

**FACTORS THAT EXPLAIN GENDER BASED-VIOLENCE AMONGST  
SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS IN THE INANDA AREA**

BY

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**DECLARATION**

I, Frances Nomvuyo Nkani, declare that this dissertation is my work, and has never been submitted previously for any degree in any university. All sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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**RESEARCHER**

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**JANUARY, 2006**

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**ABSTRACT**

**The prevalence** of gender-based violence in South African schools has been **identified** by the research and the Department of Education has acknowledged its existence. However, little has been done to alleviate the problem. Female learners are continually victimized by male learners at school.

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that explain gender-based violence amongst learners from three secondary schools in the Inanda area. Inanda is a predominantly informal settlement area on the outskirts of Durban, in South Africa.

**This study** has largely focussed on female learners as victims of gender-based violence perpetrated by male learners. Both quantitative and qualitative **methods** had been adopted through which data was collected. School records **were reviewed** and one perpetrator and the victim were chosen from each **school**. **The two** participants were then, interviewed in order to get both **perspectives**.

**The data** collected revealed that there are other kinds of gender-based **violence** besides those that were identified from the records review. The **findings** from the interviews outlined the factors that explain gender-based violence in schools. In conclusion, some recommendations were made in the light of the findings.

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Gender-based violence in South African schools has been identified as a key area of concern that needs to be addressed urgently. It is so rife, that it threatens the safety of the female learners (Truscott, 1994:49 and Chisholm, 1999:10). Therefore, this study seeks to gain insight into the problem of gender-based violence by investigating the lived experiences of both male learners and female learners from three secondary schools. In an attempt to investigate gender-based violence, this research attempts to ascertain the kinds of gender-based violence that female learners in an informal settlement secondary school experience and the factors explaining gender-based violence among male and female learners.

### **1.2 THE FOCUS OF THE STUDY**

The South African Constitution confers everyone the right to dignity and privacy. Gender-based violence is one form of intrusion on both those rights. In schools, instances of gender-based violence occur, but they are not often reported by the victim, or recorded by the school. Victims are afraid to speak about their experiences, but when an opportunity is provided to do so in a safe environment, the victims are more willing to come forward (Agenda No. 36 of 1997:9). As the school shuns bad publicity, female victims sometimes think that they would not get enough support from educators when they report gender-based violent actions. The result is that the perpetrators often go unpunished.

It is important for this study to raise awareness to the policy makers, that there is an urgent need for monitoring schools in carrying out the policies on curbing gender-based violence on female learners.

Furthermore, within the research site, schools are more concerned with addressing issues of drug abuse and the carrying of dangerous weapons on school premises. As a result the issue of sexual and gender-based violence is often overlooked.

### **1.3 THE RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

Violence affects women differently, depending on their position in relation to race, class and sexual orientation (Zwane, 1994:20). My experiences of gender-based violence are similar to those, which are experienced by the female learners, although on a different level. As a 'black' female educator, who often encounters personal gender-based violence, I have a responsibility to help learners reconstruct their masculinity and femininity in a positive way. There is a need for male learners to respect gender differences and learn that aggression is not a positive way of solving differences. Learners should be encouraged to understand and respect other people's rights, as it is entrenched in the South African Bill of Rights, which states that- "every human being has a right to human dignity".

Inanda is a predominantly informal settlement area with low cost housing. It is a disadvantaged area with a high rate of unemployment and violence. Having worked in Inanda, since 1992, it has been my observation that there are many incidents of gender-based violence against female learners in particular. These incidents of violence have been mainly in the form of sexual abuse, sexual harassment, coercion and beatings amongst secondary school learners. These incidents of violence have escalated, since the acknowledgement of their existence in schools, instead of decreasing. This makes it an extremely important area of concern that requires investigation and intervention to curb gender-based violence against female learners.

As a result of many years of personal observation, male learners constantly violate female learners' rights at school and this study

focuses on male learners as perpetrators and female learners as victims of gender-based violence. An observation, which is confirmed by Human Rights Watch (2001:1) where it argues that;

*On a daily basis in schools across the nation, South African girls of every race and economic class encounter sexual violence and harassment at school that impedes their realization of the right to education.*

Male learners also become aggressive towards female learners. This aggressive behaviour disrupts the concentration of the female learners towards their studies. Therefore, gender-based violence compromises the learning environment and educational opportunities for female learners.

Female learners have reported numerous gender-based violence incidents inflicted upon them. These reported cases include: sexual harassment, coercion, bra- snapping, beatings, bullying, fighting and name-calling of female learners by male learners.

Most often when these violent cases were investigated, the perpetrators were the male learners, who would claim that they resorted to violence because female learners have shown no respect for them. Therefore, male learners force female learners to respond to their bidding, if they don't, male learners would become aggressive. In addition, the male learners are constantly reminding the female learners about who is supposed to be in a dominant position. For instance, the male learner would claim that the female learner is taking him for granted, and justifies this claim by beating the female learner.

These violent actions are prevalent everywhere on the school premises; from the classroom, to the corridors, to the playground and in the toilets. Sometimes these violent actions happen in the presence of an educator (Whitney and Smith, 1993).

All these acts of violence, perpetrated by male learners, are a form of dominating and controlling female learners (Vetten, 2000). Most of the aggressive behaviour by male learners at school comes from their observation of the wider society, which constructs gender identities on how males and females should behave.

Research has shown that gender identities are socially constructed (Richmond-Abbott 1992:4 and Short 1993:77). Learners at school often construct and shape gender and sexual relations in the making of everyday gender identities. Children actively contest, challenge and contribute to the dominant definitions of gender and sexuality through which particular identities are constructed (Hearn, 1996 and Bhana, 2000). Furthermore, within gender constructions, there is distribution of power, and males always construct their identity as that of power over females.

#### **1.4 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS**

For the purpose of this study it is important at the outset to clarify and define important terms used. The term girl and female learner on one hand, and boy and male learner, on the other hand, are used interchangeable in the study. The term '*Black*' in this study refers to the South Africans of African origin. This definition excludes other race groups such as Indians and Coloureds.

#### **1.5.CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY**

##### **1.5.1.Historical background**

Violence was for many years an integral part of the apartheid South African way of life. The use of force normalised male on male violence as part of 'official' masculinity. Furthermore, the apartheid system economically marginalised black people, which led to the majority of black males being unable to access economic opportunities as the majority are unskilled and most of them become unemployed. Thus, the majority of the black people live in poverty. Unfortunately, poverty is

the breeding ground for violence, where every female becomes the potential victim, to the many frustrations males experience in the work places as well as the pressure associated with unemployment. Thus a link between patterns of economic inequalities and gender violence is formed.

The focus area of this study is Inanda and the schools in this area demonstrate the familiar patterns of gender-based violence, which mark the majority of black schools. These violent acts include rape, sexual harassment, fighting, beating, stabbing, and bullying (Morrell, 1998). The behaviour that is demonstrated by learners at school emanates from the influence they get from their family, society, the media and the educational environment.

### **1.5.2 Family influence**

According to Short (1993), children learn to be violent from their immediate families, through observing their parents on how they deal with unwanted behaviour, whereby parents resort to physical violence by spanking and beating them (children). Children also observe that at home, it is the father, who has power over the mother, and that a boy-child is favoured to a girl-child. What they observe in their families is confirmed by the practices of the larger societies.

### **1.5.3 Society's influence**

Children are always exposed to violent actions through criminal actions in their society (Bhana, 2002). They learn from society that at the different sites, times and places; violence becomes a strategy for exerting control over others and establishing and maintaining relations of domination and subordination. Sometimes they use their bodies as tools and that symbolises the capacity for violence. Male learners who are in senior grades tend to coerce female learners who are in lower grades just because they are smaller than them, and their belongings are taken by force by learners from the senior grades (Connell, 1995).

Gender power is understood in terms of how gender identities are created, and how the school environment and its social structures reproduce and perpetuate it. The relationship between male and female learners of Inanda schools is more or less the same as that of the wider society. In addition, Connell (1991:30) argues that institutions like schools have their own characteristics of gender regime. These institutions form their own arrangements of gender relations in line with those of the wider society, which distribute power. Societal norms socialize males to be aggressive, powerful, unemotional, and more controlling than females. On the other hand, females are expected to be passive, nurturing, submissive and emotional than males. This contributes to social acceptance of men as dominant. All these reinforce female's roles as weak, powerless and dependent upon men (Robbin 1992).

These norms create stereotyped gender-role definition in which males are encouraged to exercise control and authority aggressively over females. As a result, violence against females has become part of the social fabric. Hence, violence against females becomes a gender equity issue. In some cases, there is still a widely held belief that women provoke violent behaviour from their male partners and they somehow deserve to be abused (Bower, 2003).

#### **1.5.4 Influence of the media**

There is a major role played by the media that perpetuates violent behaviour amongst young people. Television, movies and music often reinforce the notion that females enjoy being abused and it is a masculine trait to control women. These stereotyped notions of what it means to be male and female are considered natural, (Robbin, 1992). Most of the programmes, which young people watch on television, portray females as subordinates to males, and males dictate female's actions. Television shows much fighting, killings and sexual harassment and most young males like to identify themselves with those who are acting in films.

### **1.5.5 Educational Environment**

It is also important to examine the ways in which educational environments may foster and perpetuate gender-based violence, where many schools still use corporal punishment; although the Department of Education and Culture has banned the use of corporal punishment on learners; as a means of educators wanting to control unwanted behaviour. This practice encourages the use of violence in order to control those who are powerless (the learners). Moreover, the educator's denial of the existence of gender-based violence in schools condones this act.

## **1.6 EDUCATIONAL POLICIES AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

Research has proven that there is high prevalence of violence in South African schools. The Department of Education and Culture has also acknowledged through its policies that gender-based violence needs to be addressed. The policy makers have drawn policy guidelines for schools as intervention to curb any form of violence in schools, but after review of policies it was found that there is no intervention taking place to fight against gender-based violence in so far as schools are concerned. Female learners are continuously discriminated against, as there is no vigilant monitoring on whether or not these interventions are carried out in schools.

### **1.6.1 The relationship between practice and policy**

The school is supposed to be a safe place for all learners, but it is not the case. Female learner's rights are violated. They cannot go wherever they want to go on the school premises because they are afraid of being sexually abused or harassed by male learners. Such abuses meted out by male learners on female learners constitute sexual discrimination. That kind of act is inconsistent with the content and spirit of the South African Constitutional Law, (Act No. 108 of 1996). Section 9 of the constitution, which is in line with international legal standard, states: *"unfair discrimination against anyone directly or indirectly based on sex or gender is prohibited"*.

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 29, guarantees the right of the child to education as a fundamental human right. The government has the responsibility of providing schooling in a non-discriminatory manner to all children irrespective of gender or sex. When female learners feel unsafe at school, their fundamental human rights guaranteed by the constitution are undermined.

