions and laws are crucial, but they are insufficient to stop GBV and improve responses. GBV prevention is a complicated subject that calls for involvement and commitment from all parties, including the government, civic society, and other individuals. In South Africa, awareness of the extent and effects of GBV as well as the necessity of bolstering response efforts across sectors is developing.

The National Strategic Plan (NSP) on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) sets out to provide a cohesive strategic framework to guide the national response to this scourge. Founded on women's constitutionally entrenched right to be free from all forms of violence, also emphasised by the 24 demands delivered by #TheTotalShutdown movement, the Declaration emerging from the 2018 Presidential Summit on GBVF, this NSP builds onto previous work undertaken by government. It also responds to the recommendations from the review of responses to violence against women and children, commissioned by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME); the subsequent review of the National Plan of Action undertaken by the Department of Social Development (DSD), and the work undertaken by civil society through the Stop GBV NSP Campaign (Shiva et al, 2021). Furthermore, impetus is given to Priority five (5) of Community Safety and Social Cohesion and provides a coherent national framework to support South Africa in meeting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Target.

3.13 Conclusion

Although several studies were conducted on GBV worldwide, studies on GBV in rural areas like the Thulamela municipality are under-researched. The reviewed literature established that culture, patriarchy, poverty, women oppression, unemployment, inequality and alcohol abuse play a huge role in GBV. Studies also found that there are several progressive laws and policies intended to reduce GBV but implementation has been rather weak. The next chapter will place its focus on discussing the research methodology employed in the study.

4. CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research methodology and how it was applied on this study, to enhance clarity to the reader. The research methodology entails these components; research approach, research design, population and setting, sampling and sampling size, research instruments and measurements, pre-testing, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness of the study, and ethical considerations.

4.2 Research Approach

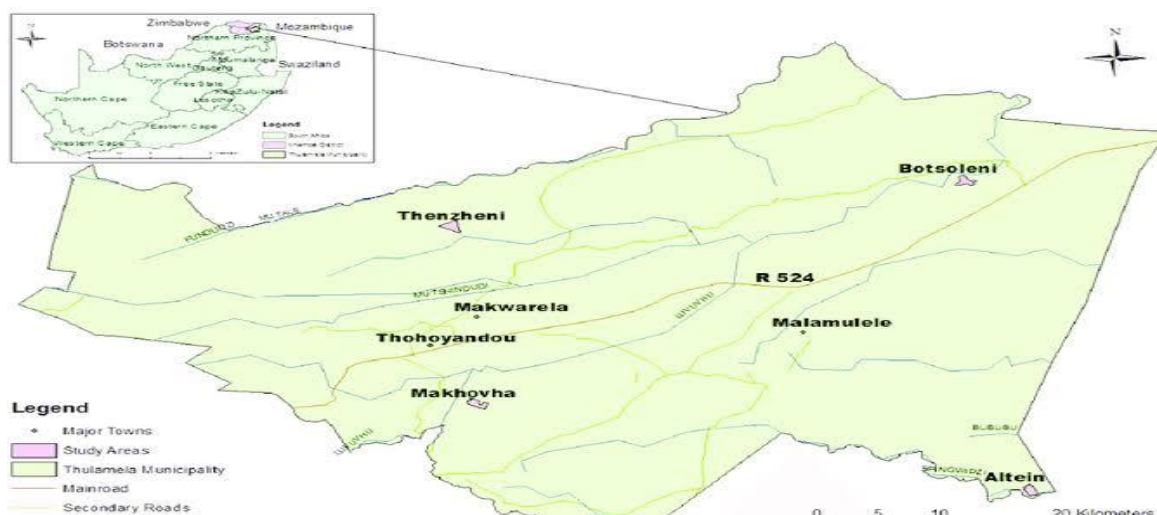
Chetty (2016) defines research approach as a plan and procedure that consists of the steps of broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. She further adds that it is therefore based on the nature of the research problem being addressed. In this study the researcher chose to use qualitative research approach to be able to solicit in-depth views on gender-based violence against women. Through qualitative research approach, the researcher was able to answer questions about GBV and its impact on women from the participants' point of view. This type of research approach allowed participants to express their views freely without any pre-set constraints; therefore, the possibility of receiving authentic answers was high. In addition, qualitative research approach allowed the researcher to stay flexible, meaning that the researcher was able to adjust the questions of the interview depending on the information they were getting from the participants and was also able to dig a little deeper in search of comprehensive information. This type of research approach also allowed the researcher to probe, which also stimulated the respondents to produce more information.

4.3 Research design

Guided by the nature of the study, the aim, objectives and research questions, the researcher chose to apply exploratory research design. Exploratory research design intends to explore the research questions, this type of research is usually conducted to study a problem that has not been clearly defined yet (Makri, 2021). The goal of using exploratory research design in the study was to get an in-depth understanding of the views of women regarding gender-based violence. It was important for the researcher to use an exploratory research design to be able to understand the women's views of GBV. This will also give direction for future research.

4.4 Setting of the study

According to Busetto (2020), the research setting can be seen as the physical, social, and cultural site in which the researcher conducts the study. The current study was conducted in the Thulamela municipality within the Vhembe district in the Limpopo province. Lwamondo, Tshisaulu, Thohoyandou, Muledane and Itsani villages in the Thulamela municipality formed part of the study setting. Thulamela municipality is located in the eastern tip of the Vhembe district, Limpopo province, South Africa. More than 85% of the people in this municipality live in tribal areas. Thulamela municipality is predominantly a Venda-speaking community, although there are a few Xitsonga-speaking people in the community. Venda culture and traditions are rooted in the responsibilities of the royal leaders who are referred to as mahosi or vhamusanda. Rules of behaviour and traditions are upheld by the royals and the community. Venda culture is guided by traditional initiation schools where children learn more about their culture and how to conduct themselves at home and in their community. Women are taught chores such as sweeping, fetching wood and vegetables, washing and cooking. Men are responsible for looking after livestock and so boys are taught about cattle. Although roles in the Vhavenda cultural groups have changed over the years with women being educated and taking over senior positions at work, most people in the rural areas such as the Thulamela municipality still believe it is a woman's duty to take care of the household. Thulamela local municipality has a population size of 618 462 but only 12.5% of the population has higher education and 23.1% has matric only and 14.3% of the population has no education.



4.5 Population of the study

Sheppard (2020) describes population as all the elements that meet the criteria for inclusion in a study. The targeted population for this study were females between the ages of 25-50 who are residing within the Thulamela municipality. Women within this age group are most likely to be in relationships or married and have experienced or witnessed a form of GBV in their life time. All participants of the study were originally from the Vhavenda cultural group.

4.5 Sampling and sampling size

Bhardwaj (2019) defines sampling as the process of selecting a representative group from the population under study. In this study sampling was non-probability; the researcher chose to use non-probability sampling due to the design of the study which is qualitative. Purposive sampling and snowball methods were used to sample the participants for the study. This means that the researcher used her own judgement to select participants that best meet the needs of the study and those participants then assisted the researcher by identifying other potential participants that met the criteria of the study.

Although not every member of the population had an equal chance of being selected, the inclusion criteria for this study was only females who are between the ages of 25-50 and are originally from the Vhavenda cultural group. These women are residing within the rural areas of the Thulamela municipality. This means that the exclusion criteria consisted of males and people who were below the ages of 25 and above 50, and not from the Vhavenda cultural group. This is because the Thulamela municipality areas are Vhavenda-dominated and participants from the Vhavenda cultural group were easily accessible. The sample size for this

study was 20 participants; however this was determined by data saturation. After data saturation, the researcher ended up with 09 participants for the study.

4.6 Research instruments

A research instrument is a tool which is used in a study which helps the researcher to properly collect data (Trigueros, 2017). The researcher used an interview guide as a data collection instrument. The interview guide was designed based on the objectives of the study.

The interview guide provided an opportunity for the researcher to probe. Probing is the way for the interview to explore new path which may not have been considered initially and gathering much more information during the process (Pandey, 2015). The interviews were structured into two sections, mainly the socio-demographic and gender roles on gender based violence. On the socio-demographic section, the researcher collected information such as age, cultural group, gender and language. On the gender roles and gender based violence section, the researcher asked questions such as which gender roles (both for men and women) are common within that cultural group and how do those roles impact women specifically, how often do women become victims of GBV, who is mostly affected by GBV and what are the effects of GBV on them. Lastly, the researcher also asked questions regarding the impact of GBV amongst females and what might be the solution towards GBV against women.

4.7 Pre testing

According to Kaplan (2020), pretesting involves simulating the formal data collection process on a small scale to identify practical problems with regard to data collection instruments, sessions, and methodology. Pretesting can provide advance warning about how or why a main research project can fail by indicating where research protocols are not followed or not feasible. Pre-testing helps to identify problems with the data collection instrument and find possible solutions. If problems occur in the pre-test, it is likely that similar problems will arise in full-scale administration. In this study pre- testing was done using two participants in order to test the data collection instrument. This was done in order to avoid errors and difficulties during the actual study. Pre-testing was done on the study's setting (areas within the Thulamela municipality). The researcher used the same interview guide and asked the very same questions that were asked during the main study. The participants for pre-testing were ones who fall within the target population of the study and all ethical considerations were followed during this process including adhering to all the Covid 19 regulations.

