



**MALE PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND
FEMICIDE: A CASE STUDY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
PIETERMARITZBURG CAMPUS**

by

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DECLARATION

This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of **Master of Social Sciences in Sociology** at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus, South Africa.

1. I, Nomandla Sixolile Billie, declare that the data presented in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, are my original work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
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Student's Signature

14 December 2023

Date

Ms Sihle Lamula

Supervisor's Name


Signature

²⁴ Now all glory to God, who is able to keep you from falling away and will bring you with great joy into his glorious presence without a single fault. ²⁵ All glory to him who alone is God, our Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord. Jude 24–25

To

my late younger brother, ***Bambanani Ndabazovuyo “Zimthambele” Billie***, who passed away before he could pursue his dreams, but he remains a source of light and inspiration in my life. I always treasure the memories we shared, and I am grateful for his support and encouragement. This thesis is a tribute to his memory and a testament to the importance of pursuing our passions and fulfilling our potential.

Forever and Always.

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ABSTRACT

Gender-based violence and femicide are pervasive issues worldwide, with South Africa being one of the countries where men are predominantly the perpetrators. Despite efforts and initiatives to curb the problem, it continues to persist. To develop impactful interventions, researchers must understand men's perspectives on gender-based violence and femicide to gain insights into the root causes of these issues. The study aimed to examine men's views on gender-based violence and femicide to better understand the underlying causes of these problems. The social construction of gender theory was adopted to investigate how cultural factors influence men's perspectives.

The social construction of gender theory posits that societal norms and cultural influences shape individuals' gender identities. The study employed a qualitative research approach and gathered data through semi-structured interviews with 15 men aged 25-35. The research findings suggest that cultural norms in South Africa play a significant role in the acceptance of violence, resulting in gender-based violence and femicide. Patriarchy and cultural norms that uphold male dominance over women further exacerbate gender inequality. Efforts to raise awareness about these issues should be targeted to effectively reach individuals living in rural areas, where a significant lack of education and awareness often exists, making them more vulnerable to gender-based violence. Women's financial dependence on men can also make them more susceptible to violence, as some men may feel a sense of ownership when they provide financial support. To decrease women's vulnerability to violence, researchers suggest addressing economic inequality and empowering women.

Several recommendations were presented to address gender-based violence and femicide, including adopting the gender mainstreaming approach, conducting targeted awareness campaigns and interventions in rural areas, and enforcing stricter legal penalties for offenders. Stronger legislation is necessary to comprehensively address gender-based violence and femicide, including education, awareness campaigns, legal reform, and cultural change. The study findings underscore the influence of cultural factors on men's perspectives and highlight the need for targeted initiatives to raise awareness, empower women, and enforce legal consequences. A comprehensive approach that includes education, awareness campaigns, legal reform, and cultural change is necessary to effectively tackle gender-based violence and femicide.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
SAPS	South African Police Service
UCT	University of Cape Town
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
USB	Universal Serial Bus
UWC	University of the Western Cape

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter examines men's attitudes towards femicide and gender-based violence against women, which are grave issues affecting individuals, families, and communities globally. The research aims to uncover the root causes of these issues and create prevention strategies. The chapter presents clear definitions of the issues and outlines the research problem, purpose, aims, objectives, and research questions. Femicide and gender-based violence originate from power imbalances and gender inequality, leading to significant harm to victims, families, and society. The research provides a unique perspective to understand the root causes and contributing factors of these issues. Exploring men's attitudes and beliefs towards gender-based violence can help contribute to the existing literature on the subject and inform policies and practices aimed at preventing femicide and gender-based violence against women, promoting safety, equality, and justice for all.

1.2 Background and problem statement

Gender-based violence is a profound and widespread problem in South Africa and has an impact on almost every aspect of life. The murder rate of women increased from 13.1% in 2013/14 to 15.2% in 2017/18. These statistics indicate that gender-based violence and femicide are ongoing issues that persist despite existing campaigns. Leburu-Masigo & Kgadima's (2020) study reveals that gender-based violence keeps on rising. The statistics indicate that 179,683 contact crimes were reported against women in the 2018–19 financial year. These crimes increased by 2063 cases from the 2017–2018 to the 2018–2019 financial year. Out of the contact crime cases reported, 82,728 were cases of common assault, and 54,142 were assaults with the intent to cause grievous bodily harm. Two thousand seven hundred seventy-one (2771) women were murdered that year, with 3,445 attempted murders of women in addition. The police do not provide data on the motives behind these murders due to undisclosed reasons.

Furthermore, there were 36,597 recorded cases of sexual offences against women in the 2018–2019 financial year. This category includes crimes such as rape, attempted rape, sexual assault, and other sexual offences (Medicins Sans Frontieres, 2020). According to the report by the Minister of South African Police Service, Bheki Cele, in March 2020, there were at least 2,230 incidents of gender-based violence recorded during the first week of the COVID-19 national lockdown, representing a 30% increase from the same period in 2019. This highlights the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on the victims. Hence, in just 7 days, 2,230 cases were reported. Bheki Cele recently announced that more than 9,500 cases of GBV and 13,000 domestic violence cases were reported between July and September 2021 (Mlambo, 2020). Over the same period, 897 women were murdered.