The Kwa-Zulu Natal Department of Education and Culture formulated policy guidelines for all schools in KwaZulu-Natal on discipline, safety and security. These policy guidelines stem from the Republic of South African Government Gazette No. 22754: Department of Education Notice 1040 Regulations for policy. In many schools familiar to the researcher gender-based violence is not taken seriously. Generally there is a tendency by educators to turn a blind eye on incidents of gender-based violence; they regard it as part of the socialisation process (Agenda 53: 2002). This idea is shared by Khoza (2002) when he says that educators often claim to be unaware of gender-based violence; deny that it occurs; try to minimise its extent and even blame the female learners. Khoza (2002) further states that educator's attitude, sometimes discourage female learners to report gender-based violence incidents. This leads to female learners leaving school, as they feel vulnerable to gender-based violence. On the other hand educators tending to ignore such behaviour conveys to male learners the message that gender-based violence is acceptable.

### **1.7 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HIV/AIDS**

Gender-based violence in schools need to be taken seriously as it not only results in psychological and emotional scars, but it also renders female learners vulnerable to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The school as the agency of socialisation needs to work very hard in eradicating gender-based violence amongst learners by changing their gender-biased attitudes. Wolpe, Quinlan and Martinez (1997) suggest that gender equity programmes should be held in school in order to have a non-discriminatory society.

## **1.8 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS**

### **1.8.1 Chapter one: Introduction and orientation to the study**

Chapter one deals with the introduction to the study. The focus and the background of the study to be investigated are provided. The critical questions are highlighted. The rationale and significance of the study are discussed. The relationship of practice and policies is highlighted. The literature review is briefly discussed and the theoretical framework used in the study is also presented. The methodology used for the study is discussed and data analysis is briefly explained. Lastly, a brief outline of each chapter is discussed.

### **1.8.2 Chapter two: Literature Review**

For the purpose of this research, which tries to investigate the factors of gender-based violence among male and female learners in Inanda secondary schools, it has become important to interrogate literature contributing effectively to the understanding of gender-based violence.

The purpose of the literature review is to examine literature with regard to gender-based violence. Thereafter the definition of gender-based violence is outlined in accordance with the literature review. Furthermore, through the literature, the construction of gender identities and gender-based violence is explored and findings about gender-based violence at schools are examined. It is also mentioned where this study fits in. In addition gaps from other studies are highlighted. Lastly, the literature review will be dealt with in detail in chapter two.

### **1.8.3 Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework**

In exploring the issues of gender-based violence, this study is informed by feminist theories, namely post-structural feminist theory and African feminist theory. In the post-structural feminist analysis, discourse is understood as being constitutive, that is meanings do not exist prior to

their articulation, but are always socially and historically located in the discourse (Weedon, 1997).

As a South African female who has experienced gender-based violence, also exploring gender-based violence amongst learners from African community, African feminist theory is contextually relevant for this study. These two feminist theories helped for better understanding of the historical, social and cultural practice, which constitute and contest gender-based violence against women.

Therefore, this study was explored using these two feminist theories because there is interconnectedness in them as they both consider historical background and culture on how to bring about women's empowerment. This has been elaborated in chapter three.

#### **1.8.4 Chapter 4: Research design and methodology**

In chapter four, the methodology utilised in the study is outlined. There is a discussion about the nature of the study, the sample and sampling; the site of the research ethics were taken into consideration, the tools used and the data collection strategy is presented.

In this study two approaches were used; that is quantitative and feminist experiential methodology. Firstly, the quantitative methodology was used in order to answer the first critical question, which investigates the kinds of gender-based violence experienced by learners in three secondary schools. Therefore the tool used to get answers was the reviewing of school records on reported cases of gender-based violence among secondary school learners.

Secondly, the feminist experiential methodology was used to supplement the quantitative methodology, as it seeks to gain insight into the second critical question, which investigates the factors that explain gender-based violence among learners. The feminist experiential approach was used because it stresses the individual

experience and semi-structured interviews were used as a tool to answer the question.

#### **1.8.5 Chapter 5: Presentation and Analysis of data**

Chapter five presents the ways in which the data were organised, recorded and analysed with a view of gaining an understanding of kinds of gender-based violence experienced by secondary school learners at the Inanda schools and the factors explaining gender-based violence. The data for the first critical question was analysed quantitatively and presented in a chart form. Recorded data were transcribed soon after the interviews. Collected data was coded and organised according to the emerged themes. Data were interpreted and findings explained within the feminist socio-cultural framework. The data analysis is expounded in the fifth chapter.

#### **1.8.6 Chapter 6: Interpretation and Conclusion**

In Chapter six, the arguments advanced in the previous chapters were brought together and summarised. Conclusions about the findings were drawn out and the recommendations were made.

### **1.9 CONCLUSION**

This chapter provides the background and an understanding of the research project, which investigates the kinds of gender-based violence that are experienced by secondary school learners in the Inanda area. Therefore it attempts to examine factors that explain gender-based violence among learners. It also provides the historical background of the research problem.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

One of the aims and objectives of this research is to study the existing literature on violence in order to establish factors that explain gender-based violence amongst secondary school learners, so as to establish the ways to curb gender-based violence against women. If we wish to lessen gender-based violence, we must first understand the many forms it takes and the social conditions that constitute it.

According to research perused, gender-based violence is universally pervasive, where the majority of females are battered, killed, raped, intimidated or verbally abused by a friend, lover or a relative (Wood, 1997:309). In South Africa, one adult woman out of every six is assaulted regularly by her mate. In at least 46% of these cases the men involved also abuse the woman's children. On average, a woman is raped in South Africa every minute (Russell, 1991).

Gender-based violence definition was outlined according to the literature review. The construction of gender identities was explored in order to understand the factors that explain gender-based violence amongst secondary school learners. Furthermore, the gaps on other studies are highlighted and lastly, the niche occupied by this research study.

#### **2.2 DEFINITION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

Ideas about how gender-based violence is defined are often inconsistent due to various reasons. For the purpose of this study a standardised definition has been adopted. Gender-based violence is an umbrella term used to describe any harm that is perpetrated against a person's will and that results from power inequalities that are based on gender roles (UNAID, 2002).

Around the world, gender-based violence almost always has a greater negative impact on women and girls:

*Gender-based violence is any act of violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life (Unesco, 1999:53).*

The term gender-based violence is often used synonymously with the term violence against women and the Human Rights Watch (2001:18) defines gender-based violence as:

*Violence that promotes gender inequality; it includes all acts that inflict physical or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, or other deprivation of liberty.*

Connell (1991) also argues that gender-based violence includes wolf-whistles and shouted jokes. Gender-based violence may be physical, sexual, psychological, economic-social or cultural. Research proves that female learners in South African schools are facing various forms of gender-based violence (Truscott, 1994) and in schools it is interconnected with the constructions of masculinity and femininity of the broader society.

### **2.3 CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER IDENTITIES AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

Examining the existing literature in order to understand the factors that cause gender-based violence is useful for the present study in its findings to determine how the school and community can be able to bring about change in our schools. The following factors were examined; historical background, family and social background, mass media and music.

### **2.3.1 Historical Background**

Decades of violent enforcement of apartheid policies by the government have fuelled a culture of violence in South Africa. Therefore, it is important to look at the historical background of the violent South African society, which was caused by the apartheid system. South Africa's political, social and economic conditions have all been shaped and moulded by apartheid. The apartheid government used violence to oppress people and people retaliated through violence. Apartheid violence has become exacerbated within societies where poverty is rife and the unemployment rate is high. This violence is mimicked at schools by the children, who observe violent actions around them on a daily basis.

### **2.3.2 Social Background**

The definition of what gender means depends heavily on social background, cultural values and practices, and the way culture defines masculinity and femininity, which leads to expectations about how individual female and male should act and communicate (Wood, 1997:23). There are certain culturally defined expectations of the traits and behaviour of males and females, for an example, men are seen as aggressive, competitive and controlling, physical, strength and anger is acceptable (Richmond-Abbott, 1992:7). This gender stereotype is perpetuated from generation to generation in order to maintain male domination and control over females.

From birth, males and females are translated into exclusive gender roles in which males and females are expected to perform their respective roles where masculine roles are given power and status over feminine roles and masculinity must always maintain its power or hegemony by forming boundaries. According to Richmond-Abbott (1992:40), the research has found that children acquire gender identity as early as 2 years and that it is difficult to change a child's primary gender orientation, where a male-child learn at an early age not to cry

when he is hurting because it is not acceptable. Short (1993:77) also supports the above argument when he confirms that literature is showing that very young children are aware of gender stereotypes. He continues saying that children from an early age tend to behave in accordance with sex-role stereotypes and Thorne (1993) supports him when he argues that the gender roles stereotypes created by society are enhanced at school.

Connell (1995:77) confirms that masculinity is the authoritarian type particularly involved in the maintenance of patriarchy: marked by the contempt for women as well as a more general conformity to authority from above and aggressive towards the powerless who are the female learners at school. Male learners become aggressive to female learners as a way of conforming to their peers and the wider society that they are real men, because if they do not become aggressive they will be regarded as different to the norm and will be called names.

Paechter (1998) further explains that whoever is deviating from what is expected by the society is seen as problematic and he is marginalised. We as individuals have to perpetuate and regulate our performance of the gender roles as seen as appropriate by society. One must be either male or female and opposition embedded in these terms is one in which part of the definition of masculinity is dominance over the femininity.

The social relations between males and females are power related and man's masculinity is constructed as dominant to that of femininity. Men are supposed to use violence or aggression in order to conform to their patriarchal domination over women. Men who are not hegemonic are regarded as the other and are discriminated and called names such as 'sissy' and are assaulted for being different from the 'norm', which means that men themselves are pressured to prove their masculinity through violence (Paechter, 1998:49).

In addition, women always feel responsible when it comes to gender-based violence as they are always blamed for their predicament. The society believes that women are raped because they are in the wrong place, wearing wrong clothes, or behaving the wrong way (French, 1998). Hence, girls are taught not to walk alone at night, in lonely streets and not to wear revealing clothes, which means, females must compromise their freedom of movement and freedom of choosing what to wear, in order to be safe from the male's violent attacks. In this case, females are pressured to affirm the gender identity of aggressive masculinity.

The above discussion illustrates that males are brought up as chauvinistic and misogynistic beings by the society, but Morrell (2001) argues that masculinities are constantly changing in Southern Africa. He adds that there are competing understandings of what it means to be a man. There are men, especially amongst middle class who engage in introspection and gender-consciousness-raising, where females are not only seen as objects who affirm male domination, but as equal partners who deserve respect same as males. Therefore, it is also thought that schools as one of the socialisation agencies can change the way male learners view female learners and in turn will become adults who respect women as their equal partners in life and not their subordinates.