4.8 Data collection

Data collection is a methodological process of gathering and analysing specific information to proffer solutions to relevant questions and evaluate the results (Formplus, 2019). The researcher used semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews comprised of open-ended questions; this enables the participants to respond in their own words (De Jonckheere, 2019). This method of collecting data is useful because it ensures that the researcher gets deeper understanding and also asks [for] clarification (De Jonckheere, 2019). To enable probing during the interview, the researcher used open-ended questions. Interviews were conducted in Tshivenda language and later translated into English for analysis. This was to allow participants to comfortably express themselves during the interviews and make sure that they understood the questions clearly. The interviews were done face-to-face, this enabled the researcher to establish rapport with potential participants and gain their full cooperation. It also gave the researcher a chance to explain and clarify respondents when they had a problem understanding the questions. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, the researcher made sure that all Covid 19 regulations were observed during the data collection process, this included elbow greeting, the 1.5 m social distancing, and use of hand sanitizers and wearing of face masks. The interviews took place at the participants' place of residence, this means that the researcher went to where the participants stayed. The researcher visited the villages where the participants stay, mainly the Lwamondo, Muledane, Thohoyandou, and Itsani villages to be able to access the participants. The interview questions were printed on a paper for the researcher to read out.

The researcher read out the questions to the participants and the participants' responses were recorded on an audio recorder with the participants' consent. The researcher used a reliable audio recorder to record the interviews and each interview took a maximum of 30 minutes. Doing the interviews face-to-face gave the participants a chance to ask questions and clarity from the researcher when there was something they did not understand and allowed the researcher to observe the participants' body language and facial expressions while answering the questions. The researcher also read and interpreted the interview guide to those who could not read or understand English to make sure that everyone understood the questions clearly. During each interview the researcher had a separate book to write down sketchy notes; this assisted the researcher to note pertinent behaviours that may not have been captured on the audio recorder. The researcher later linked the notes to the interview via the interview date and participant number, allocated to participants for anonymity. These sketchy notes were stored with study data and protected from disclosure in the same manner as the interview audio and transcripts.

4.9 Data analysis

For data analysis, the researcher chose to use thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is defined as a conventional practice in qualitative research that involves searching through data to identify any recurrent patterns (Lester, 2020). A theme is a cluster of linked categories conveying similar meanings. Themes are patterns across data sets that are important to the description of phenomenon associated with a research question. Themes emerge from insights gained through the process of data collection. The process of this analysis occurs as the data is collected and involves reading and over viewing the data (Lester, 2020).

Data collected were analysed using the Braun and Clare's six phase framework of thematic analysis as illustrated below:

Phase 1: Getting familiar with the data

The data collected were re- read thoroughly and re- listened to repeatedly until the researcher got to understand clearly the meanings of the data collected.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

Generating codes is important because it assists with the grouping of themes. The data collected were re-read slowly, underlying words, phrases, units and sentences relevant to the research questions.

Phase 3: Discovering themes/searching for themes

Phase 3 began when all data were initially coded and collated. The words that had been underlined, phrases, units and sentences were then be grouped according to themes.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes

During this phase, it became evident that some participants' themes are not really themes (for example, if there is not enough data to support them). The researcher did a thorough review of identified themes, and decided to combine, refine, separate, or discard initial themes.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

The themes which the researcher saw as important were then grouped and carefully named to make the analysis process easier and clear. The researcher looked at the relationship among the themes to determine if there was consistency, if the story was to be retold through the use of themes.

Phase 6: Analyzing the results/ producing the report

In this phase, the researcher took the information which was in a form of fully worked out themes and wrote a detailed report. The report clearly indicated the gathered information in a more understandable manner.

4.10 Trustworthiness of the study

Trustworthiness enables a researcher to explain the virtues of qualitative terms outside of the parameters. Trustworthiness is a concept that supports the argument that the research results are worth paying attention to. It consists of four aspects, namely; credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability (Nyirenda et al, 2020).

4.10.1 Conformability

Conformability refers to the degree to which the results of an inquiry could be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers (Mamba, 2019). In this study conformability was ensured through an audit trail. According to Carcary (2020) an audit trail offers visible evidence from the process and product that the researcher did not simply find what he or she set out to find. The researcher accounted for all the research decisions and activities to show how the data were collected, recorded and analysed.

4.10.2 Credibility

Credibility is defined as confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research study findings “how do you know that your findings are true and accurate” (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). It is important for a researcher to use tactics to help ensure that there is honesty in the information given by the respondents; so to ensure credibility the researcher used member checks, which is a strategy for improving the quality of the qualitative data. The concept member checks means that the data and interpretations are continuously tested as they are derived from members of various audiences and groups from which data are solicited. This is a crucial process that any qualitative researcher should undergo because it is the heart of credibility.

4.10.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the degree to which the reader can be convinced that the findings did indeed occur as the researcher says they did (Merriam, 2015). The researcher achieved this by using the code-recode strategy, this is where the researcher coded the same data twice, giving one or two weeks' gestation period between each coding. The results from the two coding were then compared to see if the results show similarity or disparity.

4.10.4 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of a qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts with other respondents. It is the interpretive equivalent of generalisability (German et al, 2015). In order to ensure transferability, the researcher presented the findings in a form of detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences which was translated into themes.

4.11 Ethical considerations

De Vos et al (2011), defines ethics as moral principles that govern the researchers when conducting research project to avoid harm to the research participants and the society as a whole. Ethical considerations while conducting and reporting research is vital to establish the validity of the research project (Editage, 2019). The study adhered to ethical norms and standards to promote the aim of the study, accountability, human respect and fairness (David & Resnik, 2020). The present study observed the following ethical values:

4.11.1 Internal ethical consideration

The research proposal was submitted to the Department of Psychology for departmental evaluation. After departmental evaluation, it was submitted to the Faculty of Health Sciences Higher Degree Committee (FHDC) for quality assurance. After FHDC, the proposal was submitted to EFHDC (Executive Faculty Higher Degrees for ratification. Furthermore, the research proposal was submitted to the University Higher Degree Committee (UHDC) for ethical clearance.

4.11.2 Informed Consent

Informed consent refers to the importance of both accurately informing your subject or respondent as to the nature of the research and obtaining his/her verbal or written consent to

participate (Manti, 2018). Before collecting data, the researcher obtained permission from the village chiefs to have access to the participants. In the beginning of every interview a written letter of informed consent was issued to the participants to ensure that they participate in accordance to their will and knowing clearly what they are involving themselves in. The researcher read and explained the informed consent to those who could not read, this includes explaining the importance of the study, the importance of their participation to the study, and how it might benefit them and the community at large. However, the researcher also explained that participation is not compulsory and that participants have the right to withdraw from the study should they feel the need to do so. The researcher ensured that the participants know what information is needed and for what purpose the information is being collected. Participants signed the consent form as an indication of agreement.

4.11.3 Anonymity

Anonymity refers to data collected from respondents who are completely unknown to anyone associated with the study. That is, only the respondent knows that he or she participated in the study and the researcher cannot identify the participants (Abadie, 2021). It was ensured that participants' names remain anonymous and that the information collected during the study cannot in any way be linked to the real names of the participants. In that regard, the researcher used numbers to refer to participants rather than using their real names. For example, the first participant who was interviewed was referred to as participant number one as their participation identity, and so forth.

4.11.4 Confidentiality

According to Bos (2020), confidentiality is an ethical consideration in the research process in terms of which participants are assured that whatever information they provide during the research process will remain between them and the researcher. This is an ethical rule according to which the researcher knows the identities of participants and connects what was said to whom, but promises not to reveal such information to the public so as to protect the privacy of the participants. In that respect, the researcher observed this ethical consideration and explained to the respondents that their contributions, no matter how sensitive, would be kept confidential and not be disclosed to anyone. Only the researcher had access to the material used in the interviews and took full responsibility to make sure that the public does not have access to the material.

4.11.5 Voluntary participation

Voluntary participation is an ethical consideration requiring that the participants take part in the research process on the basis of their own free will and desire to do so. No one should be

forced or pressured to participate (Barrow, 2021). The researcher adhered to this ethical consideration by ensuring that participants in the study do so freely. It was also explained to the participants that they are free to withdraw from the study at any stage should they wish to do so, without incurring any penalty.

4.11.6 Avoidance of Harm

According to Favaretto (2020), research should not injure the people being studied, regardless of whether they volunteered to participate in the study or not. This refers to a researcher being careful not to reveal information that would embarrass respondents or endanger them in any way. Consequently, the researcher ensured no harm to the participants by asking questions that are not judgemental, inappropriate and insensitive. To prevent harm, before every interview, the researcher made sure that they ask the participants if they felt free talking about GBV since it is a sensitive topic. A debriefing session was held after the interviews in order to identify participants who might have been harmed during the interviews and urgent further referral were made to assist them. The researcher made it their responsibility to immediately refer the participant to the nearest hospital which is Tshilidzini hospital for further psychological assistance.

4.11.7 Publication of results

The researcher provided participants with a summary of results of the study in a manner that acknowledges and respects their contribution towards the study. Furthermore, the findings of the study were made available to the library of the University of Venda and other researchers who might be interested in conducting similar study in the future. The researcher also made sure that the findings of the study were not misrepresented and fabricated by not changing participants' responses and statements during data analysis and report writing. Participants were made aware of how the data will be published.

4.11.8 Acknowledgements of others' work

Acknowledgement refers to expressing the existence and contributions obtained from others work in research project (David& Resnik, 2020). The researcher ensured that all contributions from various sources were acknowledged and referenced accordingly.