According to Karstedt (2014), South Africa is ranked number 13 of the 20 'global hotspots,' with 77% of homicides in the world and the highest number of reported rape cases globally (approximately 50,000 cases per annum), depending on the definition and analysis. These numbers concur with Minister of the South African Police Service Bheki Cele's report. Karstedt's (2014) research also indicates that most cases are not reported. Many factors contribute to the failure of victims to report gender-based violence cases. These include poor treatment of victims by police officers, distrust of the justice system, negativity towards the conviction process, and personal characteristics, including failure to recognise rape as a crime. According to Dlamini (2020, citing the World Bank, 2019), 37% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence. According to Heilman & Barker (2018), men and boys are more likely to perpetrate intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and homicide. Men perpetrate the majority of interpersonal gender-based violence against women, indicating a high prevalence of gender-based violence against women.

Literature shows that although some men can also be victims of gender-based violence, violence against women is a more prevalent, severe, and intense issue (Ali, 2018). Fulu & Miedema (2015) challenge the widely held belief that men are primarily responsible for women's homicides by pointing out that there have been instances where female relatives have also been involved. The term 'femicide', which refers to the killing of women, is distinct from the killing of men in several ways. For instance, 70% of all femicide cases involve

current or former male partners, and women are twice as likely as men to die at the hands of their partner or ex-partner (WHO, 2012). Fulu & Miedema (2015) stress that although men typically commit women's murders, female family members can also be involved in some cases.

Brankovic's (2019) research shows that there is no single cause of violence in South Africa; instead, several risk factors combine to enable violence, depending on the context. Sexual violence is a continuum, with different symptoms of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment. It reflects the underlying pathological norms, attitudes, and behaviours of people and society. Wife slapping appears to be the most common form of physical abuse against women, as "corporal punishment for spouses is commonly sanctioned as a form of discipline in many regions" (Ademuluka, 2018, p. 350). Lloyd (2018, p. 3) states that, as a result, when men beat their wives, they "think they are imparting discipline in them (as women are viewed as children who can be prone to indiscipline if not 'disciplined)'".

Existing research indicates that domestic violence in heterosexual relationships is typically the result of men seeking to exert power and control over their female partners (Dobash & Dobash, 2017). Studies have also found that men who are unemployed and living in poverty are more likely to perpetrate violence, often due to feelings of powerlessness related to their lack of economic resources (Knabe et al., 2016). Hence, this is due to the stress caused by the inability to support their families financially, so they use violence to "remind" women that they are still house owners (head of the household, authoritative figures in the household, etc.).

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI) members are also vulnerable to gender-based violence, and "corrective" rape refers to an instance where a woman is raped to "cure" her of her homosexuality (Lake, 2017). In numerous instances, men have molested lesbians to teach them a lesson, which has resulted in femicide—the killing of a lesbian because of her sexual orientation.

One cannot discuss gender-based violence without referring to patriarchy. Patriarchy is a social structure where males dominate over females (Sultana, 2010). Patriarchy can also refer to various manifestations in which men have social privileges over women, leading to

exploitation or oppression involving male dominance in terms of moral authority and control of property (Walby, 1989). According to Mshweshe (2020), South Africa has a robust patriarchal social structure that enables men to dominate, oppress, and exploit women in both the public and private spheres. Ademuluka (2018, p. 349) observes that "married women's sexuality is regarded as being under the control of their husbands."

Zain (2012, p. 132) defines gender-based violence as an "extreme manifestation of gender inequity, often targeting women and girls because of their vulnerable position in society, which is reinforced and perpetuated by structural patriarchy." The most significant risk factors include social and economic inequality, frustrated masculinity, and a lack of social cohesion. Inequality is a super-driver of violence. According to Brankovic's (2019) studies, the hopelessness, humiliation, guilt, and stress linked to inequality, limitations on life possibilities, and inadequate resources contribute to violence.

According to Statistics South Africa's (2021) Quarterly Labour Force Survey, the unemployment rate among women was 37.3% in the third quarter of 2021, compared to 32.9% among men. The official unemployment rate among Black African women was 41.5%, compared to 9.9% among White women, 25.2% among Indian and Asian women, and 29.1% among women of colour (STATS, 2021). The results indicate that the South African labour market is more favourable to men than women, and white women are more favoured compared to Black women. Intersectional approaches—which take into account all the many axes of oppression, including gender, race, and class—are essential for effectively addressing gender violence since oppression and subordination happen and cross at every level of identification, with gender being only one of them.

According to Vallabh (2022), Black women in South Africa are still the most susceptible to gender-based violence due to a legacy of economic vulnerability and violence perpetuated by discriminatory and prejudiced structures and institutions throughout the country's history. These factors interact with several drivers, such as social norms (cultural or religious), low levels of women's empowerment, a lack of social support, socio-economic inequality, and substance abuse.

Current literature emphasises a connection between gender-based violence and traditional or conservative norms, especially those rooted in patriarchy (Saffitz, 2010). Research has shown that 'tradition' or 'norms' often justify violence or gender inequality (Perri, 2019). Inequality happens in all spheres. Even today, women still earn less than men, even though they do the same job (Auspurg et al., 2017). This happens because of entrenched beliefs that if a woman earns less than a man, she will respect him and her husband at home. Men continue to hold the highest positions of authority (like the office of the presidency) due to the myth that women are emotional beings who cannot make comprehensive decisions without involving emotions (Merchant, 2012).