### **2.3.3 Mass media**

Mass media is one of the contributing factors on the widespread acceptance of violence among men. Television, movies, radio, advertising, magazines and comics have all subtly energized violence in men. The mass media creates and reinforces gender stereotypes. Moane (1998:279) argues that media has a powerful influence on how society view men and women. She argues that all forms of media perpetuate unrealistic, stereotypical and limiting perceptions. Depictions of relationships between men and women emphasize traditional roles and normalize violence against women.

In movies, men are portrayed as physically strong and sexually aggressive. Most movies depict men fighting to prove their strength and manhood by physical abuse. On the flip side, women are portrayed as helpless, dependent on men (Browne, 1996). They are usually pushed around, always in need of men's protection, at the beck and call of men and in most cases are depicted as sex objects.

On television, young people are bombarded with violent images in programmes such as Dragonballs GT, Jackie Chan Adventures, Power Rangers, Ninja Storm and WWE Smackdown. From what boys observe on television, they are encouraged to be physically aggressive, to compete and win, and to control others, (Wood, 1997)

Within the world of advertisements, female characters devote their energies primarily to improving their appearances in order to satisfy men's sexual fantasies. This is done primarily by advertising beauty products. These advertisements are reinforcing the idea that the female's identity is constructed to serve men. Men's advertisements conversely involve the use of the intellect. Men are either business managers or holding meetings, where assertiveness is promoted. In some advertisements men are shown as physically strong like working in a construction company or flexing their muscles.

According to bell hooks (1994:116) gangster rap music is also criticized for its violence, misogyny and sexism. Some lyrics of rap music degrade women when they refer to them as 'whores' or 'bitches' and are regarded as men's sex objects (Moane 1998:279b). Rap music also glorifies killing for sport, where physical aggression is promoted. Young people tend to emulate what they see happening on rap music videos, and all these perpetuate gender-based violence.

Schools are viewed as one of the socialisation institutions of our times and are specifically charged by society, with the responsibility of

teaching about culture, traditions, practices, beliefs and values. Male learners are expected to continue assertion of masculinity. Hence violence against female learners continues at school as it happens in society, and Connell (1991) argues that research in education has found an active though not always articulate politics of gender in every school. Among learners there are practices that construct various kinds of femininity and masculinity, and some gender patterns are hegemonic. The aggressively heterosexual masculinity is mostly subordinating femininity.

#### **2.3.4 Family background**

Gender-based violence can be traced back to rigid parenting, dominance of the family by the father, because he wants to be viewed as man among men by the members of society. Msimang (2002:13) argues that in 'black' culture, the father is still strongly regarded as the authority figure of the family even if he does not bring any income to the family. As the father is regarded as the head of the family, the mother is not allowed to make a sound decision in the absence of the father. In many instances, the mother at home is regarded as the eldest child of the family, who should always consult with the father.

Gender-based violence that happens in schools reflects what happens in society. Practices that construct various kinds of femininity and masculinity are hegemonic, where aggressively heterosexual masculinity is practised and others are subordinated (Connell, 1995b). Female learners are raped, sexually harassed, coerced, battered at school, and those female learners who are assertive are called names (Human Rights Watch, 2001). All these violent actions of male learners marginalize female learners, as they cannot acquire their education in a safe environment as their male counterparts.

## **2.4 INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS**

Gender-based violence is widespread in schools universally. It is not only peculiar to female learners in South African schools. The following characterises physically inflicted violence: rape, sexual coercion, sexual abuse, sexual assault, sexual harassment, touching in an offensive way and pushing and shoving. Emotional violence constitutes intimidation, threats of violence, verbal abuse, which involves sexist language and intimidation.

Studies conducted in the United States of America by Robbin (1992) stress that sexual harassment is one form of gender-based violence, which is pervasive in all schools, districts, urban and rural areas (Stein, 2000). They also argue that schools are the training grounds for gender-based violence as sexual harassment is rampant in both elementary and secondary schools. By not dealing with this form of violence against female learners that happens within school premises and during school activities, schools send a message of tolerance. However, schools should strongly condemn gender-based violence, as it discriminates and constrains the freedom of movement, choices and activities of female learners. Furthermore, girls being constantly intimidated leads to poor participation in learning activities and that erodes the basis of equal opportunity realised through equal access to education.

Hallam (1994) and Morrell (2000) argue that sexual coercion is a means through which men demonstrate power towards women and that is what happens in African and South African schools. Truscott (1994) also adds that physical violence is widespread in Black schools in South Africa where male learners hit and sexually harass female learners. This leads to female learners leaving school because of humiliation. To support the argument, Chisholm and Unterhalter (1999) argue that there is widespread sexual harassment and sexual abuse of

female learners by fellow male learners, documented in South African schools.

These violent attacks happen within the school premises, that is, the school toilet facilities, in empty classrooms, hallways, in hostel rooms and dormitories. Nzimande (1993) argues that certain forms of sexual assaults occur in classrooms during class in full view of the educators. The educators sometimes overlook these incidents by saying it is part of growing up. The female learners always complain that the male learners try to kiss them, fondle their breasts, raise their skirts and touch them under their skirts.

Through observation of what is happening in their homes or society where men oppress women, some female learners learn that submission to male domination is a survival skill. They accept to be dictated to by male learners (Hallam, 1994). Female learners do not feel free to walk alone on the school premises, and cannot wear whatever they want to wear, because they will attract male learner's aggressive behaviour, and that will lead them to be sexually harassed or raped by male learners. In this sense, female learners have accepted that they are objects of male learners (Human Rights Watch, 2001).

## **2.5 AFRICAN SCHOOLS AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

In addition, schools in Africa have not escaped the scourge of gender-based violence. Hallam (1994) observes a sharp rise in sexual violence in educational institutions, reflecting a general rise against women. Hallam continues that gender-based violence is not only a serious problem in its own right, but has very important implications for women's ability to pursue their studies. Schools are viewed as unsafe for female learners as they are raped, assaulted and murdered within school premises. In Kenya at St Kizito secondary school boys attacked girls in their dormitory, killing 19 and raping 71 girls in 1991.

In another study in Senegal, Africa confirms that female learners face gender-based violence in schools. It was found that 60% of rapes were inflicted on female learners with an average age of 15 years (Hallam, 1994). These rapes cause high rate of pregnancy among female learners. Female learners drop out from school, whereas male learners continue with their education. In this sense female learners are marginalised as they do not realise their dream of better educational qualification and they become dependent on their male counter parts.

According to Insight Issue August (2003) latest research conducted in Botswana, Malawi and Ghana indicates that, learners daily lives in schools is affected strongly by gender-based violence. It continues arguing that male sexual aggression against girls is endemic and institutional in Zimbabwe. Girls are propositioned by male learners inside the school and by older men outside, which means girls are in danger of sexual violence both outside school and inside school. Rape, sexual harassment, abuse, assault, the list is endless of gender-based violence experienced by female learners in Zimbabwe, (Insight Issue 36, 2001).

## **2.6 SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

Various studies conducted in South African schools confirm the widespread gender-based violence as it has been continuously documented. The impact of abuse on female learners, who are constantly sexually harassed, beaten and raped by their fellow male learners is to learn that male violence is the condition against which their rights and freedom are negotiated. Sometimes boys in senior grades rape girls from lower grades, which leads to girls leaving school not only due to pregnancy but also of humiliation and poor performance (Truscott 1994:50). This also has a negative impact on them socially and economically as they do not have any skills to be employable and contribute meaningfully in the development of their communities. Sexual abuse of female learners needs to be addressed urgently in order to ensure that the rights of all children are respected. This

argument is confirmed by an incident, which happened in one of Gauteng primary schools, where a 9 year-old girl was raped in a school toilet by a 16 year-old boy, who was in Grade 7 (SABC 1 News 07/12/04).

Khoza (2002) also adds that rape of female learners at school makes them vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, as they have no say in their sexual encounter with male learners. Female learners are forced by male learners to engage in sex without the choice of debating the use of condoms. Most female learners do not report the incidents of violence to the educators because they are afraid of being attacked by the boys (Human Rights Watch, 2001).

When it comes to sexual harassment, female learners learn that education about human rights has no or little meaning as their rights are violated on a daily basis by male learners. This is exacerbated by the fact that teachers frequently treat sexual harassment lightly because they believe that the female learners enjoy boy's attention or have asked for it, but Wolpe, et al. (1997) argue that being flirtatious, wearing sexy clothing and heavy make-up, being sexually active, getting drunk does not mean that female learners are fair game or ask to be harassed or raped. Yet, this is a frequent rationalisation used by male learners for their behaviour and the educators for their passive implicit support.

Morrell (1998) adds that the South African schooling system is filled with acts of violence. He highlights research conducted by Independent Project Trust in 10 Durban secondary schools and its findings were that there is a high level of sexual harassment and rape that is being inflicted on female learners (Nzimande and Thusi, 1990; Seekings, 1991; Chisholm and Vally, 1996).

These acts of violence on female learners appear to be motivated by the desire of male learners to control their female classmates or put

down assertive girls, as Vetten (2000) argues that the male learners sometimes rape females who are perceived as arrogant and assertive in order to 'put them in their places' of submission to men. In this case, male learners target female learners who show qualities of leadership, for an example, learners who are prefects. Female learners are sexually assaulted or threatened with sexual violence, so as to put them in a powerless position. Nzimande (1993) also supports this argument when he adds that female learners who perform well at school are targets for assault or threatened with sexual violence by male learners.

Male learners also use sexual violence to scare female learners into submission, and this acts as a mode of control over the female's body, i.e. the way they dress, their lives and social activities. However, to male learners this harassing behaviour is nothing more than a natural expression of masculinity (Larkin, 1994:21).

Although, gender-based violence exists in all schools in South Africa, research has found that the level of these violent acts is higher in previously known 'black' schools because some learners, who belong to gang members, and schools become recruiting grounds for new members to sell drugs due to poverty. Gang affiliated learners may also carry out conflicting grudges on female learners, where girls from rival territory could be raped as a form of revenge over geographical territory (Vetten, 2000). Morrell (2000:233) also confirms that there are learners who experience gang violence on the school grounds and in most cases gang violence can be paralleled with sexual violence of girls.

In another research study conducted by Human Rights Watch (2001) in South African schools from three provinces Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape, it was suggested that other forms of sexual harassment could be the fondling of breasts of female learners, being kissed forcibly, having their skirts raised and touched under their skirts.

Through observation it has been found that girls are also beaten for refusing to be in a relationship with male learners. Their belongings are taken by force until they agree to the male learner's demands. In this case, male learners use violence to scare female learners into submission so as to ensure their hegemony.

## **2.7 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICAN RURAL SCHOOLS**

Research on gender-based violence in schools has not only been conducted in urban areas in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, but also in rural areas where it is found that it is pervasive like in the urban areas. The Midlands Women's Group campaigned against gender-based violence in Pietermaritzburg in 1999 then Richmond and Greytown in 2000. They targeted Grade 7 and 8 learners after a boy who was in Grade 6 raped a five-year old girl-child on the school premises, during school hours (Children First, 2003). This shows that children are exposed to gender-based violence, at an early age in South Africa.