4.12 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research methodologies followed when conducting the study. A qualitative research approach was used to gain a deeper insight on the views of women regarding Gender-Based Violence. An exploratory research design was employed in this study. The study was conducted in the Thulamela municipality within the Vhembe district in these selected villages: Lwamondo, Tshisaulu, Thohoyandou, Muledane and Itsani. The targeted population for this study was females between the ages of 25-50 who are residing within the Thulamela municipality. Sampling was non-probability and purposive and snowball methods were used to select participants. Data were collected using Semi-structured interview, guided by the developed interview guide. Thematic analysis was applied during data analysis. Pre-testing was done with two participants who did not form part of the actual study. Trustworthiness was assessed using the criteria of credibility, confirmability and transferability. Ethical norms and standards were observed to promote the aim of the study. The next chapter presents the study findings.

5. CHAPTER FIVE: PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to present the findings of this study and to accurately present the responses of the participants in light of the research objectives. A narrative presentation was chosen to achieve this objective. A demographic profile of all the participants is given to ensure that the reader may have a better picture of the individuals behind the data and the quotations. The responses of the participants were laid out in themes and subthemes, direct quotations are used to corroborate the interpretations the researcher extracted from the data.

5.2 Demographic information

The table below presents demographic information of the study participants. Only females between the ages of 25 to 50 and who are from the Vhavenda cultural group (Venda-speaking) and residing within the Thulamela municipality participated in the study. The table

below consists of 09 Female participants of which 06 are unemployed and only 03 are employed.

5.2.1 Demographic profiles of participants

Table 1: The table below shows the demographic characteristics of participants.

PARTICIPANT	AGE	GENDER	OCCUPATION	MARITAL STATUS
Participant 1	28	Female	Unemployed	Married
Participant 2	35	Female	Unemployed	Single
Participant 3	29	Female	Social Worker	Single
Participant 4	42	Female	Unemployed	Married
Participant 5	40	Female	Unemployed	Married
Participant 6	25	Female	Unemployed	Single
Participant 7	45	Female	Educator	Married
Participant 8	42	Female	Unemployed	Married
Participant 9	27	Female	Nurse	Single

According to the Table 1 above, a slight majority of the participants were unemployed and a slight majority of the participants were married. The ages of the participants ranged from 25 to 45. All the participants of the study were females.

5.3. Themes and subthemes emerging from the data

The themes were generated from the interviews with the participants. In order to give better coherence to the data, subthemes were created to aid understanding of the themes. Four main themes were identified which are: causes of GBV, effects of GBV, social impacts of GBV and potential measures to reduce GBV. Under each theme, subthemes emerged and the table below gives a clear summary on the themes and subthemes that emerged.

5.3.1 The table below presents a summary of the findings, and is divided into two sections of themes and subthemes.

Themes	Sub-themes
Causes of GBV	Societal expectations Gender roles Financial dependency Self-defenseless Toxic masculinity Stigmatization
Effects of GBV	Emotional trauma Death Low self-esteem Inferiority complex Depression Suicidal thoughts Hatred towards men
Social impacts of GBV	Reinforcement of gender roles Reinforcement of toxic masculinity Victim blaming
Potential measures to reduce GBV	Normalization of divorce and separation Change in parental styles Transformation of societal expectations and gender roles Increased and harsh sentences for GBV crimes

5.4 THEME 1- Causes of GBV

- SUB-THEME 1- Societal expectations and gender roles

The respondents highlighted a wide variety of perceptions for what the causes of GBV are. There was generally no consensus on this issue amongst respondents. The first of the three general causes named was that women were affected by societal expectations. This group of respondents believe that women are generally expected to be 'strong' and tolerate abusive behaviour because not doing so will be considered weak or viewed as a rebellious trait.

"I think most of the time we go through abuse because we have to tolerate a lot of things from our partners and it so painful to be mistreated and you know there is nothing you can do but to tolerate because you are a woman, but deep down you know you are not okay." (Participant 1, 28 years)

"Most of the time we go through emotional abuse because we have to tolerate a lot of things from our partners and it so painful to be mistreated and you know there is nothing you can do but to tolerate because you are a woman." (Participant 4, 42 years)

"I think one of the social impacts of GBV towards women is our expectations as the society, we expect a man to be the one in charge and make all the decisions including making a decision on a woman's life." (Participant 9, 27 years)

"Women stay in abusive relationships because they fear judgement from society and sometimes from even our own families because when you leave a relationship or even marriage you are considered weak" (Participant 1, 28 years)

"That is why even when you get married they tell you that marriage is not easy and that you must be prepared for anything and every situation, you have to listen and obey your husband which is why some women end up being killed all in the name of staying in marriage." (Participant 4, 42 years)

- SUB-THEME 2- Financial dependency

The most prevalent cause for GBV that participants reported was financial support. The majority of the participants generally reported that they believed victims could not leave perpetrators of GBV because they depend on them financially for their needs. These respondents believed that the perpetrator was taking advantage of the victim because they were well aware that the victim's apparent financial dependency.

"Another reason women stay in abusive relationships in because they are not independent and they fear losing the financial support from their partners." (Participant 1, 28 years)

“Number one is being dependent [on] a man it might be financially or emotionally, once a man knows that you depend on him for survival he starts taking advantage and loses the respect he has for you and starts treating you like a possession and expects you to do as he says because he knows without him you cannot survive.” (Participant 2, 35 years)

A minority of the respondents reported that they believed one of the causes of financial dependency leading to GBV was due to the fact that the victim was not employed. This insinuates that the victims could stay in the abusive relation until they obtain employment then they would feel that they are sufficiently financially empowered to leave the perpetrator.

“I knew that if I left I wasn’t going to be able to survive financially on my own since I wasn’t working that is why I had to wait until I got a job so that I can survive with my kids.” (Participant 3, 28 years)

“I think it’s because most of them are unemployed and the very same abuser is the bread winner so it ends up being a matter of choosing financial support over safety and peace.” (Participant 5, 40 years)

Another form of financial dependence that few of the respondents reported was instances the victim of GBV depended on the perpetrator not only for themselves but also for support for their children or child. The fear of being a single parent or the fear of the kids not having sustenance was the reported motivation for remaining in the abusive relationship.

“She told me that she cannot afford to be a single parent and that her man will change and now I am the enemy.” (Participant 9, 27 years)

“I did not report the matter to the police because my in-laws kept on reminding me of my poor background and that if I report him he will get arrested and I will die of hunger with my kids and at that time I was still finishing my degree and he was the one paying for my fees since I didn’t get a bursary.” (Participant 3, 28 years)

According to the minority of the respondents, there was another form of financial dependence that existed amongst victims of GBV. The respondents reported that there was a group of victims of GBV that depend on the perpetrator of GBV in order to afford a luxurious lifestyle or extravagant gifts which they receive from the perpetrator and not necessarily for survival needs.

“She is unemployed and the guy is well off, financially she has everything you could wish for as a woman. Last year he bought her a car on her birthday and she is living in this beautiful

house so if she leaves then who will maintain the kind of life she is used to? the guy is her meal ticket.” (Participant 6, 25 years)

“The last time I spoke to her I asked her the very same question and she told me that happiness cannot pay her bills and give her the life she wants, so I think it’s a matter of choosing money over your own life and that is because she is not independent enough to stand on her own.” (Participant 6, 25 years)

- SUB-THEME 3- Self-defencelessness

A small minority of the participants believe that the main cause for GBV was that the victims could not fight back or retaliate to fend off the perpetrator. One explanation for not being able to fight back is the incapacity to do so whilst the other is the perception that the society (including family and relatives) will judge them or view them negatively.

“That is why most of [us] become victims of physical abuse because we cannot fight back.” (Participant 4, 42 years)

“We cannot fight back and even if we try we are usually judged by our family members and the community for challenging a man and viewed as disrespectful.” (Participant 1, 28 years)

- SUB-THEME 4- Toxic masculinity

Another cause listed by respondents was an element of toxic masculinity present in our society. This toxic masculinity seems to be exacerbated by the fundamental belief that a man must be obeyed in everything by his woman and this is deeply rooted in Venda culture. Another element of toxic masculinity that was reported by one participant manifested through aggression or violence when he sees the woman talking to another male, this form of toxic masculinity is reported to be fueled by jealousy and an attempt to assert dominance over the woman on who she has the right to talk to.

“I remember one day he found me greeting a male neighbour he did not like and he beat me for that just because he thought the neighbour had a crush on me.” (Participant 3, 28 years)

“Because somehow we were taught that a man can say whatever he wants to say and as a woman you have to listen and submit to it.” (Participant 8, 42 years)

“We even have a saying that says, “munna ha vhudziswi” which simply means that as a woman you should not ask a man any questions but rather do as he says.” (Participant 2, 35 years)

“And I think GBV is mostly caused by jealousy that is why I say women who are in relationships or married are at high risk. I know of a lady who cannot go out without her partner’s permission.” (Participant 6, 25 years)

“She will be accused of seeing or wanting to flirt with other men and once the accusations start then it ends up getting physical.” (Participant 6, 25 years)

“That is why when a man gets aggressive we always blame the woman for provoking him. So, I think we have failed as a society especially us blacks in raising and teaching our children what it means to be a man.” (Participant 4, 42 years)

- SUB-THEME 5- Stigmatization

Some of the respondents reported that one of the main causes for GBV was an element of victim blaming and stigma that follows women who have had “failed marriages”. Respondents reported that these women are given taunting names to tease them. They are also perceived as the reason for their relationships or marriage not being successful. One of the respondents reported that part of the victim blaming manifests through the belief in society that if the victim experienced GBV it was because she provoked the perpetrator.