Contemporary research has found that incidents of sexual violence are often more common in settings where social norms condone or ignore men's sexually coercive or aggressive behaviours (Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 2008). These cultures, which maintain power structures and practices that blame victims instead of holding perpetrators accountable, tacitly support perpetrators and their crimes. Gender-based violence results from societal beliefs and practices that support male entitlement and dominance. According to the Gender-based Violence and Femicide National Strategic Plan (2020), with this conceptualisation in mind, any effort to end gender-based violence would necessarily focus on social, community, and individual and family transformation. Macro-level interventions aimed at changing beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of social norms are a type of intervention that has shown promise (Kimball, 2016, p. 5-8). These social and cultural norms have a huge impact on gender-based violence and femicide since they are responsible for creating societal structures like patriarchy that favour men's dominance over women.

Perrin et al. (2019) further argue that the work on gender equality and gender-based violence prevention should challenge those aspects of men's behaviour or constructions of masculinity and gender relations that harm women. Peacock & Barker (2014) also argue that getting male perspectives on gender-based violence and femicide would provide insight into these social vices and reveal the cultural backgrounds that influence their views and opinions, which would help create awareness about gender-based violence and femicide.

Therefore, this study explored male perspectives on gender-based violence and femicide, with KwaZulu-Natal University students as the case study. Men's views would help provide

more insight into the issue of gender-based violence. “Men have to engage men to speak out against this scourge” (Perrin et al., 2019, p. 3). Hence, men need to be actively involved in the fight against gender-based violence. Thus, the research seeks to understand male perspectives on gender-based violence and femicide and how cultural norms and social constructions of gender affect their worldviews.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The study aimed to investigate male viewpoints on femicide and gender-based violence against women, focusing on the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). Research has shown that men are the primary offenders in gender-based violence, so understanding gender-based violence and femicide from their perspectives would help understand why men commit such social vices and address the root cause of the problems. Thus, the researcher sought to explore the conceptual understanding of gender-based violence and femicide from a male perspective. The research would contribute to the ongoing studies and debates on gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa, as gender-based violence and femicide have become prominent issues, although the research findings may not be generalised to the broader population.

1.3 Research objectives and questions

1.3.1 Research objective

1. To explore the male perspectives on femicide and gender-based violence against women at KwaZulu-Natal University.
2. To examine the influence of patriarchal culture on femicide and gender-based violence against women at KwaZulu-Natal University.
3. To examine the relationship between gender-based violence against women and women's financial dependency on men at KwaZulu-Natal University.
4. To explore how the social construction of gender, specifically the structures of masculinity and femininity, influences gender-based violence against women at KwaZulu-Natal University.

1.3.3 Research questions

1. What are the male insights and perspectives on femicide and gender-based violence against women at KwaZulu-Natal University?
2. What is the influence of patriarchal culture on femicide and gender-based violence against women at KwaZulu-Natal University?
3. What is the relationship between gender-based violence and women's financial dependency on men at KwaZulu-Natal University?
4. To what extent does the social construction of gender, particularly the portrayal of masculinity and femininity, influence gender-based violence and femicide at KwaZulu-Natal University?

1.4 Key concepts

1.4.1 Gender-based violence

According to Djamba & Kimuna (2015), gender-based violence is any act or threat of harm that is inflicted on a person due to their gender. This type of violence can take many forms, including physical, sexual, emotional, financial, or structural abuse. Individuals or institutions may commit gender-based violence against people of a certain gender identity. People who are closely related to the victim—such as intimate partners, family members, friends, or even strangers—frequently commit gender-based violence.

Manjoo (2012, p. 6) describes "femicide" as the murder of women by men who act out of hatred, contempt, pleasure, or a sense of ownership of women. Gender-based violence is rooted in gender inequality, power abuse, and norms that legitimise violent behaviour (UNHCR, 2021). Women are often the primary victims of gender-based violence, and it can manifest in various forms of abuse, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Gender-based violence is a severe violation of human rights and poses a life-threatening health and protection issue.

1.4.2 Femicide

Femicide is the killing of women and girls, usually by a man because of their gender, and is recognised as a critical public health and human rights issue (DoJ & CDC, 2017). According to Abrahams et al. (2013), men's risk of perpetration begins in childhood and increases if they have observed violence between parents and have been subjected to physical and sexual abuse as children. Gender and economic inequalities in society are also contributing factors. Women forced into vulnerable situations due to a lack of resources perpetuate the cycle of violence. Despite legal protection, the lack of accountability for perpetrators exacerbates the problem in patriarchal societies with corrupt institutions.

1.4.3 Sex and gender

Sex is a biological characteristic that categorises individuals as male or female, and is determined by factors such as chromosomes or genitalia (Little, 2006). Gender, on the other hand, is a socially constructed concept that refers to the characteristics, behaviours, and roles associated with being male or female (WHO, 2019). Gender is internalised through socialisation and influences how individuals perceive themselves, behave, interact, and the distribution of power and resources in society (Cislaghi & Heisi, 2020).

Human beings are not born with gender but are socialised into it. Gender is a social construct that varies from society to society and is fluid (Manandhar, Hawkes, Buse, Nosrati, & Magar, 2018). Gender is a pre-existing structure, so people do not create gender at birth but instead conform to existing ideas around gender. Gender consists of separate roles, expectations, and norms that men and women must conform to. Gender roles are based on societal standards, and these differences lead to gender inequality, perpetuating violent cultures, including gender-based violence. Roles are rules that govern behaviour among men and women. This includes responsibilities, advantages, disadvantages, opportunities, constraints, functions, status, and power assigned to women and men in society (Simpson, 2004). These roles are based on norms or standards created by the community, and they are learned through socialisation. They can change over time and vary within and between cultures.