## **2.8 EDUCATORS AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

What has been identified by the research is that most of the gender-based violence experienced by the female learners in schools is not reported to school officials, because the female learners are afraid of retaliation and negative reactions of their peers. In the case where a girl has been abused by a popular boy, for example, a soccer player, nobody wants to believe the female learner's story. Her friends choose to abandon her as well. She feels lonely, rejected, depressed, which might lead her to leave school. Educators are also at fault, as they do not take the sexual abuse reports from female learners seriously (Khoza 2002). Female learners feel that the voice of their male counterparts is louder than theirs and it becomes worse when they do not even get the support of female educators. Therefore, some girls feel that they are all alone in this predicament and they tend to accept that no one could keep them safe at school and that females are meant to be objects of violence (Human Rights Watch, 2001).

The research has found that educators themselves have the tendency of not taking the issue of gender-based violence seriously, as Khoza (2002) argues that educators often claim to be unaware of these violent acts. Some educators deny that it occurs. They try to minimise its extent and sometimes blame the female learners. Some incidents of gender-based violence are viewed as something acceptable and form part of the socialisation process, or as a natural part of sexual relationship (Agenda 53:2002). For an example in black culture it is acceptable for a young man to talk to a young woman sexist language and can also forcibly hold her hand when he has an interest in her. That is called 'ukuqomisa'<sup>1</sup>, and that language is very offensive to women.

## **2.9 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION**

Research has proven that female learners in South African schools are daily facing gender-based violence. That means their human rights are being violated. It is violation of bodily integrity when female learners are sexually abused and that allows gender-based violence to erect a discriminatory barrier to the ability of these learners to enjoy their right to education. Gender-based violence is also a form of discrimination, which seriously inhibits women's ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on a basis of equality with men as they always live in fear of being raped, sexually harassed and sexually abused by men. Therefore, female learners cannot realise the right to education as equally as male learners as they are sexually abused at school. As Human Rights Watch (2001) argues that rape survivors reported that, their school performance suffered, as they could not concentrate on their school-work after their assaults. Some girls were transferred to new schools. Others lost interest altogether and simply left school entirely.

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<sup>1</sup> 'ukuqomisa'- is a Zulu word, which means a love proposal of a young man to a young woman.

## **2.10 THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S RESPONSE ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

The question that we can ask ourselves, is 'what is the government doing to make sure that female learners realise their right to education as enshrined in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights'.

After various reports documents on gender-based violence, as part of addressing gender-based violence at school, the Department of Education and Culture developed, as part of a 5 year partnership between the South African National Department of Education, McGill University in the USA and CIDA, a module for educators designed to be used at school or district level with educators, school management and school governing bodies. The module draws on research supporting the belief that educators must first possess the knowledge in order to implement a curriculum of change. There are 8 interactive workshops which are intended to show school staff what is happening in their schools and how they can respond to gender-based violence (Gender Directorate, 2001).

These workshops aim to heighten awareness of what gender-based violence and sexual harassment are and why they happen. They provide tools and strategies for addressing gender-based violence and also increase awareness of the links between gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS. Lastly, they contribute to whole school strategies for enhancing the culture of learning and teaching within a safe environment. These workshops have been piloted in schools in Gauteng, the Free State and Mpumalanga. Thereafter, they will be rolled out nationwide, but the successful implementation rests on the commitment of national and provincial government to take seriously the magnitude of the problem.

However, when it comes to the implementation of any changes in schools, the pace is very slow, and the same will happen in tackling the

matter of gender-based violence. The Department of Education has shown commitment on eradicating gender-based violence in schools by providing “The guidelines for educators on issues on gender in schools”, which was published in May 2002, but only reached schools in May 2005 and other schools have not yet received it. It will take some time for educator’s workshops to be conducted, whilst female learners are still living in fear at schools. However, it is imperative for educators to be made aware of what gender-based violence and sexual harassment are and why they happen (Insight Issue 37 of 2001). Educators also need to see the urgency of emphasising equal rights for all learners, instead of turning a blind eye on the incidents of gender-based violence happening at school.

## **2.11 CONCLUSION**

This chapter provides the literature review on gender-based violence. The definition of gender-based violence was outlined and the niche occupied by the study was explored. The construction of gender identities was explored in order to understand the factors that explain gender-based violence against female learners at secondary schools. The South African Department of Education’s response on gender-based violence was also examined. Lastly, the theoretical framework that informed the study will be presented in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

*A theory provides an answer to puzzling questions because it links together different elements in a causal process, in order to produce an explanation of the particulars that have been explored (Neuman 2001:59).*

Every researcher has to base her/his research study on a certain theoretical framework, which becomes an orientation or sweeping way of looking at the social world.

Therefore, in exploring the issues of gender-based violence, this study is informed by feminist theories. As a female researcher who is not detached from the research study there was interaction and collaboration between the researcher and the participants. In addition, the researcher's personal and professional life was fused in trying to understand the participant's experiences while taking into consideration the influences of culture in the actions of the participants (Neuman, 2000:83).

Moreover to be a feminist is to believe that there must be equal justice for both male and female interests. However, women are often violated and French (1998) argues that feminists need to resist patriarchal dogma in order to address gender-based violence.

This research is based on the post-structural feminist theory in order to explore gender issues globally, and the African feminist theory, as the researcher is an African female researching African participants. These two feminist theories have been used because there is interconnectedness in them. They both take into consideration the

historical, social and cultural practices, which constitute gender-based violence.

### **3.2 POST-STRUCTURAL FEMINIST THEORY**

In post-structural analysis, discourse is understood as being constitutive, that is, meanings do not exist prior to their articulation, but are always socially and historically located in discourse. In every discourse, subject positions are made available to us, and these subject positions that we take up ultimately affect and determine our identity. Therefore, the learners at school speak and act from a certain position; they also bring their history as a subject to a particular position. Learners therefore, adopt the discursive practices and storylines from their society as if these practices were their own experiences. Hence the social background, cultural, class, and political and historical forces influence the learner's actions.

For post-structuralism, identities are derived from a wide set of factors which often involve and attempt to understand the contradictions among class, gender, sexuality, history, language, culture, individual experiences amongst others; contributing to how and what we understand to be our identities (Yob 2000). Weedon (1997) asserts that feminist post-structuralism is a useful theory to address the issue of how social power is exercised and how social relations of gender, class and race might be transformed.

When considering how social power and social relations constitute gender-based violence, and to get an understanding of the factors that explain gender-based violence among secondary school learners, it is important to look at the social background of the participants. For example, the majority of the learners in Inanda schools are marginalised as they come from disadvantaged background. The majority of these learners live in poverty and informal settlements, because of the discrimination of the apartheid system. Therefore, their experiences of gender-based violence are unique.

### 3.3 AFRICAN FEMINIST THEORY

#### 3.3.1 Introduction

*African feminism signals a refusal of oppression and a commitment to struggling for women's liberation from all forms of oppression-internal, external, psychological and emotional, socio-economic, political and philosophical (Salo 2001:59)*

African feminist theories aim at discussing gender roles in consideration of other factors such as racism, neo-colonialism, socio-economic exclusion and exploitation. They far extend the race-class-gender approach of African-American feminism. African feminism is appropriate for this study as it was conducted among African learners who are disadvantaged because of the apartheid system. The majority of them are exposed to violence, which is caused by combined factors such as poverty, crime and unemployment. All of these factors were exacerbated by the oppressive systems of the apartheid system (Nzimande, 1993).

Furthermore, African feminism looks at woman's rights within personal relationships, developing campaigns around gender-based violence, and argues that women have the right to determine the conditions under which they will or will not have sex (Msimang, 2002). This theory informed this study as the research was conducted among female learners, who will be future women and who will have to make these choices in the future. Special consideration had to be adapted in specific situations by the research study with relation to the cultural influence amongst Africans. In one such context, the men assume that they have a right over the woman's body as they have paid "lobola"<sup>2</sup> for them.

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<sup>2</sup> 'lobola' is a custom which is practised by 'black' South Africans whereby the groom pays the family of the bride in a form of either cattle or money as a token of appreciation.

### **3.3.2 Gender-based violence and learners**

African feminism also rejects stereotypical homogeneity and acknowledges that woman's lives have been diverse and differentiated on the basis of range of factors such as culture and custom, class and citizenship status, socio-economic context, and historical period (Kuumba, 2003). This relativity emphasises that the experiences of Inanda learners about gender-based violence cannot be generalised.

### **3.3.3 Gender-based violence and personal experience**

I am a black South African female who is a mother and an educator, exploring gender-based violence among black learners. Being a female, I identify myself with female learners who are dominated by the male learners as I am also marginalised by a patriarchal dominated society.

Through personal experience it has been noted that black society prefers a boy-child to a girl-child, and females are marginalised. Msimang (2002:11) confirms this in her argument that in black culture it is only males who can conduct cultural rituals. This indicates that according to black culture females are always regarded as subordinates to men. Such cultural practices reinforces and strengthens the notion of society's preference of a boy-child to a girl-child and this in turn awards power to a boy-child over a girl-child.

Through observation, male learners become aggressive over female learners at school because of power invested in them by the society. Male learners force female learners to respond positively to their bidding, or else, female learners receive punishment. Furthermore, male learners become violent in order to conform and maintain their domination (Richmond-Abbott 1992). Female learners are sexually harassed and these attacks appear to be motivated by the desire of male learners to control or put down assertive female learners (Vetten, 2002).

It is believed that the school can play a major role in changing the attitude of male learners. The school should take the responsibility of incorporating equal rights for both girls and boys in the future curriculum for a non-aggressive society. As Wolpe, Quinlan and Martinez (1997) suggest, gender equity programmes in schools must be emphasized to become beneficial to society at large.

Transformative African-feminists assume that men are capable of transformation, (Arndt, 2000:33); a change that could transform the whole society.

Lastly, an African feminist researcher should have knowledge on how to negotiate for change within a given societal context (Tegomoh, 2002:127), so as to effect gender equality.

### **3.4 CONCLUSION**

To conclude, this chapter has provided the theoretical framework used in the study, which are feminist theories. Therefore, theories that informed the study were outlined so as to examine factors that explain gender-based violence. The next chapter will present the methodology used in the study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The following chapter reflects choices and reasons for choosing the research methodologies adopted to address issues of gender-based violence amongst secondary school learners. While methodology is a theoretical reflection on the ways in which research should be conducted. It also includes a description of the logic underlying the selection of a particular way of conducting research. After carefully exploring the literature on the research methodology, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies have been used as advocated by feminists in social science research.

In order to examine the factors that influence gender-based violence amongst learners, qualitative methodology has been employed to explore traits of individuals and settings that cannot be easily described numerically, for example where the information collected is largely verbal. Secondly, the quantitative methodology has been used in order to obtain numerical data, through review of records. Therefore, the methodological triangulation was applied in this study (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998).