“So, when you make a decision to leave you are called names like “return soldiers” which is painful.” (Participant 5, 40 years)

“When a woman gets abused the society blames the woman for doing something wrong to provoke the man because we always think violence is a form of discipline.” (Participant 6, 25 years)

“Another thing is the issue of the stigma that is associated with divorce or separation, our society believes that it is a woman’s duty to keep a relationship or marriage.” (Participant 2, 35 years)

5.5 THEME 2- Effects of GBV on women as victims

- SUB-THEME 1- Physical injury and subsequent death

The minority of the respondents reported that one of the effects of GBV is physical injury or harm. One of the respondents reported still having a physical scar due to acts of GBV. Another one of the respondents even reported that there were instances of victims subsequently dying due to the injuries they incurred from occurrences of GBV.

“Secondly they end [up] with physical effects like scars or being seriously injured especially for those who are physically abused, some even end up dead as a result of violence.” (Participant 2, 35 years)

“Secondly I am also physically scared; you see this mark that I have on the forehead, I wasn’t born with it but I got it from a man I trusted so every time I look myself in the mirror I see a reminder of the pain I went through.” (Participant 5, 40 years)

“I’m sure you have heard that this month only about three women have been killed by their partners and most of those women have been abused for some time and as a community we advised them to be strong and patient but they end up dead.” (Participant 4, 42 years)

- SUB-THEME 2- Emotional trauma

Respondents also reported that one of the effects of GBV was emotional harm. The respondents believe that GBV leads to victims having emotional scars which are difficult to heal because it seems that even when the victim has left the perpetrator it becomes difficult to ever trust another male.

“Firstly, I am emotionally scared, I don’t think I will ever feel safe around a man or fall in love again because for me the man I trusted with my life was not a protector as I expected but a beast that I had to fear.” (Participant 6, 25 years)

“I am emotionally damaged; I don’t think I will ever trust a man or fall in love again because for me the man I trusted with my life was not a protector as I expected but a manipulator and a liar.” (Participant 7, 45 years)

- SUB-THEME 3- Low self- esteem

Some of the respondents reported that the victims of GBV end up feeling worthless and their sense of being a woman is snatched from them. This worthlessness therefore explains the subsequent inferiority complex and the low self-esteem. This sense of inferiority is believed to be rooted in the assumption that the male is innately superior to the female so the female has to live in dependence to him or in submission to his views or authority.

“As I said before a lot of women who are being abused have low self-esteem and they somehow believe that they cannot live without a man because they are too emotionally dependent on men.” (Participant 2, 35 years)

“Women are inferior especially in our black society where it’s assumed that women need to be constantly under men in terms of judgement, views, power and voice where women need to always agree with what men are saying without disagreeing.” (Participant 3, 28 years)

“It hurts, you end up feeling worthless or like you are not woman enough.” (Participant 1, 28 years)

- SUB-THEME 4- Suicide and depression

A minority of respondents reported that they have heard of instances in which GBV led the victim into depression and subsequent to that the victim committed suicide. The implication of such statements is that GBV can have such adverse effects emotionally that the victim can view being dead as better than being alive even when they have children.

“I even have a friend who tried to commit suicide a few weeks ago because she is in an abusive relationship and when she talks to her family about her problem they tell her to be strong and fight for her man.” (Participant 9, 27 years)

“I know more than five women who are going through an abusive situation, the other one committed suicide last year and left her children to suffer.” (Participant 5, 40 years)

“There are a lot of effects, firstly women who become victims of GBV may suffer from serious mental health challenges like depression that is why some of them even end up committing suicide.” (Participant 2, 35 years)

- SUB-THEME 5- Hatred for men

One respondent who experienced GBV reported that it has caused her to have such a hatred for men that she has at times contemplated being violent to men but was deterred by the stigma that may carry. The respondent also attributes her over-protectiveness of her daughter from men or boys. This insinuates that she believes every man will end up harming her and she is attempting to prevent that from happening.

“I have a teenage daughter and I am overly protective of her because I don’t want her to go through what I went through, every time I see her talking to a boy I lose it because of the hatred I have for men.” (Participant 3, 28 years)

“An example of this would be that if a woman lays a hand on a man everyone gets shocked and it is considered a taboo but when a man lays a hand on a woman it is considered as discipline.” (Participant 3, 28 years)

5.6 THEME 3- Social impacts of GBV

- SUB-THEME 1- GBV reinforces traditional gender roles in society

The majority of the respondents reported that they believe that the impact GBV has in society is that it reinforces traditional gender roles. In other words, if GBV continues it strengthens the belief in society that men are superior to women and that the woman should only be obedient to anything the man is saying. This is viewed to be exacerbated by cultural values which seem to place the value of a woman below that of a man. Respondents believed that this was even

more prevalent in Venda culture which emphasizes the headship of the man and thus gives him the right to assert his dominance over a woman. These gender roles seem to be even stronger within the institution of marriage.

“The husband is taken care of while a man decides on how the family should be run.” (Participant 2, 35 years)

“So, I think we have failed as a society especially us blacks in raising and teaching our children what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman.” (Participant 1, 28 years)

“When we talk about societal impacts we may talk about things like gender roles, in our Venda culture a man has a final say and a woman’s job is to submit and obey, that plays a significant role in GBV because it gives a man more power over a woman.” (Participant 1, 28 years)

“For an example in our Venda culture a man is the head of the family and is expected to be the decision maker while a woman is expected to obey.” (Participant 8, 42 years)

“When we talk about gender roles we are talking about roles that a woman is expected play within the family and society, an example of this would be that a woman is expected to be the one taking care of the household while a man provides for the family.” (Participant 2, 35 years)

- SUB-THEME 2- GBV reinforces toxic masculinity in society

According to a few of the participants, the prevalence of GBV reinforces toxic masculinity and encourages the men to assert their dominance by remaining in charge at all times. An attitude of toxic masculinity is reinforced when it goes unpunished because it increases the measure to which a man can exert influence over a woman through the use of physical force.

“Our society expects men to be in charge, and most of the time.” (Participant 1, 28 years)

“In our Venda culture a man has a final say and a woman’s job is to submit and obey, that plays a significant role in GBV because it gives a man more power over a woman.” (Participant 4, 42 years)

“I think [it encourages] the mentality of inferiority like believing that men are superior and women are inferior especially in our black society where it’s assumed that women need to be constantly under men” (Participant 5, 40 years)

- SUB-THEME 3- GBV reinforces victim blaming in society

A minority of the respondents reported that they believe the effect GBV has on society is that it reinforces victim blaming to justify the perpetrators' behaviour. The implication is that when GBV is prevalent, the male is exonerated by the mindset that it is the victim's fault and that the woman must have somehow provoked or offended the man so he used physical force to tame her. Due to the fact that the victim is seen to be at fault, the violence is viewed to be a warranted form of discipline to bring her back in line.

“Society blames the woman for doing something wrong to provoke the man because we always think violence is a form of discipline.” (Participant 1, 28 years)

“Most women would rather stay in those abusive relationships and marriages and continue to tolerate the abuse in order to keep their dignity. We suffer more because we fear what people might say” (Participant 2, 35 years)

5.7 THEME 1- Potential measures to reduce GBV

- SUB-THEME 1- Normalization divorce and separation

One respondent reported that they believed that one of the ways to reduce the level of GBV is to normalize divorce or separation in society. This can be interpreted to mean that females fear getting a divorce or going back to their parents' home because of the shame it carries in our society. Thus, if divorce or separation or going back to their parents' home did not carry the measure of shame or scorn that it currently carries in society then victims of GBV would not be ashamed to leave perpetrators of GBV.

“And another thing if we normalize things like divorce and stop judging people who separate with their partners because some women stay in unhealthy relationships and marriages because they fear judgement from our society.” (Participant 1, 28 years)

- SUB-THEME 2- Change in childhood grooming

Some of the respondents also believed that to reduce GBV would require that children are brought up differently in homes. This line of thinking assumes that part of the problem is the way children are brought up. One of the aspects these participants believe is key is the fostering of self-love and self-worth in kids. This line of thinking assumes that if an individual is taught to love themselves from a young age they will not tolerate GBV. Another important principle that these respondents believe is important is training the younger generation the importance of financial independence so that they do not have to depend on anyone else for

sustenance and have to endure abuse just to get sustenance. One participant believes that to achieve this, female children have to be taught to value their career above all things so that they can maintain their financial independence.

“I think if we can change the way we groom and raise our kids then maybe in future we would have a GBV-free generation because that is where the problem begins. We should raise our children to be independent and teach them to love themselves first before loving someone else.” (Participant 2, 35 years)

“Lastly, parents should support their children and teach them to be independent so that they will not have to tolerate abuse all in fear for losing financial support.” (Participant 9, 27 years)

“In order to end this as parents we should make it a point to provide for our girl children so that they won’t have to ask money from men and also teach them to pursue a career they want to pursue and another thing is [to change] our views and expectations of women and men and how we should live our lives.” (Participant 7, 45 years)

- SUB-THEME 3- Transforming societal expectations and gender roles

As stated elsewhere in this chapter, there is a great emphasis that respondents placed on the effect of gender roles and societal expectations in reducing GBV. Respondent again reiterates this notion by postulating that if society’s views of women and their role in society is transformed then GBV could be eradicated.

“I think it all has to start with us, our views and expectations of women and men and how we should live our lives.” (Participant 3, 28 years)

- SUB-THEME 4- Increased and Harsh sentences for GBV crimes

Respondent 8 reported that the current state of our prisons is not sufficient to deter perpetrators from committing GBV. This line of thought insinuates that prisons are not tough enough or are not viewed by perpetrators to be tough enough which contributes to their nonchalant attitudes towards committing acts of GBV.