1.4.4 Femininity and masculinity

Femininity and masculinity are socially constructed concepts that refer to the characteristics, behaviours, and features associated with being female or male (Kachel et al., 2016). Masculinity is often associated with being tough, hiding emotions, and getting what one wants, while femininity is viewed as nurturing and timid (Windsor, 2015). These gender roles can vary across cultures and are not fixed, essential traits that characterise all individuals.

Hegemonic masculinity, which glorifies the most accepted form of masculinity, is the most dominant form of masculinity in a culture. The pressures of masculinity on men and the inability to perform socially constructed roles that define being a man have been found to perpetrate domestic violence.

1.4.5 Patriarchy

According to Sikweyiya (2020, p. 3), patriarchy refers to a “social and political system that treats men as superior to women, perpetuating women's subordination and male dominance.” It is characterised by attitudes and expectations that give men uncontested authority over women and is embedded in social structures, including marriage, where women are treated as the property of their husbands (Mudadu & Obadire, 2017). Patriarchy is a major contributor to gender-based violence because it allows men to abuse women because of the power that society has given them.

1.5 Methodology

According to Neuman (2011, p. 102), qualitative research is a “research method that helps uncover how and why individuals behave and think in certain ways, including their experiences and attitudes.” A qualitative research methodology was used in this study. A qualitative approach is a systematic subjective approach used to investigate life experiences and situations and give them meaning (Burns & Grove, 2003). Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (points) through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information. Case study research involves studying a case (or cases) within a real-life, contemporary context or setting (Yin, 2014). Stake (2005)

states that case study research is not a methodology but a study choice. Exploratory case studies are set up to explore any phenomenon in the data that serves as a point of interest to the researcher. The researcher chose the case study research to examine male perspectives on gender-based violence and femicide since men have been identified as the main perpetrators of gender-based violence.

In this study, non-probability sampling methods were used, specifically purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling involves deliberately selecting certain individuals or settings to obtain information that cannot be obtained from other options. The researcher aimed to understand gender-based violence against women from a male perspective and chose men as the research sample due to the higher prevalence of male perpetrators. The study included males aged 25–35 from diverse cultural and societal backgrounds at UKZN to capture a range of perspectives on gender-based violence and femicide. This age group was selected as the researcher believed they could provide in-depth knowledge on the different threads of gender-based violence and femicide over decades.

Semi-structured interviews were used in this study. The researcher chose semi-structured interviews as they allowed for open-ended responses from participants for more in-depth information. Semi-structured interviews enabled a dialogue between the researcher and the interviewer. The interviews were conducted in English and isiZulu. Participants who wished to answer in IsiZulu were allowed to do so.

Thematic content analysis was used in this research to analyse the data, as is common in qualitative studies, to provide greater depth (Blumberg et al., 2008). Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic data analysis method identifies, analyses, and reports patterns or themes within the data collected. Perspectives and meanings from the males' responses, which were essential for the study, were noted. The researcher closely examined the data to repeatedly identify common themes, topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning and code similar aspects together. Anonymity, confidentiality, and ethical clearance were maintained throughout the research process, and pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities.

1.6 Theoretical framework

This study employs the social construction of gender as its theoretical framework. The theory stems from social constructivism theory. Social constructivism is a "sociological theory of knowledge according to which human development is socially situated and knowledge is constructed through the interaction of people amongst each other" (McKinley, 2015, p. 123). Social constructivism posits that knowledge evolves through social interactions and language. Therefore, it is a shared rather than personal experience. The social constructivist perspective is concerned with meaning created through defining and categorising groups of people, experiences, and reality in cultural contexts. Social constructivism highlights how cultural categories—like "men," "women," "Black," and "white"—are socially constructed concepts created, changed, and reproduced through historical processes within institutions and culture.

The core components of this theory involve how individuals interpret their experiences, create a model of the social world, and use language to construct reality (Amineh & Davatgari, 2015, p. 15). Creswell (2009) asserts that social constructivism serves as a practical, theoretical framework as it allows for necessary qualitative analysis to reveal insights into how people interact with the world.

According to Strebel et al. (2006), the social construction of gender theory recognises that norms of masculinity and femininity (roles allocated to women and men) vary widely across communities. Calzaghe & Heise (2020) state that gender is socially constructed, so different societal norms and cultural values might have different effects. The social construction of gender is most suitable for this study because it speaks about how gender is socially and culturally constructed and shapes people's actions, behaviours, and conduct as specific sexes.

1.7 Thesis structure

Chapter One: Introduction: This chapter includes the introduction and background, problem statement, aim and objectives of the study, research questions, and the purpose of the study, key concepts, research methodology, theoretical framework, thesis structure, and chapter conclusion.

Chapter Two: Literature review: This chapter presents an introduction, a review of the literature, and a chapter conclusion. It discusses available studies published by both local and international sources, including research from the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Chapter Three: Theoretical framework: This chapter provides the conceptual framework utilised in this study and evaluates its reliability in connection to the research questions and problem statements.