In addition, procedures for gaining access to the research site and acceptance are discussed. The procedures of the study, which encompasses sampling techniques, ethical issues, the data gathering tools (review of records and interviews), data analysis and the validation mechanisms are described in detail.

#### **4.1.1 Quantitative methodology**

In order to best initiate the investigation into the kinds of gender based violence experienced by Inanda secondary school learners, data was assimilated through a review of school records and analysed in form of numbers. This quantitative methodology was engaged in order to

obtain an idea of what kinds of gender-based violence were experienced by secondary school learners in the Inanda area and the frequencies of these occurrences at school.

With Bailey's (1982) argument that records are an important source and contain unique features, the records of reported cases were reviewed from the three secondary schools in a forty-seven kilometres radius within Inanda. Bailey also argues that records are examined without the fear that the actions of the observer may influence raw data. Finally, numbers were used to analyse the data in the form of statistics and were presented in the form of table.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods have been effectively utilised and implemented in ways, which are consistent with feminist values, (Hollard, et al 1995; Best and Kahn, 1993).

#### **4.1.2 The Feminist Experiential Approach**

The study focused on female learners violated by male learners at school, hence the use of the feminist approach to inquire the factors that explain gender-based violence. This perspective enables me to enter the personal world of the research participants in order to gain a deeper understanding of how they perceive gender-based violence.

According to The Human Rights Watch, 2001 gender-based violence inflicted upon female learners occurs on daily basis in most South African schools. This was confirmed by this research study. The participants' experiences are very important in a feminist experiential approach, unlike positivism, which disregards people's experiences and concerns with abstract laws or formulas that are irrelevant to the actual lives of real people (Neumann, 2000).

The learner's power to create knowledge has proven valuable to the study with the participants functioning as the key source of information (Brayton, 1997). Guba and Lincoln (1994) remark that human

behaviour cannot be understood without reference to the meanings and purposes attached by human beings to their activities. Qualitative data is asserted and can provide rich insight into human behaviour. It was therefore imperative to search out an understanding from both the perpetrators and victims on how they interpret the issues of gender-based violence.

The feminist approach challenges gender inequalities and offers an in-depth understanding of the female's own subjective experiences of their lives. Learners were not treated as objects to be researched but were perceived as "experts" on their own lives and "authorities" on their own experiences. Unger, (2001:21) reflects on the similar view when they highlight that social scientists methods must permit participants to describe the world as they experience it, hence the feminist experiential methodology. This provides the true picture and experience of the participants (Bradley, 1993; Mellon, 1990).

Kvale (1996) also concurs with Bradley (1993) and Mellon, (1990) when she argues that qualitative research is very common with the feminist approach as it focuses on the everyday world of women. In addition, qualitative methodology works with methods appropriate for understanding the very lives and situations of women, which leads to change on the conditions studied.

In exploring the factors that explain gender-based violence, the uniqueness of the learners from Inanda was taken into account. The context or institutional culture plays a vital role in the inquiry of gender-based violence amongst the learners (Shapiro, 1988). The focus had to be on socially constructed nature of reality, because it has influence on learners and how they relate to each other on a daily basis.

The intimate relationship between the researcher and participants and the value-laden nature of inquiry is vital. That is why there is a need for a researcher to become an active participant in order to gain trust and

confidence of the participants (Kvale, 1996). Hence, the researcher had an advantage because of her experience as a member of the management team at school and she had already handled cases of gender-based violence. Furthermore, the participant's emotions were taken into consideration in the interaction, with attentive listening on the part of the researcher, to participant's views in order to have an understanding on the wholeness of factors that influence gender-based violence.

Secondly, a rapport was built as the researcher could identify with the participant's experiences, and acknowledged her biases.

Moreover, Mellon (1990:26) argues that:

*Total objectivity is impossible for researchers who are after all human beings. The difference between objective researchers is that naturalistic researchers systematically acknowledge and document their biases rather than striving to rise above them.*

As a black female educator who has been working in the area for thirteen years and speaking the same language as the participants, specialized knowledge and skills required to interact with the participants were developed and the misunderstandings were reduced. Therefore, using the feminist approach helped to realise an understanding of how participants view gender-based violence.

## **4.2 SAMPLING**

### **4.2.1 Gaining access**

The study was conducted at three secondary schools within a radius of forty- seven kilometres in the northern part of Inanda. The schools were chosen because of their convenience to the researcher. Secondly, as it has already been mentioned in the first chapter, that Inanda is predominantly informal settlement and disadvantaged area,

crime is rife, because many people are not working and are fighting to survive.

The children are exposed to various kinds of violence and crime, where they observe incidents of sexual abuse, beatings and sexual harassment acted upon women. Whatever learners observe from the society is reflected on the incidents of gender-based violence happening at schools.

Through a number of years of observations of gender-based violence against female learners, there was an interest in obtaining views from both female and male learners on their perceptions of gender-based violence.

After perusing existing literature, it was found that there is no study of this nature that has ever been conducted in the research site area. Trying to curb the problem of women abuse as peculiar to Inanda was one of the reasons, that necessitated researching factors that influence gender-based violence amongst learners. It was also of the utmost importance to get an understanding from the perpetrators (the male learners) why they violate female learners, for future intervention.

Inanda schools fall under the Kwa Mashu circuit in the Pinetown District, which is in the eThekweni Region. Permission to conduct this research was obtained from the Circuit Manager. Gaining access to the site was not a problematic task, as the researcher is the member of the management team in the area and always in contact with the neighbouring schools through workshops conducted by the Department of Education and Culture and networking through team teaching and sports. This already established relationship allowed the researcher permission to conduct the study to be telephonically acquired from the principals. The permission to conduct the research was granted by the principals of the three secondary schools after an explanation that the Circuit Manager for the area had already granted the permission. For

the purpose of anonymity, which is to ensure that the study cannot be traced back to the schools, the principals were promised that the schools were not going to be called by their real names. Therefore, pseudonyms were used in the study; that is Ukusa, Ikhwezi and Ilanga Secondary Schools. After the permission had been granted, an appointment to review reported cases on gender-based violence was set up.

### **4.3 THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

#### **4.3.1 Records review**

The first phase of the research study was composed of the school records review. Visits were made to the schools to review records of cases on gender-based violence. After reviewing, records were analysed statistically in the form of a table.

During visits to Ukusa and Ikhwezi Secondary Schools, the researcher was informed that there were many incidents of gender-based violence cases but the educators only recorded those cases, they deemed serious. According to them, the serious cases were only those cases where they thought that they would put the learner's life in danger and they would have to call the learner's parents. It was found that there were a lot of reported cases of touching, whistling and grabbing of female learners by male learners, but these incidents were not recorded as educators thought that it was normal interaction, which was expected and accepted to happen between young males and females. What was found was that there was a lot of gender-based violence happening at school but educators too did not take these incidents seriously.

The cases of sexual violence, which were recorded in one year, were incidents which the educators deemed as important; however, there were incidents of sexual violence that were reported by the female learners not recorded by educators. On average these incidents such as whistling, touching and peeping under skirts occurred daily but were

not recorded. It was interesting to note that the female learners understood these acts to be violation of their rights.

At Ilanga Secondary School, most of the reported cases were recorded, but it was found that sometimes educators did not bring these incidents to the office where they were supposed to be recorded by the school's secretary. They resolved the cases on their own. After reviewing the recorded cases, it was found out that there were various incidents of gender-based violence happening at schools, for example, physical fighting, verbal abuse, assault, sexual harassment, bullying, threats, intimidation and attempted rape. These cases were categorised according to their occurrences.

#### **4.4 THE SAMPLE**

The sample for this study was comprised of six research participants selected from the three Inanda secondary schools. The sample was based on records of gender-based violence cases amongst learners.

The learners were then categorized according to the perpetrator and victim, where the three perpetrators and their victims were selected. The willingness of the victims was considered. The aim for choosing the perpetrator and his victim was to get both sides of how gender-based violence is perceived by the learners. Therefore, one perpetrator and his victim were selected per school. The participants were given pseudonyms for anonymity: Mpho, Senzo and Khula are the perpetrators and Gabi, Gugu and Qondi are the victims.

Permission was obtained from the learners selected to participate in the research and it was granted. Further permission was required from the learners' parents in a form of a consent form and the parents also granted the permission. The issue of confidentiality was addressed to both parents and participants. They were promised to be informed about the progress of the research and their right to comment at any

stage of the study if they so wished. They were then informed about the dates and the time scheduled for an interview.

Time constraints was also taken into consideration, as it is difficult to conduct interviews to a large number of participants, it was perceived to be advantageous to have fewer participants, resulting in more detailed and thorough interviews.

Lastly, the participants were informed that they would have a chance to read the report for changes if required before the final draft.

#### **4.5 THE INTERVIEWS**

The interviews formed part of the second phase of the study. The choice of interviews as the second research instrument was to place emphasis on attentive listening to the participants and to provide specific suggestions for helping others to change.

This choice was also based on the premise that factors that explain gender-based violence need to be explored through a tool that would stimulate the research participants to provide insights into their experiences, where the researcher was also sharing her experiences and observations of gender-based violence.

The interviews were conducted in the form of conversation with the participants in order to bridge the gap between the researcher and the participants. Larsen (1997) argues that:

*Interview-research shifts the traditional alliance between social science and natural science by forcing exclusively on knowledge generated through social interactions, putting a human relationship in the form of two-way dialogue, at the centre stage of the research process.*

Furthermore, interviews create balance between the interviewer and the participants and can provide room for negotiation. The discussion allows the participant to feel at ease to talk to the researcher and that leads to the expansion of the participant's responses (Graham and Hughes 1990).

What is also important about interview is that a researcher can learn more from the gestures and facial expression of the participant. Thus, the researcher has chosen the interviews as the research instrument to gather data through the medium of personal contact (Gay, 1992).

In addition, through elicited narratives from the learners the researcher obtained a deeper understanding of their experiences as Best and Khan (1993) assert, the main purpose of interviews is to obtain a special kind of information if we are to explore the actual and perceived experiences and that may be better to:

*“Interview people to find out from them those things that we cannot directly observe...we cannot observe feelings, thoughts and intentions. We cannot observe behaviours that took place at some previous point in time” (Best and Khan 1993:72)*

They also argue, that we cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organised the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world – we have to ask people questions about things. The purpose of the interviewing is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective (Best & Khan 1993).

Gay (1992) concurs that the interview is most appropriate for asking questions, which cannot effectively be structured into multiple-choice format, such as questions which are personal in nature. In contrast to the questionnaire, the interview is flexible. Jones, Siraj-Blatchford and Ashcroft (1997:17) support the view that the interview is not only

flexible but it yields rich data. Interview enables the researcher to get open responses from a number of people without the problem of obtaining data that are too unmanageable in-group interview. Then the decision is made on the structure of the interview schedule.