“And another thing is that the government should make prison life a hell so that people could fear breaking the law or killing women knowing that prison is not a good place to be.” (Participant 8, 42 years)

5.5. Summary

In conclusion, it is fair to deduce from these interviews that respondents believed that GBV is prevalent in Vhembe District and that it is not limited only to physical violence but may also

manifest through other forms of abusive behaviour such as financial abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse. There is a wide variety of beliefs from respondents about what the cause of GBV is in the district but most of the participants attribute it to financial dependence and societal expectations. It would also be a fair observation to reiterate that there was no consensus on the effects of GBV since participants gave varying thoughts about what they believe the effects of GBV to be. Pertaining to remedy for GBV, it is fair to note that most of the participants believe that most transformational belief systems must be instilled when the kids are still young. It is also apparent that the respondents were willing to give their thoughts on GBV without divulging much about their personal experiences.

6. CHAPTER SIX : DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

6.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the pervasive issue of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and the importance of understanding the perceptions of females in addressing this complex problem. It looks to compare the findings of this study to those of other studies that have been conducted in different parts of the globe. Each of the findings from the previous chapter will be discussed and corroborated or refuted with data extracted from previous studies in this subject area.

6.2. Discussion of the results

The study found that all the respondents believed that GBV was prevalent in the Vhembe District. However, the respondents gave varying reasons for their belief that this was so. The evidence for the prevalence of GBV in South Africa is clearly stated in the Crime South Africa 2018/2019 (2019) report which indicated that GBV was alarmingly widespread and it affected a significant portion of the South African population. This report, which is the country's official crime statistic report showed that forms of GBV such as domestic violence, human trafficking

and femicide were some of the most common types of GBV that occurred in South Africa. The evidence for the accuracy of this opinion from respondents is further corroborated by Enaifoghe, Dlelana, Durofika and Dlamini (2021) who called GBV an intense and widespread problem in South Africa that has an effect on almost every aspect of life. The notion that GBV is prevalent is further corroborated by Meyiwa, Williamson, Maseti and Ntabanyane (2017) who emphasized that the general reported statistics are not an accurate depiction of the magnitude of the problem because there is large number of cases that are not reported.

This study found that there have been reports of GBV leading to the death of the victims from the injuries sustained during the violence or abuse. Therefore, the study shows that there are severe cases of aggravated violence in the region. It is a general fact that if left untreated, injuries such as fractures, head trauma, or internal organ damage can lead to death resulting from GBV incidents (Breiding et al., 2015). It is also important to note that deaths related to GBV stifle societal progress and development by reducing the number of human resources required for development and growth (Dartnall et al., 2009). Johnson et al. (2007) make a valid point that also corroborates the findings of this study by highlighting that the risk of fatal injuries can increase due to fear, stigma, or financial constraints, which may prevent victims from seeking medical care (Johnson et al., 2007).

The study also demonstrated that women in the Vhembe region were more apprehensive about sharing their own experiences of GBV but were rather more open to sharing general perceptions and observations that they had made. It is well known that gender-based violence is a severe global problem and that research plays a vital role in understanding and addressing GBV, however, victims' reluctance to share their personal experiences remains a significant challenge. According to Chang (2016), this may be due to the fear of retribution from their abuser if it became known that they participated in a research study or divulged any information about the abuse the perpetrator committed against them. Another opinion is that the victims (participants) in research studies may lack trust in the researcher or in the legal system or the confidentiality measures that are being applied in the research process (Krishnan et al. 2010). Campbell reiterates how such action can be detrimental to the cause of eradicating GBV because by not fully disclosing their experiences victims inadvertently perpetuate GBV because their actions allow it to remain unaddressed.

This study found that there is an underlying belief among Vhembe women that GBV is perpetrated on women by men based on the fact that they are perceived as being weak and incapable of self-defense. A similar argument was made by Hollander (2016), who argued that the exclusion of self-defense training from any prevention of GBV efforts was misguided and at risk of being ineffective. The premise of this line of thinking is rooted on the notion that if women were capable of self-defense it could transform the 'root conditions' that make GBV flourish (Hollander. 2016). McCaughey and Cermele (2017) also advance a similar point by postulating that self-defense training should be one of the cornerstones of prevention of GBV efforts giving credence to the perception that women suffer GBV because they are viewed as being the weaker vessel incapable of self-defense.

The study also found that the women of Vhembe District did not believe that GBV was exclusively limited to physical violence. The views of the women in Vhembe were that GBV was a complex nexus of physical, financial, emotional and sexual abuse and that the concept of GBV should be looked at as a broader spectrum of abusive behaviour towards the victim. According to Perreault (2018) GBV encompasses a wide range of abusive behaviours not all of which meet the threshold of criminal behaviour and different forms of sexual, emotional and verbal abusive behaviours can be viewed as GBV. This line of thinking gives weight to the manner in which women in Vhembe perceive GBV. Cameron and Tedds (2021) contribute to this discourse by highlighting the range of manifestations of gender-based violence and emphasize its pervasive nature provide an overview of the various forms of gender-based violence that exist. These include sexual assault, femicide, intimate partner violence (IPV), dowry-related violence, early or forced marriage and pregnancy, female genital mutilation, elder abuse, human trafficking, sexual harassment, cyber abuse, and other visible and invisible forms (Cameron & Tedds, 2021).

The study also found that respondents perceived that rape and sexual abuse was a characteristic of GBV. The study also found that the rape and sexual abuse the participants reported was not predominantly perpetrated by strangers. Emphasis on the issue of rape and sexual abuse was primarily linked to husbands and intimate partners of the individual. These sentiments were echoed in the study conducted in rural and semi-rural areas in Kenya by Baiocchi, Friedberg, Rosenman, Amununzu-Nyamongo, Oguda, Otieno and Saenquist (2019). This study was conducted amongst a younger demographic (primarily adolescents) and had a satisfactory sample of 4 125. However, 7.2 percent of the female adolescents reported that they had experienced some form of rape in the 12 months prior to the study

being conducted (Baiocchi et al. 2019). Among the 21.3 percent of the female adolescents who reported to have a boyfriend, 38 percent of them reported that they had experienced some form of sexual abuse. The perpetrators of this sexual abuse/rape were reported to be boyfriends or intimate partners who were reported to account for 46 percent of the rapes that the adolescent girls encountered (Baiocchi, 2019). Studies like that of Shamu, Gevers, Mahlangu, Shai, Chirwa and Jewkes (2016) further corroborate the respondents' perception of the widespread prevalence of the sexual abuse or rape element in GBV. This study reported that amongst 14 percent of the female participants reported having experienced some form of sexual abuse or rape from intimate partners in just the 12 months prior to the study (Shamu et al. 2016). Even before this study, another study done amongst adults in Durban reported that almost 10 percent of the participants reported having experienced some form of rape or sexual abuse from intimate partners in the 3 months prior to the study being conducted (Jewkes, Gibbs, Jama-Shai et al. 2014). Similar reports of rape and sexual abuse have been reported in studies around other parts of Africa such as Ethiopia (Garcia-Moreno et al. 2006) and the Ivory Coast (Gupta et al. 2013). What is important to note is that all the studies listed above had large sample sizes. However, the strength of their validity may be challenged by the fact that most of these studies were cross-sectional in nature and perhaps longitudinally designed studies would hold more weight (Baiocchi et al. 2019).

It was also apparent in the study that females in Vhembe District believe that some form of emotional abuse precedes GBV. According to the respondents, there is a set pattern that GBV victimization follows which may begin with manifestations of verbal and emotional abuse. These behaviours gradually increase in severity. As the victim continues to tolerate each stage of the abuse it will eventually lead to physical abuse and violent behaviour. This perception is similar to what Hamberger and Larson (2015) found when they postulate that the detrimental effects of emotional abuse can foster a toxic environment that normalizes manipulation and control. Such an atmosphere can desensitize the abuser to the harm they inflict, potentially leading to an escalation of abuse into physical violence (Hamberger & Larson, 2015). The difference however, between the findings of this study and those of Hamberger and Larson (2015) was that they emphasized how the emotional abuse desensitizes the perpetrator and gives them courage to commit more abuse whilst in this study the respondents focused on the perception that the preceding emotional abuse desensitizes the victim so that they are able to accept more and more abuse. However, the fundamental similarity is that Hamberger and Larsen (2015) found that there was a statistically significant correlation between the two phenomena from their sampled participants. Dutton and Goodman (2005) also addressed the

issue of heightening tensions in conflict which leads to escalation of emotional abuse into physical violence.

The study found that financial abuse is an important piece of the puzzle of GBV. The study found that different acts of financial abuse including the taking of a victim's salary or the refusal to give spousal support on a financially dependent partner was one of the forms of expression of GBV. The link between GBV and financial abuse is both complex and multidimensional and there are several studies that corroborate the findings of this study by linking the two constructs. Goodmark's study (2013) is one of the studies that deeply analysed how GBV and economic abuse are linked in relationships and deeply examined how prevalent the use of economic abuse was. Another study found that perpetuating financial abuse was one of the tools perpetrators of GBV used to subject a woman to their control perpetually (Adams et al. 2008). This study explores the topic of financial control as a tactic used by abusers to assert power and control over their partners. It highlights different ways in which this control is exercised, such as limiting access to money, employment opportunities, or educational resources (Adams et al. 2008).