Chapter Four: Description of research methodology: This chapter presents a detailed overview of the research methodology used in the study. The chapter covers the research paradigm, design, instrument, data collection procedure, and analysis methods. The introduction is followed by a summary of the methodology, and the research paradigm and design, research instrument (an interview guide), data collection procedure, and data analysis methods (thematic content analysis) are discussed in detail. The chapter concludes by summarizing the key points and emphasizing the significance of the study's methodology.

Chapter Five: Key findings and discussion: This chapter presents the findings obtained during the data collection process. The discussion was generated based on the study findings and critically examined with a literature review, policies, and conceptual and theoretical frameworks.

Chapter Six: Summary and recommendations: This chapter summarises the study findings and offers recommendations to combat gender-based violence and femicide. Additionally, suggestions for further research avenues are proposed to advance the understanding of these critical issues.

1.8 Conclusion

This study delves into the critical issue of gender-based violence and femicide, highlighting the need to understand male perspectives on these issues. Gender-based violence and femicide are prevalent and pervasive problems in South Africa, affecting almost every aspect of life. The social construction of gender and its impact on patriarchal beliefs, social norms, and the socialisation process within society have all been identified as primary drivers of gender-based violence and femicide. To effectively tackle gender-based violence, macro-

level interventions are needed to change beliefs, attitudes, and societal norms that perpetuate patriarchal ideologies. This research employs a qualitative methodology, utilising purposive and snowball sampling to explore male perspectives on gender-based violence and femicide at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). Semi-structured interviews in English and IsiZulu were conducted to gain in-depth insight into the experience and knowledge of the selected male participants. The social construction of gender theory provides a practical theoretical framework for exploring cultural backgrounds that influence male perspectives on these issues. The study recommends further exploration of these issues and the implementation of effective interventions to combat gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa. Therefore, this research presents a significant contribution to the ongoing studies on gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa, as it seeks to understand the root causes of these issues from a male perspective.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The issue of femicide and gender-based violence is a deeply concerning and long-standing problem that has affected societies worldwide for many years. To address these issues, it is crucial to acknowledge the importance of gender roles and the associated societal expectations and norms. Gender stereotypes perpetuated within cultural and social norms significantly contribute to femicide and gender-based violence. Unfortunately, individuals who do not conform to these societal norms may face social disapproval and resort to aggressive behaviour to assert their masculinity. This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the complex relationship between patriarchal structures, traditional gender roles, women's financial dependence on men, and their significant impact on the prevalence of femicide and gender-based violence. Case studies included in the review serve to illustrate the practical implications of these factors, enhancing the analysis. Additionally, the review offers valuable insights into the impact of gender norms on femicide and gender-based violence and identifies potential areas for future research and intervention. The primary objective of this review is to contribute to the development of more effective strategies and interventions to address femicide and gender-based violence while promoting gender equality. Recognising the gravity of this issue and taking action to create a safer and more equitable world for all individuals, regardless of gender, is essential.

2.2 Gender-based violence, femicide, and gender inequalities in the South African context

Gender-based violence, a serious result of unequal gender dynamics, significantly affects the well-being of women and children in physical, emotional, and psychological ways (Rico, 1997; Mukanangana et al., 2014). Patriarchal beliefs upholding male dominance and control in relationships play a significant role in perpetuating intimate partner violence in South Africa (Graff and Heinecken, 2017). Intimate partner femicide refers to the killing of a woman by her current or former intimate partner, irrespective of gender, within personal relationships like marriage, while non-intimate partner femicide refers to the killing of a

woman by someone other than her intimate partner, including strangers, family members, relatives, or any other individual (WHO, 2012).

Gender inequality is a central component that fuels gender-based violence in many societies (Jewkes et al., 2003). Societal gender roles that place women at the bottom of the social hierarchy and men at the top primarily stem from gender inequality. Helman and Ratele (2016) argue that gender inequality is first established and spread within families before extending to wider societal frameworks. Gender inequality is strongly associated with a culture of violence and is correlated with violence against women (Heise et al., 2002). South Africa's cultural diversity contributes to varying levels of gender inequality across different cultures (Helman and Ratele, 2016). Gender inequality appears to subvert ethnic and cultural boundaries in South Africa (Mabokela and Mawila, 2004), and men's attitudes towards women's rights and gender equality reflect broader structural inequalities within society and can be linked to their use of violence against women (Leibbrandt et al., 2010).

It is essential to promote gender equality and challenge patriarchal beliefs and attitudes towards women to address gender-based violence as a societal issue. Education is also an essential tool in creating awareness and promoting gender equality, as it can challenge harmful beliefs and attitudes towards women and girls. Survivors of gender-based violence require appropriate support and access to justice to address the harms caused by such violence. Healthy relationships built on equality, respect, and consent in all forms of intimate relationships should be promoted to reduce gender-based violence.

2.3 Involving men in fighting gender-based violence

Efforts to prevent violence against women must address the role of men because they are responsible for perpetrating the majority of this violence (Flood, 2011). To stop violence against women, men must change their attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions of masculinity. Studies have shown that men's adherence to sexist, patriarchal, and sexually hostile attitudes plays a crucial role in shaping violence against women (Flood, 2015). In many societies, men hold power and ensure that cultural norms are implemented and enforced. Therefore, preventing violence against women requires sustained and systematic efforts involving men at all levels, from families and relationships to communities, institutions, and societies

(Flood, 2015). To effectively address gender-based violence and femicide, it is not enough to collaborate with men without challenging societal norms. To make meaningful progress, it is essential to confront entrenched masculine attitudes, relationships, identities, and norms (Heilman & Barker, 2018). This is because various cultural, societal, and traditional norms and beliefs support and perpetuate gender-based violence and femicide.