#### **4.5.1 THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW**

Semi-structured interviews were used because of providing the chance of probing deeper to reveal the underlying sources of gender-based violence among learners. Furthermore, the semi-structure interviews are the research tools, which are particularly useful to a researcher because of their flexibility as they create opportunities for rephrasing and clarifying misunderstood responses (Bailey, 1994).

Two interview sessions were conducted in order to gain clarification. The interviews were also conducted at a venue of the participant's choice. Permission was sought from the participants to record the interview sessions in order to create meaning from the viewpoint of the participants. What was also good about recording is that it reduces the possibility of misinterpretation of participant's views (Graham and Hughes, 1990).

Initially, the participants were distracted by the presence of the tape recorder, but as we continued, they adjusted to it and responded as if it was not there. Listening and not writing also created the impression of interest and undivided attention, which led to the interview taking on a dialogical dimension. There was also a chance of noticing gestures and facial expressions, which helped a lot to assess validity of the responses. During interviews, interruptions were minimized while participants were talking. Support was provided through nods, agreement than excessive verbalisation, which could distract the participants and led them to unproductive directions (Keat, 1993).

The interviews were conducted in isiZulu language, as both the researcher and the participants are isiZulu first language speakers.

Each participant was allocated one hour for each session of interviews. After completing the first session, there was a problem with a participant from Ilanga Secondary School, who left school and could not be traced to continue the second session. This resulted in the abandoning of this set of participants and another set of perpetrator and victim was selected.

Lastly, the choice of using semi-structured interview helped a lot especially when re-interviews were conducted for clarity. Furthermore, it possesses qualities of flexibility, adaptability and probing which are valuable devices to acquire a holistic account of the lived experiences of the research participants. In addition, semi-structured interviews helped the researcher who is new to the field of research in keeping her on track with the critical question and the purpose of the study.

#### **4.6 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES**

As both quantitative and qualitative methodologies have been used to collect the data for the study, both methodologies have also been used for the data analysis procedures. Statistical and qualitative procedures were adopted for the first phase of analysis, as the data was about the number of occurrences of gender-based violence experienced by female learners at school and also what came out of the interviews. The qualitative methodology was adopted to perform the data analysis for the second phase, which was reading the data a couple of times, making comments and memos on the transcripts.

After completing the transcripts, they were read several times in order for the researcher to familiarise with the text. The text was sorted into broad categories using the feminist theories as a framework to analyse the data. The themes that prevailed in the data in terms of the lived experiences of the secondary school learners were uncovered. The data was codified in accordance with the themes developed. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998) coding is a crucial step in data analysis. Lastly, the relationships among the various themes and categories

were described in accordance with the structure that emerged from the data. Thereafter, the data was interpreted within the feminist perspective (Neuman, 2000b).

#### **4.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has examined a variety of procedures that have been used in conducting and developing this research, which are the quantitative and qualitative approaches. It dealt with the choice of design and the administration of the research instrument to elicit answers to the questions. In addition, the issues of the Code of Ethics are dealt with in details so as to show that the researcher intended to treat both the participants and data with respect and honesty. Lastly, the next chapter presents the procedure followed to analyse and interpret the data.

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

**5.1 INTRODUCTION**

It is necessary to present and analyse the data for research purpose in an attempt to identify trends emerging from review of the records. This data is presented in the form of tables and a graph. Interviews were also conducted about gender-based violence among learners at school. It is also necessary to enable the researcher to fulfill the aims and objectives, which are in line with themes of the study and be able to present the results of the study in an understandable and convincing way. Therefore, this chapter presents the voices of the participants through extracts from the transcripts and analysis of the data, thereafter.

For the first phase of the research the data was gathered through the review of school records of reported cases of gender-based violence from the three secondary schools in the Inanda area. The schools were given the pseudonyms of Ukusa, Ikhwezi and Ilanga. The second phase entailed face-to-face interviews conducted with male and female learners. The final phase involved the analysis of the data.

<b>Name of School (pseudonyms)</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>
Ukusa Secondary School	1315
Khanya Secondary School	1182
Ilanga Secondary School	762

**Table 1: Number of learners per school**

## 5.2 KINDS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS

From records reviewed, it was found that gender-based violence is pervasive amongst learners at school as it was identified by the previous studies. However, it was found that some incidents of gender-based violence are more common than others; for example verbal abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation occur daily.

Name of School		Number of reported cases
Ukusa School	Secondary	125
Khanya School	Secondary	134
Ilanga School	Secondary	164

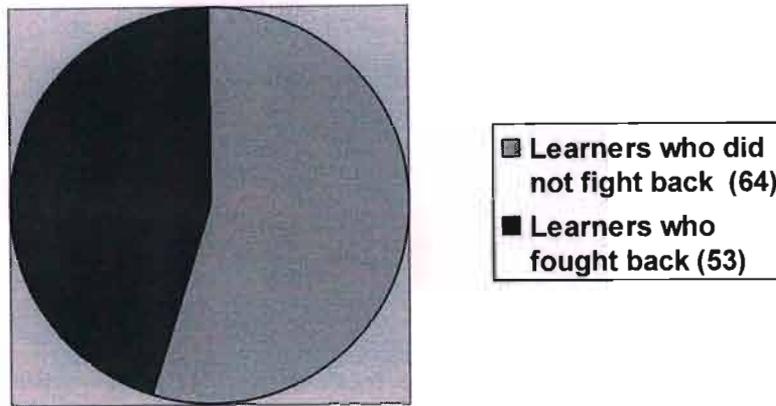
**Table 2: Number of reported cases of gender-based violence [January 2003-March 2004]**

Name of School	Assault	Verbal Abuse	Bullying	Sexual Harassment	Threat/ Intimidation	Attempted Rape	Rape
Ukusa	33	21	16	27	26	02	00
Khanya	38	28	21	23	23	01	00
Ilanga	46	35	24	29	27	02	01

**Table 3: Kinds of gender-based violence experienced by learners**

On the other hand, educators do not treat gender-based violence with the seriousness it deserves, as they mentioned that they do not record all the occurrences of gender-based violence, because they (educators) view these occurrences as insignificant or “common practice”.

It was interesting to note that out of 117 cases of assault, there was a report of 53 cases where the female learners “had tried to stand to” male learner’s aggression by fighting back. Although these attempts were not very successful in the sense that the female learners were still assaulted, these figures do allude to an indication that some female learners are attempting to break the cycle of always being viewed as victims of gender-based violence.



**Figure 1: Number of female learners who fought back when assaulted**

The interviews held, confirmed the kinds of gender-based violence as recorded by the schools' records. However other kinds of gender-based violence were identified through interviews conducted. One such example was "the control of physical space". This involved the male learners attempting to control where and when female learners can move about.

**Gabi (victim):** *He blocked my way when I didn't listen to what he was saying to me  
He closed the door and started to kiss me*

The cultural influence of gender-based violence also reared its ugly head as all the female participants felt that male learners abuse female learners due to disrespect. Male learners do not take other males for granted as they do to females.

**Gugu (victim):** *He beat me because he didn't respect me*

An issue of no respect was confirmed by the male participant.

**Mpho (perpetrator):** *Yes.....we do not respect girls because we know that they are not going to do anything to us*

A further finding peculiar to the study was “the restriction of peer support / friendship” another kind of gender-based violence. It was found that boys do not like to talk to girls when they (girls) are with their friends and enjoy controlling their girlfriends by not allowing them to have other female companionship.

***Gabi (victim):** Sometimes when girls walk in groups and one girl's boyfriend passes-by while the girls are laughing, he will think that these girls are talking about him, and the boyfriend will beat his girl friend saying that she tells her friend about their relationship*

Lastly, “misplaced violence” was also identified, where females are abused just because their boyfriends are afraid of fighting with other males.

***Gabi (victim):** I think he beat me because he was afraid of the other boy, as most boys at school are afraid of him*

### **5.3 FACTORS THAT EXPLAIN GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AMONG LEARNERS**

It is necessary to present and analyse data through voices of the participants who were interviewed by constructing or exploring possible meanings of what they had said. Through transcripts their words and phrases were deconstructed to arrive upon a deep understanding of the factors that explain gender-based violence among secondary school learners in the Inanda area. Then, using thematic analysis, two significant themes emerged upon interpretation of the participants' interviews (transcripts).

There are two major themes that emerged as the factors that explain gender-based violence among learners and they are as follow: the **cultural and social factor**.

The theme, social factor has a sub-theme, which is called **the social stereotype**. The themes overlap as society is influenced by cultural values and norms.

### **5.3.1 The Cultural factor**

When looking at the cultural factor, a boy-child is preferred to a girl-child. The boy-child becomes the centre of attraction from birth by the family. He learns at an early age from the manner in which the mother and father model and communicate that males are generally more valued than females

At an older age, he enters society and he embodies socially approved views of how to become a man. Thus, interpersonal influences on gender are part of a broad system of cultural views and values. The cultural perspective is a particularly comprehensive approach to understanding the development of gender and what it means in any society at a specific time (Wood, 1997).

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Furthermore, according to African culture there is one form of gender-based violence, which is most misunderstood; that is sexual harassment. There are things done by men, which are culturally accepted but offensive to women, like "ukukhuzela" (whistling). It is also accepted for a young man to persist in proposing love to a young woman, even if the woman has expressed lack of interest, because it is believed that any woman who has a good reputation cannot fall in love within a one day of proposal. The man would do anything to get the

attention of the woman; it could be blocking her way to the shop or to the stream. Other young men would forcibly hold the hand of the young women, which could persist an entire day. When the young woman ultimately accepts him, he will become the “talk of the area due to his assertiveness”. This is another example of what the society expects of males that they must aspire to win all the time.

In addition, boys learn that they must show their physical strength by being aggressive in order to get what they want in life.

**Mpho (perpetrator):** *You know ma'am.... even in the olden days, it used to take young men about...ehh...one to three years to ultimately win over the girl's love, and....in any case, girls love attention. They pretend as if they are not interested, but when you keep on proposing they end up agreeing on what you ask them to do.*

A similar response was reiterated from another participant on why he didn't stop talking to the girl when she told him that she was not interested in him.

**Senzo (perpetrator):** *I thought... she wanted to see how serious I was and I kept on talking to her until she agreed, and girls don't agree to your proposal on a first day.*

**Mpho (perpetrator):** *Men do not take things seriously, which are said by women and they say that 'imbizo' (meeting) is for men only. That is when I really miss to have a father, because our household is usually not represented in the meetings.*

**Khula (perpetrator):** *You see ma'am here at school....eh...eh...I mean boys do not just beat girls for nothing. It is just that girls do not show respect, like when a boy wants to*

*talk to a girl, she talks to a boy anyhow, without showing any respect.*

In both cases, the participants demonstrated that the general view of females is that they need to be convinced by males to help them make up their minds, and their feelings must not be considered in the process. It also means that females are not assertive as men and this is supported by culture, which promotes that femininity remains subordinate to masculinity. There is also pressure for the boy to conform to the accepted masculinity by being assertive. Therefore, winning is the ultimate goal to show that you are a real man.