According to this study, it was also apparent that one of the main causes of GBV was linked to the issue of financial dependence. Women are unable to leave their abusive partners because they are financially dependent on them to either support their children or provide for their own basic needs. The study also found that there was a group of women whom the respondents perceived as not being able to leave abusive partners because they depend on them to provide gifts and sponsor their luxuries lifestyle. It is important therefore to understand that these are two separate groups of women with financial dependence on perpetrators but for different reasons. The first group is perceived to be either unemployed or fearing to be single parents who cannot provide all the needs of the children. The latter group is perceived to possess a vain attitude and may be viewed as being controlled by their need or lust for non-essential needs. Chimhore, Albert, Stanzia & Marvelous (2023) echo the same sentiments as those highlighted in this study by demonstrating through ANOVA models that when there was increase of a woman's engagement of economic activity there was a decrease in the level of emotional, sexual and physical violence she would encounter from a partner, thus the two phenomena are proven to be significantly correlational statistically. Another study that corroborates the perception obtained from the women in this study is provided by Zinyemba and Hlongwane (2022) whose study in Alexandra township (South Africa) found that socio-economic factors such as unemployment or lack of income in women was perceived by the

interviewees as one of the key aggravators of GBV. Another study in rural Cameroon also showed similar findings, it demonstrated that poverty and inability to the access land (for subsistence farming) were one of the traits of women who encountered GBV (Nsahlali, Constantine & Simone-Pierre, 2023)

One of the findings of the study was that the issue of societal expectations imposed on women by society is detrimental and is a significant contributor to the negative constructs that underpin the phenomenon of GBV. In general, the perception of women in the Vhembe District was that women are expected to adopt an attitude of servitude and inferiority and any deviation from their prescribed gender roles is viewed as rebellion or non-conformity. According to Flood (2011), societal expectations are oppressive to women in that it compels them to adopt a submissive role and a passive posture, thus reinforcing inequality and placing women in a vulnerable position. The purpose of the Flood study (2011) was to examine the role of gender expectations on shaping gender norms that contribute to power imbalances and violence in relationships. Ahmad et al. (2016) also echoed similar sentiments to the respondents of this study by reiterating that women are more vulnerable to acts of GBV when society expects them to endure suffering and remain silent or submissive even when they are being abused. It is important to recognize social norms as contextually and socially derived collective expectations of appropriate behaviour (Perrin, marsh, Clough, Desgroppes Yope Phaniel, Abdi & Glass, 2019). Harmful social norms that sustain GBV include the notion of a woman's sexual purity, the dedication to protecting the honour of her family over women's safety, and the authority of men to discipline women and children (Perrin et al. 2019)

This study also found that women of Vhembe District believe that there is an element of toxic masculinity in the district in general. This toxic masculinity is perceived to manifest through aggression or aggressive behaviours and the desire to subject their female counterparts to their absolute control. The study also found that traditional values of the Venda culture underpin this toxic masculinity as it seems to give men the leeway to act with authority to subject a woman to their control. The study also found that jealousy over the partner and possessiveness are the other main drivers of this toxic masculinity and manifest in instances where the perpetrator believes the woman is unfaithful or is welcoming advances from other men. Connel's (1995) definition toxic masculinity is foundational and thus provides context for the interpretation of the concept itself. The general premise of toxic masculinity is that men should be tough, unemotional and sexually aggressive and thus must be able to assert their dominance and not show a sign of weakness.

Kaufman (2017) postulates that toxic masculinity encourages an environment where violence is accepted as a method of controlling women by reinforcing harmful beliefs about male entitlement and female submission. This line of thinking is further corroborated by Messner (2016) who emphasizes that toxic masculinity discourages any show of vulnerability and leads to suppression of emotion which may subsequently lead to GBV. One of the studies that corroborate the findings of this study is that of Fleming et al. (2015) which examined whether traditional masculinity norms shape men's attitudes toward intimate partner violence. It discovered that men who adhere to these norms justify and perpetrate physical violence more often. One other study that corroborates the notion that toxic masculinity contributes to the increase of GBV is that of Debowska et al. (2020) which examined the relationship between toxic masculinity and the perpetration of sexual violence and found that adhering to traditional masculinity norms was associated with a greater likelihood of sexual aggression.

The study also provides evidence for the notion that GBV can lead to severe emotional harm. This can lead to trauma or post-traumatic symptoms. The study also makes it clear that GBV can also be a significant contributor to depression or depressive symptom to the victims that have survived the ordeal. The study also gives traction to the notion that GBV can be a significant contributor to suicide rates. According to a study conducted in KwaZulu Natal by Nguyen, Myers, Abrahams, Jewkes, Mhlongo, Seedat, Lombard, Garcia-Moreno, Chirwa, Kenenge and Peer (2023) one of the effects that demonstrate that GBV can lead to emotional harm and trauma is the presence of alcohol abuse. The study found through logistical regression models there was a significant statistical association between a history of different forms of GBV and trauma-related alcoholism. A study in the slums of India where suicide rates are relatively high, reiterates the argument that GBV has a strong link to depression and suicide ideation (Patel, Prabhu, Sciarrino, Presseau, Smith & Rozek, 2021). Another study that corroborates the findings of this study is that done by Rees, Silove and Chey (2011). This study examined 1 218 Australian women and found that 27.4 percent of them reported having experienced GBV. From the participants that had experienced GBV, the study found that 77.7 percent of them had experienced some form of anxiety disorder, 52.5 percent of them had experienced mood disorders such as major depressive disorder (Rees et al. 2011). The study also found that more than 43 percent of these women had attempted to commit suicide, an even greater number of them admitted that they had at least contemplated attempting suicide (Rees et al. 2011).

The study also gives traction to the notion that GBV can lead to feelings of worthlessness which may subsequently lead to inferiority complex or low self-esteem. The notion that GBV

can lead to feelings of inferiority and worthlessness is corroborated by another qualitative study conducted in the Vhembe District by Rikhotso, Netangaheni and Nongiwe (2023) who expanded on this theme as extracted from their thematic analysis. The participants in this study reported that the words they were told were so horrible that they ended up feeling like they are worthless. One participant (a 26-year-old, female, single) reported feeling worthless after she was told that “I am nothing without him and there are a lot of things I cannot achieve without him because I am from a poor family. Today I know how to wear a night dress because of him and that I came with nothing to the marriage ... I most of the time feel worthless as a woman.” (Rikhotso et al. 2023). Another participant (a 27-year-old, female, married) echoed this sentiment by reporting that “I think it is the reason that I stayed in the relationship for too long to a point where my husband realized that I will not leave him. Again, I think he ended up viewing me as his property because he paid lobola or dowry for me ... The violence I suffered killed my self-esteem because of being told that I am useless.” (a 27-year-old, female, married) (Rikhotso et al. 2023). The significance of this study was that it was carried out in the same district as the current study, thus lends more validity to the reports of the respondents of the current study. Orchowski (2019) reiterates the notion that victims of GBV usually go through a loss low self-esteem because of the amount of shaming and blaming they have to endure.

The study also found that GBV can lead to inter-gender hatred. In the case of our study, it is clear that GBV against women leads to a development of hateful feelings in women towards men which may manifest through a distrust in men generally. Several studies may be viewed to corroborate this finding. However, most of these studies did not necessarily focus on GBV leading to female hating males as reported by the participants in this study. Rather they focused on emphasizing that there is a complex relationship between hatred and GBV and it may at times be the cause and sometimes an after-effect and that it is not one-sided and could include males hating females too (Bates, 2018). A study by Fulu (2013) explored the links between GBV and gender stereotypes and found that incidents of GBV serve as a catalyst for perpetuating harmful stereotypes which subsequently lead to inter-gender hatred. Baits (2018) also highlighted that prejudiced attitude against the opposite gender contributes to the further division of society and hinders efforts to foster gender equality.

The study also found that in a place like Vhembe District, which is built upon patriarchal constructs, there is an overwhelming amount of victim blaming for victims of GBV. According to what this study unearthed, the initial reaction to hearing of an incidence of GBV is an attempt to discredit the victim or insinuate that she must have done something to provoke the

perpetrator. This line of thinking as explained by respondents insinuates that the perpetrator is justifiable for their actions if the victim can be found guilty of an error in judgment or behaviour. It is evident from the study that respondents believed that there was also an element of victim shaming in Vhembe district for victims of GBV. The study found that victims of GBV that successfully leave the perpetrator were mistreated, shamed and called different scornful names especially if they were married to the perpetrator. Benagiano's statement (2017) when he postulated that victim blaming and victim shaming foster a culture of silence and fear in which victims are often hesitant to report abuse because of fear of judgment is a good summary of what the current study found. Reich (2012) also reiterates the same sentiment when he postulates that the psychological trauma experienced by survivors can be compounded by victim shaming and blaming, resulting in emotional distress and potentially discouraging them from seeking help. As a result of society's tendency to focus on victim behaviour instead of perpetrator behaviour, it often becomes difficult to overcome the cycle of violence (Orchowski et al. 2019)

The study also found that respondents believe that one of the biggest contributors to victims remaining in relationships in which they were abused was the fundamental, underlying beliefs on marriage. What became clear is that once an individual is married in Vhembe District, they are expected to stay in that marriage even when it causes them physical harm or other forms of abuse. Marriage in Vhembe District is viewed as a very rigid institution where a woman should be able to stay despite being subjected to abuse. Bassey and Bubu (2019) show that the view that traditional African pattern of marriage is fundamentally biased towards the females is a phenomenon that spreads wider than just the Vhembe District. Male headship and female submission are both cultural and religious values within African societies (Bubu & Bassey, 2019). African societies are patriarchal and use patriarchal systems to conduct social relations and marriages. A number of these values define the role and position of women within African societies, so they also pose challenges to modernity's goal of gender equality (Bubu & Bassey, 2019).