2.4 Types of gender-based violence and male perspectives on gender-based violence

2.4.1 Gender-based violence

As per a study by Karakurt and Silver (2013), gender-based violence encompasses psychological, verbal, socio-economic, physical, and sexual abuse. These behaviours can range from harmful online comments to acts such as rape and homicide. Gender-based violence includes domestic violence, physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual assault, and femicide as examples of its various forms (Cruz & Klinger, 2016). Gender-based violence is a form of abusive behaviour that is rooted in power imbalances, perpetuating harm and subjugation with the intent to marginalise and dominate others. This type of violence is often inflicted on women, given their disadvantaged societal status, and occurs both in private settings and in public spaces. Gender-based violence is regrettably pervasive in our society and frequently encouraged by attitudes and beliefs that foster a culture of silence and disbelief. Perrin (2019) emphasises that addressing gender-based violence requires a significant cultural transformation, as it is deeply rooted in our social and cultural institutions.

Survivors of gender-based violence face catastrophic long-term consequences. This form of violence can affect a woman's mental, physical, sexual, and reproductive health. Domestic violence victims often experience psychological disorders in addition to physical injuries. Depression, anxiety, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and suicidal tendencies are all common among victims of gender-based violence (García-Moreno et al., 2015).

Men's adherence to the norms of gender inequality and unequal treatment of women promotes gender-based violence (World Health Organisation, 2009). Social norms that foster tolerance and silence about sexual violence in communities can contribute to stigma against victims and prevent people from speaking out or acting against sexual violence (Flood & Pease, 2006).

2.4.2 Domestic abuse

Domestic violence is a pattern of assault and coercive behaviours, including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion, used by one partner against another (Okenwa et al., 2009). Domestic abuse can take many forms, including spitting, scratching, biting, grasping, shaking, shoving, pushing, restraining, tossing, twisting, slapping, punching, choking, burning, and using weapons against the victim (Ganley, 1995). Domestic violence can result in death, serious injury, long-term health problems, and profound emotional and psychological trauma for victims, their children, perpetrators, and other individuals. Victims often bear physical scars from stabbings, torchings, and rape.

According to estimates from Abrahams et al. (2013), South Africa has the highest rate of fatalities from domestic violence, with a woman reportedly dying every six hours due to domestic violence. Many cases of unreported domestic violence occur in rural areas, where societal norms accept violence against women, leading to its prevalence. LGBTQI relationships are also at risk of domestic violence due to power and control dynamics that influence abuse (Rolle et al., 2018).

2.4.3 Sexual abuse

Sexual violence includes any conduct that coerces someone into unwanted sexual contact, such as pressured sex, physically forced sex, or verbal degradation during sex (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013). Women and children are the most vulnerable to sexual violence due to their subordinate status in society. Children are at high risk of sexual violence because of their vulnerability. Perpetrators often use intimidation tactics, which can lead to long-lasting damage affecting their mental health in the long run. Social norms that associate male pride with female sexual activity and endorse violent behaviour contribute to the prevalence of sexual violence (World Health Organisation, 2009).

2.4.3.1 Rape

South Africa has one of the highest rates of rape in the world, and this is partly due to a culture of toxic masculinity that normalises violence against women. According to the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (2007), rape "occurs when a person

forces another to have sexual intercourse without their consent." Buiten & Naidoo (2016, p. 537) propose "refiguring rape as a problem of socially constructed gender norms and power."

South Africa is considered to be the rape capital of the world, with 9,516 rape cases reported between April and June of 2022 (General Bheki Cele, 2022). There was an increase when Minister Bheki Cele reported for the third quarter, as 10,000 rape cases were opened with the SAPS between July and September this year. General Bheki Cele states that in a sample of 8,227 rape incidents that were perused, it was determined that 5,083, which amounts to 62% of these incidents, occurred at the residence of the victims or perpetrators. One thousand six hundred and fifty-one (1,651) rape incidents occurred in public places such as streets, parks, and beaches, and 69 people were raped in abandoned buildings. This shows that victims are mostly raped in their own homes.

Rape culture, where rape and other forms of sexual violence are normalised, affects both men and women in society by perpetuating harmful beliefs and behaviours. Boys and men are socialised to be sexual aggressors, while girls and women are often perceived as sexually passive, perpetuating sexual violence in society (Johnson and Johnson, 2017). Marital rape is one of the most common forms of sexual abuse that married women experience due to cultural taboos surrounding sex discussions. Domestic rape cases often go unreported, leading to prolonged suffering for the victims (Conroy et al., 2016; Lynch et al., 2016).

2.4.4 Femicide

Femicide is the most severe manifestation of gender-based violence, which involves the killing of a woman or girl simply because she is female, according to the United Nations (2015). The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2013) defines femicide as the physical harm and murder of women by a current or former partner or relative. In most cases, femicide is connected to intimate partner violence, and male partners are usually the perpetrators. Studies reveal that the men who commit femicide perceive women as their possessions and assume the right to dominate and control them (United Nations, 2014).