Another **Senzo's (perpetrator)** response was that:

*"Girls confuse us (boys),.....ehh... like most girls like to be talked to especially in front of other girls, so that everybody could see that there is someone proposing love to her..."*

The participant feels that males are important in a female's life. Males are not forcing themselves on to females, as females like to be proposed to.

There is no respect for females, as they are regarded as subordinate to males. This means that males can force females to do whatever they want them to do. A theme that continually emerges is that males are not prepared to listen to what females say.

**Gugu (victim):** *He did not listen to me; he only wanted me to listen to him and did what he was telling me to do.*

In most of the instances the boys demanded respect from the girls, whereas they did not respect girls. These boys are influenced by the cultural values of the society, which expect males to have more power than females so that they remain in control of females. In order to be in

control they must use physical strength to promote masculinity. On the other hand there are those females who still submit to the expectation of the society by acknowledging that males deserve to be respected by females.

**Gugu (victim):** *I was afraid, because I answered him back in front of many learners,...ehh, you know ma'am, boys feel bad when other people know that they argued with a girl and did not discipline her. Girls are expected to do what boys tell them to do. If a boy calls you, you must go and listen to what he says, otherwise they will call you names.*

**Gabi (victim):** *He got angry when he found me talking to another boy. You know....he...he ...only wanted me to give him his place.*

**Gabi (victim):** *I am supposed to respect him, as he is my boyfriend, otherwise he becomes angry when I talk to other boys.*

Gabi also added that she did not feel bad that her boyfriend had beaten her...

*" because that shows that he still loves me when he is jealous when I am talking to other boys. If it was otherwise he would have just looked at me even if I spoke to other boys in front of him*

This statement shows that cultural factors play a big role in the way the participant perceives the power between masculinity and femininity. She has accepted her destiny that she is supposed to please the man in whatever she does. Therefore, she accepted beatings as a form of punishment of her wrongdoing.

In the above selected text, the analysis suggests that according to the participant, jealousy means that her boy friend loved her, whereas, it

was used as a form of controlling her from talking to other people. In accordance with culture, a man must be assertive and be able to control his woman to be perceived as a real man. In addition it was found that boys demanded respect from girls as a way of "policing" the boundaries of gender relations where masculinity is dominant over femininity. If the girl showed disrespect, the boy would punish her in order to keep her in a lesser position, especially if they had a relationship.

**Senzo (perpetrator):** *I beat her because she did not respect me. I did not beat her because I did not love her, but to show her that I did not like what she did. You know ma'am, that even in isiZulu it is said, "induku iyakha" (the stick is used as a corrective measure)*

**Senzo (perpetrator):** *You know ma'am ...that we get our knowledge from the elders, like here at school, we learn from the teachers and at home we learn from the community elders.*

In another extract the participant's response to the question, as to why he was angry with her, was:

**Mpho (perpetrator):** *I was angry because she was beginning to take me for granted....and....ehh...I.... she needed to be reminded who is wearing pants (man).*

**Khula (perpetrator):** *You mean me....me....I get angry with girls because they like to laugh at me. Girls never stop talking about you even to the whole school. Whereas boys do not do that. If you do not see eye to eye with one of the boys it ends between you. Secondly, when I propose love to a girl I become angry when she keeps on postponing to give an answer. That it is why sometimes I end up beating them. I know that once I beat*

*the girl she starts to respect me. When I call her next time she will not give me any problem, because she will be afraid to be beaten up again.*

The above extracts suggest that the boy did not become violent to his girl friend just because she had done something wrong to him, but he was under pressure from his peers to exercise control over the girl. Males usually feel that they must prove themselves that they conform to the dominant norms of masculinity by being violent to females.

However, one participant questioned the way males use their physical strength to bully females. She had also noticed that violence is only directed at those who are not physically strong; (**women**).

**Gugu (victim):** *He beat me because he was not afraid of me, as he knows that he is physically stronger than me, I know that he would not have beaten me if I was a boy. Boys respect each other, they talk until they reach an understanding.*

The participant was not happy with the way boys treat girls and she acknowledged that there is respect among boys for each other. Males discuss their differences until they resolve the matter. However, when it comes to girls, boys use their physical power to control girls. Similar response emerged from Mpho.

**Mpho (perpetrator):** *I did not discuss the matter with her because she is just a girl. Whereas, if it was a boy we would have talked it out, may be if it comes to strength (fight) we would have fought. But there is that 'isithunzi' (dignity) amongst males. We must respect each other. We know that with the other boy you are going to fight, but with a girl, you are just going to beat her. Fighting with another boy needs strength because you might be defeated.*

From these responses there is an indication that, culture has a huge influence in relations between male and female learners at school. Boys become aggressive to girls if they sense that girls do not respect them as they are supposed to be respected. Although, boys demand respect from girls like their fathers who demand respect from their mothers, respect amongst the boys is a given.

### **5.3.2 Social factor**

A number of extracts have been presented from the texts generated in dialogue with the participants, which explore what the social influences are in gender-based violence against female learners.

The social background of the majority of learners from Inanda schools is that of poverty, a high rate of unemployment, which generally results in high rates of crime and violence. Another contributing factor to the increase of violence in Inanda is the history of South Africa, where violence was used as a means to control black people, and in response violence was employed by Black people to retaliate. Hence, violence became the social fabric.

The society regards man as the head of the family; he is expected to support or to provide for his family. These expectations escalate violence, as men cannot fulfill their role as providers due to unemployment. Males therefore, tend to vent their frustration of unemployment on women. Females become the victims of various violent acts, such as beatings, rape, etc.

Children grow up among the members of the society, especially men, who blame women entirely for their ill fate. They witness gender-based violence against women and think that it is acceptable to vent one's anger on one who is physically weaker than you. They witness females being beaten, called names and being subordinated to men. These children grow up believing that if you are a male- child it is all right to be violent to a female-child, because males are supposed to be

aggressive, whereas females are expected to be caring and emotional. When these children go to school, they mimic what they have learnt and observed from their society. Male learners continue to be violent using their physical strength or age. They bully, push around, beat, sexually harass or sexually abuse female learners (Human Rights Watch, 2001).

Boys define masculine prowess by a number of sexual partners or claimed conquests and his ability to control girl friends, because of intensely competitive struggles for position and status within the male peer groups. They clearly see sex, as their right and so forced sex is legitimate. What follows is an extract of an attempted rape, where the female learner is a Grade 9 learner and the male learner is a grade 12 learner.

**Qondi (victim):** *It was after school, then, he came to me while I was still in class and told me that he wanted to talk to me. Then...he...he ...closed the door and...he ...he...started to...ehh....kiss me. I started to get worried that I was going to be late, but he held me against the wall. He...he...ehh ...he...started to fumble with ...ehh ...ehh my panty. I told him that I was afraid and I...ehh...tried to push him away from me.*

**Qondi (victim):** *I was afraid of...eh...eh...sleeping with him.*

**Qondi (victim):** *I heard somebody running away, outside. It was his friend who was on the look out for the teachers. Then he let me loose from the tight hold, in order to lift up his head to see why his friend was running away.*

The above extracts are an indication of how men in society perceive females. According to males, females are sex objects who are there only to satisfy their sexual needs. In the process females are forced to do what is asked of them by males. For example, the female participant was not consulted about what her boyfriend wanted to do. Even when she clearly said that she was afraid, which means she was not ready. Her boy friend was not prepared to listen to her, because he wanted what he wanted and when he wanted it (Having sexual inter-course).

Furthermore, he became aggressive to a female who was far younger and also physically weaker than him, as the female was doing Grade 9 and he was doing Grade 12. This is one of the reasons why women are more vulnerable than men in being infected with HIV/AIDS. Women and girls do not have the opportunity to negotiate the sexual encounter with their partners, or to negotiate the use of protective measures against contracting HIV/AIDS or falling pregnant.

The statistics in support of the above argument is staggering. Out of 29.4 million people living with HIV/AIDS, 58% are women (aged between 15 and 49) and 10 million are young people (UNAIDS, 2002). A female's choice of saying 'no' is ripped away, as men do not pay attention to the female's refusal, because the men assume that they own the woman. An ownership bestowed upon them not only by society, but also by cultural practices such as "lobola".<sup>2</sup>

Further issues of lack of respect towards females emerged in verbal insult towards girls if male demands were not met. The research study has found that if a boy wants to talk to a girl, and the girl does not want to talk to the boy, the boy will either, beat her, insult her or proliferate lies about her with the intention of isolating her and creating dis-communication between her and her peers.

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<sup>2</sup> 'lobola' is a custom which is practiced by 'black' South Africans, where the man presents the family of his future wife with cattle or money as a form of appreciation.

**Gugu (victim):** *I mean that sometimes boys beat girls when they do not want to do what the boys want them to do, although it does not happen now and again. What is common is that boys insult girls if girls do not do what boys want them to do. Sometimes boys spread lies about girls.*

**Qondi (victim):** *He called me a 'slut', which is a word commonly used by boys to humiliate girls. Whenever he saw me, he would talk to his friends after which they laugh.*

**Qondi (victim):** *I did not like it at all, but as long as he did not touch me, I did not pay attention to what he said.*

The study has found that the emotions or opinions of girls are not taken into consideration by boys when they propose love to girls. The boys emulate what they see happening in the outer society, where females are treated as if they enjoy what is happening to them. One participant's response on how he responded when the girl showed that she did not like to do what he wanted was....

**Khula (perpetrator):** *Most of the time we do not pay attention on how the girls feel, we continue to ask what we want, especially because we know that they are not going to do anything...like fighting with us.*

In some instances, boys thought that girls pretended that they did not want their (boys') advances in front of their (girls') friends, because whenever they are in private, girls would let the boys touch their breasts or thighs. It did not occur to the boys that they were able to 'have their way' due to fear and intimidation.

**Khula (perpetrator):** *Most girls like to be touched and talked to, but in front of other girls they pretend as if they do not like what*

*you are doing to them. I think...ehh ...girls are not sure of what they want.*

The study has also uncovered that boys thought that once girls agree to be their girl friends, they own their girl friend's body and mind. They took for granted that by saying 'yes' to their advances means 'yes' to having sex with them. One of the participants could not understand that when he forced his girlfriend to have sex with him; that was tantamount to rape. In his response he argued:

***Khula (perpetrator):*** *I did not think that ...she...she did not really want to sleep with me, after all she was my girl friend. Even when I...I was proposing to her, she took a lot of convincing before she agreed on my proposal.*

***Khula (perpetrator):*** *I just thought that she...she just wanted to see how serious I was. Anyway, I had been waiting for her for a long time to be ready. I could not wait any longer.*

The above extract indicates that violence is pervasive in schools and it is exacerbated by social constructions of masculinity and femininity. Society encourages boys to become aggressive; hence violence against girls. Violence is also about power between masculinity and femininity. Therefore, boys perpetuate violence as a way of conforming to the dominant norms of masculinity. In the process, the girl's equal educational opportunities are violated, as girls live in fear of being sexually harassed, sexually abused and raped by the boys.