The study found that in order for GBV to be eradicated or significantly reduced, it would require that female children need to be taught to love and value themselves. The presumption here is that if the younger generation females are taught self-love they will not be in a position to tolerate abuse or any form of detrimental behaviour towards themselves. This perception is echoed in academia by studies like that of Sanchez et al. (2018) which argue that a sense of self-love enhances young females' confidence and ability to assert their own boundaries,

reducing their vulnerability to abusive relationships. It is again corroborated by Gupta (2017) who argued that by nurturing their self-love, young females can resist oppressive influences and challenge societal expectations that perpetuate GBV. Banyard & Moynihan (2011) also agree that young women with a strong sense of self-love have a greater ability to recognize abusive behaviours and assert their rights, thus reducing their vulnerability to gender-based violence.

Another area that the study identified as a solution to GBV as postulated by the respondents is the insisting on the importance of financial independence in the minds of young female girls. This line of thinking insinuates that if young girls learn to be financially independent from a young age, they will no longer be dependent on men to provide for their basic needs and therefore will not stay in abusive relationships for the sake of having their basic needs taken care of. There are many scholarly arguments that corroborate this perception and emphasize that the development of financial skills and opportunities can help break the cycle of GBV in situations where victims are economically dependent on their abusers (Jewkes et al., 2015). Bachman et al (2017) echo this notion by contending that young girls who have been taught and practice financial independence from a young age are less likely to stay in an abusive relationship.

It is again evident from the study that respondents believe that one of the measures that could be taken to reduce GBV is the normalization of divorce and separation. This line of thought insinuates that if divorce or separation is normalized, victims of GBV within the marriage institution would be able to leave without fear of judgement or scorn from society. The idea that normalization of divorce or separation is an important solution for eradicating GBV is not new. It is a concept that academics have been dealing with for a long while. For an example, Dobabsh and Dobash (1979) proposed this solution in the 70s and argued that this option would allow victims of GBV to leave abusive relationships without fear of the stigma and shame that they would have to face. In support of this, Kernic et al. (2002) postulated that divorce survivors are empowered to take control of their lives, and to make decisions that maintain their safety and well-being when divorce is recognized as a valid choice. Other researchers argue that there is a higher likelihood that survivors of GBV will seek legal protection when they know that divorce is an option (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994). There are of course several modern studies that argue this line of perception but the point was to demonstrate that this argument had been made in academia long before.

The study found that there was a general belief that the conditions of prison in South Africa were too comfortable and lack the ability to deter the perpetration of acts of violence. In the respondents' perspectives, if the conditions of prison were harder, fewer males would be willing to serve prison sentences for crimes such as GBV. According to Yesufu (2022), the legal or judicial solution is not the stiffening of the jail conditions as suggested by the respondents of the study but rather that the criminal justice system needs to enact a right to protection for women. Longer sentences for perpetrators of Gender-Based Violence are essential to curtail the scourge of femicide in South Africa is what Yesufu (2022) suggests.

6.3. Summary

In conclusion, this chapter discussed the complex perceptions of females regarding gender-based violence (GBV), highlighting its far-reaching consequences on individuals and society as a whole and emphasized the need for comprehensive approaches to combatting GBV. In order to prevent and respond to GBV, we can shape more effective strategies and interventions if we listen to the voices of females and understand their perspectives.

7. CHAPTER 7: LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY, REFLEXIVITY AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

7.1. Introduction

There are challenges and constraints associated with conducting research. The limitations encountered in the study are explored in this chapter, along with valuable recommendations which emerged from these challenges and the reflexive processes guiding our research. The acknowledgement of these aspects is crucial as they illuminate the intricacies of the research process, ensure transparency, and provide a solid foundation for future research.

7.2. Reflexivity

The importance of reflexivity in shaping the research process is crucial when conducting this qualitative study on survivors of Gender-Based Violence (GBV). In my role as a female

researcher, I recognize the influence of my gender, my personal experiences, and my social context on my research design and interpretation. My ethical considerations are based on these reflections and guide my approach to this project. This study inevitably shapes my perspective on GBV because I am a female researcher. Through my gender identity, I have a shared understanding of the experiences women may face, and I have also been able to empathize with the survivors. In light of the intersectional factors of race, ethnicity, and class, I recognize that my experiences and background do not fully reflect the experiences of all GBV survivors.

For this study to be conducted impartially, I must acknowledge my personal biases and assumptions. It may affect my interpretation of participants' narratives based on my beliefs about gender equality, justice, and human rights. It is therefore crucial for me to recognize these biases and continuously strive to analyze data objectively. Listening to survivors' stories of traumatic experiences can evoke emotional responses when engaged in research on GBV. In order to avoid emotional bias in data analysis, I maintain professional boundaries in order to avoid empathy for their suffering. In the process of researching, I maintained a reflexive journal that served as a tool for self-reflection and a repository of my evolving understanding of the topic.

Throughout this presentation, I purposed to be transparent about my positionality and biases, so that readers can critically evaluate my research. I am aware of the profound responsibility that comes with this research as I explore the experiences of survivors of GBV. I maintain a reflexive stance that enables me to navigate the research process with sensitivity, integrity, and a commitment to amplifying survivors' voices while recognizing my limitations at the same time. I hope to contribute to the collective effort to address and prevent GBV by applying a reflexive lens to this problem in order to gain a deeper understanding of it.

7.3. Recommendations of the study

7.3.1. Recommendations for childhood training

Self-love involves teaching young females value, acceptance, and respect of themselves. This empowerment goes beyond individual well-being and may be helpful in preventing GBV in several ways.

- Engage communities and schools to create a nurturing environment that values self-love, self-worth, and self-respect.
- Create mentorship programs and opportunities for young women to build self-love and develop positive role models.

- Educational initiatives should promote self-love, self-esteem, and self-acceptance as essential components of personal well-being and resilience.
- Empower young girls with financial literacy education that includes knowledge and skills that will lead to independence in the future.
- By providing a variety of economic resources and opportunities for young girls to gain skills, such as scholarships, mentoring, and vocational training, we can help them become economically independent.

7.3.2. Recommendations for judicial systems

- Establish legal frameworks that deter future acts of violence and hold perpetrators accountable (Dartnall et al., 2009).
- Changes in legal frameworks have led to discussions around issues such as marriage age, consent, and women's rights.
- Survivors of economic abuse can be protected by legal measures such as restraining orders and policies that recognize economic abuse as a form of violence (Hendy, 2003).

7.3.3. Recommendations for researchers carrying out related studies

In order to address this pervasive issue, GBV victims are reluctant to share their personal experiences with researchers. The academic literature emphasizes the importance of creating safe and trusting environments and engaging with communities to encourage victims to come forward. In order to gain deeper insights into gender-based violence, to develop effective interventions, and to work towards a society free from it, we must overcome this reluctance. In order to reduce stigmas and encourage participation in GBV research, communities need to be engaged and public awareness raised about the importance of GBV research

- Victims can be encouraged to participate in a process by building trust through transparent and compassionate communication (Bott et al. 2005)
- For victims to share their stories, researchers need to provide them with safe, confidential, and supportive spaces (He, 2020)

7.3.4. Recommendations for future research studies

- Further research is needed on effective intervention programs and interventions for perpetrators to prevent reoffending and foster behavioral change.
- Many studies focus on the immediate consequences of GBV, but more long-term studies are needed to understand its enduring effects on the body, mind, and economy.
- To develop effective interventions targeted to GBV, it is crucial to conduct comparative research across cultural and geographic contexts.

- Research on the long-term effects of GBV on children who witness violence in their homes is limited.
- An emerging field that needs more attention is harnessing technology to provide safe and accessible reporting mechanisms for GBV.

7.3.5. Recommendations for community awareness and engagements

- Education and awareness about the consequences of GBV are important, along with encouragement to seek help early (World Health Organization, 2013).
- Educational initiatives should promote awareness of GBV and the importance of divorce as a valid response to abuse (Lundgren et al., 2005).
- Interfaith and interethnic marriages challenge traditional norms, leading to discussions on cultural diversity and tolerance. It is becoming increasingly apparent that African societies need to adjust gender roles and promote gender equality within marriages as they evolve.
- As part of an educational initiative, stereotypes should be challenged and respect among the genders should be promoted (Abrams, 2010).
- A variety of educational initiatives can contribute to a change in societal norms and attitudes by challenging gender roles and expectations (Jewkes et al., 2015).
- A program that promotes economic independence, financial literacy, and job training can help survivors break free of economic dependence (Davies, 2008).

7.4. Limitations of the study

Despite the valuable insight qualitative studies provide on Gender-Based Violence (GBV), they also have some limitations that researchers should acknowledge. The following are some common limitations.

- The researcher acknowledges that there was a time limitation in the completion of the study. Due to time constraints, the researcher had to fast track processes in order to meet university deadlines.
- The researcher also acknowledges that there were budget constraints that influenced the process of completing the study due to the fact that the study was not externally funded thus the researcher had to use their own resources in most instances.
- The researcher also acknowledges the possibility of sample bias. The majority of subjects in qualitative studies are volunteers, and this self-selection may introduce bias. The participants may draw from a wide range of experiences, which may not fully represent the diversity of GBV survivors.

- The researcher also views social desirability bias as a possible limiting factor. There is a possibility that respondents may give responses that they view as socially desirable, rather than disclosing all aspects of their experiences, which can lead to underreporting.
- The researcher also acknowledges that the study may also have a limited cross-cultural applicability, especially outside South Africa or the African continent in general. This is because qualitative studies conducted in one cultural or regional context may not directly apply to another or be unreliable in capturing the nuances and variations of other cultures.