Research has revealed that femicide often results from gender-based violence and power imbalances. In particular, women who have attained financial independence or have left abusive relationships are particularly vulnerable to this heinous crime (Walby & Towers,

2018). In societies where the dowry system is practised, women are considered the property of their husbands and families, which exacerbates the power imbalance and elevates the risk of femicide (Kriel, 2014). Unfortunately, femicide is a critical problem in South Africa. According to the United Nations in 2015, the probability of women being killed by their partners is the highest in the world. Toxic masculinity, which is defined by socially constructed attitudes, behaviours, and values that denigrate and subordinate women, is to blame for the severity of this serious issue. Consequently, cultural norms that promote toxic masculinity contribute to gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa. These norms preserve detrimental beliefs about women and girls, resulting in a never-ending cycle of violence and discrimination that is incredibly hard to break.

Femicide, as defined by Manjoo & Nandi (2017), encompasses the gender-related killing of women, including instances such as killings related to witchcraft accusations, honour killings, dowry-related killings, and those due to sexual orientation or gender identity. South Africa is ranked fourth highest in terms of femicide out of 183 countries globally, with the murder rate of women increasing steadily each year (Swemmer, 2022, p. 77).

This encompasses the August 24, 2019 homicide of Uyinene Mrwetyana, a first-year student at the University of Cape Town (UCT) aged 19, who had visited the local post office to retrieve a package (Al Jazeera News, September 2019). Leighandre Jegels, the reigning South African boxing champion, murdered Jesse Hess, a student at the University of Western Cape (UWC), one week before this incident (Bolton, 2020). Furthermore, the August 2021 murder of Nosiselo Mtembeni by her fiancé, who subsequently placed the remains of her body in sacks, traumatised a great number of individuals. According to crime statistics from the South African Police Services for 2015/16 to 2016/17, the likelihood of homicide for South Africans increased by 13% compared to the previous five years.

Mathews (2015, p. 7) observes that men kill women because the "act of killing" is a desperate attempt to regain the control that male partners perceive they have lost. To support this argument, male participants in Matthews' study revealed that they saw femicide as an uncontrollable act of retaliation, a declaration of male supremacy, and a demonstration of masculinity to other male witnesses (that is, demonstrating their masculine identity). Kouta et al. (2018) suggest that understanding the sociocultural and ecological factors that may

contribute to femicide and other types of violence against women is necessary to effectively manage or prevent such violence.

Witchcraft is a term that refers to the influence of an individual possessing magical power on another person's property, mind, or body contrary to that person's will (Singh & Msuya, 2019). It is believed that magic users can cause disease in humans, misfortune and sickness in animals, impotence, sudden death, and other forms of adversity. Although both women and men practice witchcraft, women are more likely to be accused of witchcraft than men. Women with psychological problems are at substantial risk of being killed. For instance, Shange (2021) reported that Jostina Sangweni, who had schizophrenia, a condition that causes hallucinations, was set alight because she was accused of witchcraft. She passed away on her way to the hospital.

Honour killing is another form of femicide in which a male relative or family member kills a woman or a girl over sexual or adulterous behaviour to maintain the family's norm. According to Bahlieda (2015), honour-based systems are rooted in the power dynamics of patriarchal societies, where men establish the norms intended to uphold the reputation and standing of their families. The primary basis for continuing violence against women is the social construction of honour as a value system, standard, or custom, and such crimes are committed to warning girls and women that they will be punished if they do not abide by socially approved rules of behaviour (Singh & Bhandari, 2021).

Honour killings are frequently associated with gender identity and typically target individuals within the LGBTQI community. These individuals are viewed as shameful and are killed to protect the family's reputation from the perceived stigma associated with homosexuality. Countries like Pakistan, where same-sex relationships are considered illegal, experience higher rates of honour killings (Lowe et al., 2021).

A dowry is a cultural practice in which the bride's family gives money and property to the groom's family. If a higher dowry is required for the bride and groom's marriage, or if the groom's family is not satisfied with the dowry, the woman may be considered an 'unsuitable wife.' The groom's family then tortures and harasses the women, forcing them to commit suicide. The survey reports in Bangladesh on violence against women since 2011 identified

that as many as 87% of currently married women had experienced some form of violence from their current husbands (Hossen, 2014). The reports also stated that approximately one-third of women (33.7%) had paid dowries in their recent marriages. According to Rahman (2018), in Bangladesh, dowries are a major cause of women's oppression, as they often result in dowry killings or deaths. These killings begin with psychological and physical torture and, unfortunately, often end in death.

2.4.5 Online violence

Social media platforms are often used to perpetrate gender-based violence, such as cyberbullying, harassment, and the distribution of nonconsensual pornography, causing significant harm to the mental health and well-being of the victims. Cyberbullying involves bullying through digital technologies, while cyberstalking refers to the use of the internet to harass or stalk another person. Revenge porn, also known as nonconsensual pornography or involuntary pornography, involves the dissemination of sexually explicit images of an individual without their consent. Although laws exist to address these issues, they are not always effectively enforced. According to Sundani, Mangaka, and Mamokhere (2022), many online spaces lack adequate laws and regulations to safeguard women from this type of violence, which allows offenders to frequently escape punishment for their damaging activities. Revenge porn, a significant form of online violence, violates privacy and can cause lasting emotional and psychological harm to the victims. As Musani (2019, p. 62) explains, revenge porn involves the distribution of sexually explicit images of an individual where at least one person depicted did not consent to the dissemination.