### **5.3.3 Social Stereotype**

There are acts of violence against female learners, which are perpetrated by the gender stereotypical beliefs that males are superior to females. The male learners demand respect from female learners.

**Gugu (victim):** *He called me and I said that I am still busy, and I went to my class. He followed me to the class and told me that I am taking him for granted. He was not going to propose love to me. He wanted to ask something. I kept quiet and he told me that he was going to catch me after school, then I went to the office to report him.*

**Qondi (victim):** *Here at school...people keep on pointing fingers at me. They are blaming for waiting for my boyfriend after school. They say I knew what he was going to do. Other boys are calling me name as if I asked my boyfriend to rape me. You know ma'am people do not pay that much attention on bad things....what can I say.....I mean bad behaviour of males. Men are always excused for their bad behaviour, but women are not forgiven for their bad behaviour.*

The above extracts confirm that the societal gender stereotype transpired at school among learners. Learners believed the worst of the female learner and sided with the male learners.

#### **5.4 CONCLUSION**

To conclude, this chapter presents the voices of the participants. It also analyses data, which was collected through the review of records and interviews. In the first phase of the chapter, the analysis of data is presented quantitatively, in form of tables and graph. Then, in the second phase, themes emerging from the participants' transcripts were analysed in order to examine what influences gender-based violence among secondary school learners. In the following chapter the discussion and the recommendations on what schools could do to curb gender-based violence, is presented.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this research was to examine gender-based violence among learners in the three Inanda secondary schools. This study investigated kinds of gender-based violence experienced by learners. It also examined the understanding of the learners about gender-based violence, so as to identify factors that explain gender-based violence amongst them. In addition, the literature review informed decisions regarding the direction of the research.

Furthermore, quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques were used in order to explore the critical questions, where the school records were reviewed in order to identify kinds of gender-based violence experienced at secondary schools by female learners. Semi-structured interviews were administered to learners selected from school records. Through the presentation and analysis of the findings, various issues were highlighted and brought to the fore.

Lastly, as the intention of the study was to examine solutions to the problem of gender-based violence among learners at secondary schools, this chapter draws together the conclusion arising from the findings of the study and sets out recommendations for change.

#### **6.2. DISCUSSION**

Emerging from the literature review and findings of this research it is evident that gender-based violence is pervasive among learners in schools. The problem is that the perpetrators (male learners) of this act do not clearly understand that they are violating the rights of female learners. In some instances, the victims, themselves, tolerated gender-based violence, as they believed that male learners were doing what is expected of them. In addition, it was found that educators did not take

gender-based violence with the seriousness it deserves, as they did not take appropriate actions when it occurred. This is because both learners and educators did not understand what constitutes gender-based violence. Hence some of male learners' actions towards female learners are culturally accepted.

Moreover, the study identified common categories of gender-based violence occurring within the school. These included sexual harassment, threat, verbal abuse, assault and fighting. However, it was found that the educators did not record most of the occurrences of gender-based violence because they felt that these occurrences such as sexual harassment and verbal abuse were not life threatening. As a point of reference, educator's perceived that there was nothing wrong about "whistling" as it is the way of male's showing appreciation of females.

The social and cultural influences of gender-based violence were astute. First of all, in African culture, the construction of masculinity is that of dominance to femininity such as boys are raised as heads of the family and are supposed to give direction to their female counterparts. Boys are supposed to win every time through aggressive measures. In this case male learners perceived that it was natural to force female learners to do what boys want them to do and to force female learners to be in a relationship with them. If female learners did not agree to these demands they then deserved to be punished by beating or verbal abuse. Furthermore, those male learners who showed manhood by being violent to females were admired.

The social background also had a large influence on how male learners and female learners behave at school, as it was found that learners learn from the society most of the gender-based violence occurring at school. It was found that some female learners tolerated violence from their boyfriends, as they believed that their boyfriends beat them because they (boyfriends) were still in love with them. However, there

were those female learners who interrogated the issue of male dominance, where they pointed out that, males became mostly aggressive towards females not males.

It was also found that the Department of Education and Culture both nationally and provincially has responded on the findings of various research studies conducted on gender-based violence in schools. Hence, it has formulated policy guidelines on identifying and addressing the issue of gender-based violence in schools. However, schools do not recognize gender-based violence as a problem, which needs urgent attention, as they do not have policies in place to eliminate or reduce gender-based violence among learners. This has created a problem where the resources are available but not utilised due to a “non-existent” attitude of gender-based violence.

Finally, it has been identified that both male and female learners have the theoretical knowledge of equality of rights for men and women. However, when it comes to practice, the male learners disregarded these policies and persist to behave as expected by society. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that schools have to effect change on all learners about respecting each other’s human rights so as to have equal educational opportunities.

### **6.3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is apparent that if we want to change the perceptions of the society about gender-based violence, our schools have to take on the responsibility of effecting change on the learner’s construction of masculinity and femininity. The following are essential suggestions, which are being put forth as the way of resolving the problems of gender-based violence in our schools and the society as a whole, as learners are also the members of the society.

### **6.3.1. Gap between policy and practice**

The Department of Education and Culture has already set into place policies, spear-heading the fight against gender-based violence. The onus falls upon the schools on implementing these policies into practice in order to clamp down on aggressive behavior at schools. However, placing the responsibility upon the schools for the implementation of these policies needs to be revisited by the Department of Education and Culture. The department must ensure that schools put these policies into practice. This also requires intensive monitoring by the department.

### **6.3.2. Curriculum design**

The issues of human rights and equal opportunities needs to be incorporated into the curriculum design so that learners could learn to respect each other.

Gender studies need to be also incorporated into the curriculum of the school in compulsory learning areas. Learners need also be exposed to texts that challenge gender stereotypes and presented with alternative ways of being.

Furthermore, conflict management needs be included into the curriculum design. Learners need to know that they do not have to resort to violent behavior whenever they do not agree on certain matters.

### **6.3.3. Campaigns, workshops and seminars**

One of the findings on this research was that educators did not understand what constitutes gender-based violence. Therefore, campaigns, workshops and seminars must be conducted for the purpose of bringing awareness for the plight of the learners to the educators. This could help educators to be more sensitive to these

issues and be able to reduce the acts of gender-based violence in schools.

#### **6.3.4. Counseling sessions**

Schools need to organize counseling sessions for both perpetrators and victims of gender-based violence. Learners, who have suffered gender-based violence, need counseling which is readily available, so that they do not resort to dropping out of school or being distracted from their schoolwork.

#### **6.3.5. Public awareness programs**

As learners in schools come from the society with gender-based violence attitudes, schools need to develop programs, where parents are educated about gender-based violence. These will ultimately challenge and change society's attitudes towards violence against women.

### **6.4. LIMITATIONS**

Female learners, who were interviewed, appeared not to want to break the cycle of gender-based violence because they did not volunteer more information on the matter than was asked by the researcher. The researcher's continuous probing was the only way in some instances to extract answers.

It was also found that male learners could not explain their violent actions towards female learners. When they were asked "why" they could not give the answers.

### **6.5. CONCLUSION**

This research is an exploratory study in that it investigated the factors that explain gender-based violence among Inanda secondary school learners. It focused on the female learners as the victims and sort to bring out their plight to all the stakeholders of education.

However, it is believed that male learners are capable of changing their attitudes if schools could put up strategies for change. Therefore, this study has relevance for all stakeholders in education namely educators, policy makers, policy implementers, school governing bodies and the Department of Education and Culture. It calls for urgent interventions to address the issue of gender-based violence in schools.

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## APPENDIX A

Attention: Dr G.M. Msimang

KwaMashu Circuit

KwaMashu

30 April 2004

Reference: Nkani F.N.

Tel. 031-5185796

Persal No:11440377

Sir

### RE: Request Permission to Conduct a Research

I have registered for the Master of Education Degree with the University of KwaZulu-Natal. My research topic focuses on the factors that explain gender-based violence among secondary school learners. I'm presently employed by the Department of Education and Culture as an educator in your circuit.

For the success of this study, I need learners from three secondary schools in your circuit. I hereby, apply for permission to access these schools. My supervisor is Dr S. Singh in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

I would appreciate if your office could allow me to conduct this study.

Yours sincerely

Nkani F.N.

## APPENDIX B

### REPLY FROM THE CIRCUIT MANAGER



## PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Address	A 186-7 Musa Road	Private Bag	X018	Telephone	031-5031177
Ukheli	KWAMASHU	Isikhwana Seposi	KWAMASHU	Ucingo	031-5031195
Adres	4360	Privaatsak	4360	Telefoon	
				Toll Free No.	0800 360691
				Fax	031-5031178
Enquiries	Dr Msimango	Reference		Date	09/05/2005
Imibuzo		Inkomba		Usuku	
Navrae		Verwysing		Datum	

MISS F.N. NKANI

P.O. BOX 312

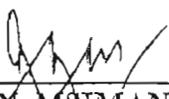
MARBLE RAY

4037

### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN INANDA

This letter serves as an agreement to conduct research in three schools in Ward 56. This agreement gives you permission to collect data by reviewing school records and interviewing learners.

This office wishes you good luck with your research.

  
DR G.N. MSIMANGO  
CIRCUIT MANAGER

## APPENDIX C

### CONSENT FORM TO PARENTS

**RESEARCH TOPIC:** Factors that explain gender-based violence at  
among learner in secondary school

**RESEARCHER:** Nkani F.N.

School of Educational Studies –  
University of KwaZulu-Natal

**SUPERVISOR:** Dr Suchitra Singh

I understand that:

1. The participation of my son/daughter in this is voluntary.
2. As a parent I reserve the right to withdraw him/her from the study at any time.
- 3 **My son/daughter** is not obliged to respond to the question of **the study**.
- 4 **Interviews** will be conducted in a safe place within the school, **and tape** recorded for the purpose of transcripts.
5. **Confidentiality** in this study is guaranteed.

I ~~do~~/~~do not~~ give consent for my son/daughter to participate in the study.

.....

**Signature**

.....

**Date**

.....

**Contact Number**

### APPENDIX D

Form for recording and reporting crime incidents at school

Recording and reporting incidents of crime.

The following format can be use:

DATE OF INCIDENT	TYPE OF INCIDENT	WHERE IT TOOK PLACE	WHO WAS INVOLVED	TO WHOM REPORTED	HOW WAS IT RESOLVED	PARTIES INFORMED	SIGNATURE

Charting the rise or decline in school based crime and violence: e.g.

6											
5											
4											
3											
2											
1											
	JAN	FEB	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV

**Months of the year 2000**