7.6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the limitations encountered in this study have illuminated the inherent complexities of GBV related topics, which guided the researcher towards valuable recommendations for future research and practice. Again, through a reflexive stance, the researcher was able to navigate the study's intricacies in a transparent and self-aware manner. Reflexivity has aided the researcher's endeavour to maintain ethical rigour and critical self-awareness. This journey was a testament to the researcher's commitment to contributing to knowledge, raising awareness and striving to foster positive change in the realm of GBV research.

The contribution of the respondents was pivotal to this study and through their experiences and insights the researcher was able to address the limitations and chart a path forward towards a better understanding of GBV. Although research endeavours are bound to have limitations, their significance is not diminished. Instead, they emphasize the need to continue exploring, adapting, and refining research methodologies. Future researchers and practitioners can use these recommendations as stepping stones towards a more profound understanding of GBV and better strategies for addressing its challenges.

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APPENDIX 1: Ethics approval certificate

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ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

NAME OF

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14000146

PROJECT TITLE: Views of women regarding gender-based violence in Thulamela municipality, Limpopo province

ETHICAL CLEARENCE NO: FHS/23/PHYCH/29/0709

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Dr MD Mushwana	UNIVEN, Psychology	Supervisor
Dr M Madzhe	UNIVEN, Psychology	Co-supervisor
Ms R Netsholwe	UNIVEN, Psychology	Investigator — Student

Type: Master's Research

Risk: Minimal risk to humans, animals, or environment (Category 2)

Approval Period: September 2023 — September 2024

The Research Ethics Social Sciences Committee (RESSC) hereby approves your project as indicated above.

General Conditions

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following.

- The project leader (prlnclpal Investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the REC:
 - Annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, and upon completion of the project.
 - Within 48hrs in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project. - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the REC. Would there be deviated from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date; a new application must be made to the REC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the REC retains the right to:
- Request access to any Information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project,

- To ask further questions; Seek additional information; Require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.
- withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - _Any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected.
- It becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the REC or that information has been false or misrepresented.
 - _The required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,
 - _New institutional rules, national legislation or International conventions as necessary

APPENDIX 2: BUDGET

BUDGET ITEM	MOTIVATION	DESCRIPTION	TOTAL
Printing	Printing consent forms and other letters, interview guides, and copies of final document	Printing in black ink per page @ R4.00 x 1 000	R4 000.00
Independent Coder	Coding and re-coding of research document	@R500.00 per hour x 20 hours	R10 000.00

Proof reading and editing	Proof reading of the proposal Proof reading of the dissertation	65 pages x R25 per page 120 pages x R25.00 per page	R1 625.00 R3 000.00
Transport	Trip from Univen to Lwamondo headman for appointment and request for permission to conduct a study Trip from Univen to Lwamondo for data collection, 10 return trips	Univen to Lwamondo @ 40 Km @ 3, 55 per kilo x 2 return trips Univen to Lwamondo @ 40 km @ R3, 55 per kilo x 10 return trips	R284.00 R1 420.00
Binding	Binding final document	Spiral binding R130.00 per copy x 5 Final report R450 per copy x 5	R650.00 R2 250.00
Consumables	For the storage of information For the storage of information For consent forms and other letters	Memory sticks 8GB x 2 External hard drive 8GB x 2 15 Envelopes @ R6 Writing pens @R10.00 x 10 Writing note pads @ R36 x 2 Highlighters Pens @ R21 x 4 Pencil @ R2.40	R400.00 R2 800.00 R90.00 R100.00 R72.00 R84.00 R40.00
Voice recorder	Data collection process	Voice recorder @ R1 500.00 Batteries @ R60 of 2 by 6 packets	R 1 500.00 R 360.00
Total			R28 675.00

APPENDIX 3: WORKPLAN

PROPOSED TIMELINE FOR RESEARCH PROJECT

Activities	Jan 2022	Feb 2022	March 2022	April 2022	May 2022	June 2022	July 2022	Aug 2022	Sep 2022	Oct 2022	Nov 2022	May 2023
Proposal evaluation												

by the department												
Departmental proposal presentation												
Proposal evaluation by SHSHDC												
Proposal evaluation by ESHSHDC												
Ethical Clearance Application												
UHDC Approval												
Permission from Chief of Lwamondo to conduct the study												
Data Collection												
Data Capturing & Analysis												
Report writing and Submission												
Submission of the final dissertation												
Graduation												

APPENDIX 4: CONSENT FORM

UNIVEN Informed Consent

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study : Views of women regarding Gender-Based Violence in Thulamela municipality, Limpopo province

Principal Investigator/s/ researcher : (Netshongolwe Rabelani, Master of Arts in Psychology)

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s : (Dr Mercy Mushwana, PHD. Dr Mpho Madzhie)

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study:

Gender-based violence is a global pandemic, South Africa is known to be one of the most dangerous places for women due to high prevalence of Gender-Based Violence. GBV affects every person of every class, culture, race and level of literacy. Women who are victims of GBV can experience a range of effects from physical, psychological and emotional effects. GBV is a human rights violation and has cost the lives of many women across the world. The study is about exploring the views of women regarding GBV based in Thulamela municipality in Limpopo province.

Outline of the Procedures : Purposive and snowball sampling will be used to recruit women who are between the ages of 25-50 and living within the Thulamela municipality areas.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant: Psychological and emotional harm

Benefits : participants who have not dealt with their trauma as a result of GBV will be referred to the nearest hospital for further assistance. The findings of the study will educate the community and raise awareness about gender-based violence, its impacts and how it affects women as victims of GBV. The community will become open-minded about the importance of practicing gender equality. The community will be able to make informed decisions regarding the normalisation of GBV. Furthermore, the researcher will be able to publish the study findings and raise awareness on the effects of gender on women as victims of GBV in Thulamela municipality.

Reason/s why the Participant May Be Withdrawn from the Study: Illness and when a participant is willing to withdraw from the study.

Remuneration : No remuneration (the study is voluntary)

Costs of the Study : R28 685

Confidentiality : The researcher will ensure that the participants' responses remain confidential and not discussed with anyone unless shared with the researcher's supervisor. She will also ensure that their names remained anonymous, particularly their responses.

Research-related Injury : The research-related injury is emotional and psychological harm. The researcher will avoid harm as an ethical guideline, however should harm occur, the researcher will debrief and counsel participants.

Persons to Contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:

(Supervisor and details) Please contact the researcher (tel no. 0769345117), my supervisor (tel no. 0724741399) or the University Research Ethics Committee Secretariat on 015 962 9058. Complaints can be reported to the Director: Research and Innovation, Prof GE Ekosse on 015 962 8313 or Georges Ivo.Ekosse@univen.ac.za

APPENDIX 5: LETTER TO REQUEST PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

University of Venda

P.O Box X5050

Thohoyandou

0950

28 April 2022

The chief

Dear Sir

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY ON THE EFFECTS OF GENDER ROLES ON WOMEN AS VICTIMS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN THULAMELA MUNICIPALITY, LIMPOPO

I am a Masters student at the University of Venda. In order to complete my degree, I am expected to conduct a research project of my choice.

The Thulamela municipality has had a history of high number of cases that are Gender- Based Violence related. The number of such kind of cases has increased over the years with women at the receiving end. Some cases go unreported due to the fact that community members have normalised GBV and associate violence and power with male gender roles. Therefore, my study is aimed at exploring the effects of gender roles on women as victims of Gender- Based Violence in the Thulamela municipality, Limpopo.

Data collection will be used through an interview guide and the gathered information will be kept confidential. A summary of results will be made available to the community members of the village during the community meeting called by the Induna. Therefore, I am requesting your permission to conduct the study within the villages of Lwamondo.

I hope this study will help in raising awareness on the effects of gender roles on women as victims of GBV within the Thulamela municipality and also the community leaders in changing and getting rid of gender roles expectations that perpetuate GBV towards women.

Your help in facilitating this research will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

.....

Netshongolwe Rabelani

Student

076 934 5117/rabelaninetshiongolwe@gmail.com

APPENDIX 6: EDITORS LETTER

P.O. Box 5575

Thohoyandou

0950

01 December 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: Editing/Proofreading of **Netshongolwe Rabelani**'s dissertation (Student no.: 14000146 - University of Venda)

This serves to attest that I edited **Netshongolwe Rabelani**'s dissertation for a **Master of Psychology degree**, jointly supervised by **Dr M Mushwana** and **Dr M Madzhie**, titled

“Views of women regarding gender-based violence in Thulamela municipality, Limpopo province”.

I trust that my linguistic and technical inputs have been appropriately considered in the finalisation of the research document.


Kind regards

A.Z. Nengome

Formerly English lecturer (Served at Univen – until 2018)

Contact numbers : 082 717 4150 & 015 962 8000 (Univen)

Email address : aznzaca@gmail.com

Signature  Date 01/12/2023

APPENDIX 7: TURNITIN REPORT

views of women regarding gender-based violence in Thulamela Municipality

ORIGINALITY REPORT



PRIMARY SOURCES

1	Submitted to University of Venda Student Paper	7%
2	univendspace.univen.ac.za Internet Source	2%
3	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source	1%
4	etd.uwc.ac.za Internet Source	<1%
5	www.sanews.gov.za Internet Source	<1%
6	reliefweb.int Internet Source	<1%
7	Submitted to University of South Africa (UNISA) Student Paper	<1%
8	Submitted to Stanly Community College Student Paper	<1%

Submitted to Mount Kenya University