2.4.6 Socioeconomic factors: impact of poverty and unemployment on gender-based violence

Women are more likely than men to work in emotional labour service occupations, such as conducting household and childcare work, contributing to the perpetuation of gender stereotypes that they have been trying to overcome for years (Scambor et al., 2014). Men often hold higher positions in various industries, leading to a wage gap where men earn more than women for the same job, perpetuating gender inequality (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). For instance, women make 82 cents for every dollar that men make in the tech industry. Men

often occupy higher positions, such as presidential or ministerial positions, and there are more male ministers than female ones. Women account for only 11.8% of top leadership positions in corporate organisations (Business Women's Association, 2017). Underprivileged women often find themselves limited to low-paying occupations such as clerks, receptionists, cleaners, and other service-related roles (Van Antwerpen & Ferreira, 2010).

Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) (2021) reported that the high unemployment rate among women at 36.8% in the second quarter of 2021 significantly increased their vulnerability to gender-based violence, as financial dependence can limit their ability to leave abusive situations. The unemployment rate varied among different racial groups: 41.0% for black African women, 8.2% for white women, 22.4% for Indian/Asian women, and 29.9% for coloured women, highlighting disparities in vulnerability to gender-based violence. The unemployment rate among black African women was 41.0% during this period, as opposed to 8.2% among white women, 22.4% among Indian and Asian women, and 29.9% among coloured women. This puts Black African women at high risk of experiencing gender-based violence, as they have a high unemployment rate. Among all South Africans, poverty levels are consistently high among Black African female-headed households living in rural areas (Statistics SA, 2018).

Women are estimated to head 37.9% of South African households, highlighting their role as primary decision-makers and caregivers, which can impact their vulnerability to gender-based violence. Female-headed households are approximately 40% poorer than male-headed households, and 48.2% of female-headed households support extended family members, compared to 23.1% of male-headed households (Bosch & Barit, 2020, p. 1), increasing the vulnerability of women and their families to gender-based violence. In rural areas, female-headed households are frequently the result of male partners who migrate to the city in search of work, leaving the wife at home with the children.

Afkhamzadeh et al. (2019, p. 7) highlight that the high unemployment rate among women increases their risk of experiencing emotional, physical, sexual, and other forms of violence. Semahegn & Mengistie (2015) observe that one of the reasons for higher levels of domestic violence against women is their unemployment and low economic power, which makes them vulnerable to violence because they are financially dependent on men.

According to Sayer et al. (2011), it is not easy for women to leave the marriage because they are not employed, and the husband is the one who provides for them and the children. Men usually use their status as breadwinners to control women. Rakovec-Felser (2014) observes that women often fear reporting domestic violence and dropping such criminal charges due to their economic dependence on men.

Men may feel a sense of inadequacy and question their masculinity if they are unable to provide for their families. In a study by Nofemele (2020), some male participants responded that they preferred women who were not employed because they were afraid that their wives or girlfriends would leave them if they were employed. Moreover, when a woman is employed, she must give all her salary to her husband so that he, as the head of the household, can decide how much he wants to give her for household expenses. This is done so that the husband does not feel emasculated since he is no longer working, and the wife is now the breadwinner. Furthermore, unemployed men often contribute to gender-based violence and femicide due to the pressure of being the provider. As a result, men tend to use violence to assert their dominance over women. According to Heilman & Barker (2018), rape and intimate partner violence reinforce the concept of power that is otherwise rejected when a man cannot live up to the social ideals of "successful" manhood.

Jewkes et al. (2011) highlighted that in rural areas, rape rates are notably high, especially in marginalised communities where societal expectations tie financial success to men's masculinity (Graff & Heinecken, 2017, p. 626). This link frequently results in the continuation of toxic masculinity, which in turn fuels violence against women. The death of Reeva Steenkamp by her well-known Paralympian boyfriend, Oscar Pistorius, who was part of an upper-class couple, serves as evidence that gender-based violence is a problem everywhere.

Mshweshwe (2020) highlights that domestic violence stems from a complex interplay of factors, including patriarchy, cultural beliefs, community norms, unemployment, and low levels of education. For instance, patriarchal norms may reinforce power imbalances that lead to abusive behaviours. The persistence of domestic violence by unemployed men poses a significant issue, particularly in traditional environments where men are pressured to fulfil the breadwinner role. Inequality significantly contributes to the perpetuation of domestic

abuse by reinforcing unequal power dynamics and societal structures that condone abusive behaviours. As a result, vulnerable individuals are more likely to face heightened risks of experiencing domestic violence due to these disparities. The connection between domestic violence and power imbalances underscores societal norms that perpetuate the belief in male entitlement to dominate women. These deep-rooted perceptions of gender roles play a pivotal role in perpetuating gender-based violence by reinforcing unequal power dynamics. This results in a cycle of abuse and control that is difficult to break.

2.5 Patriarchy and culture

2.5.1 Role of masculinity and femininity in gender-based violence

In a complex social system known as patriarchy, the male gender holds power and authority over the female gender, which is considered inferior (Sultana, 2010). In societies that practice patriarchy, there is an imbalance of power between genders, with men granted the authority to dominate women. This plays a vital role in perpetrating gender-based violence (WHO, 2009). Cultural values and norms significantly contribute to the occurrence and perpetuation of gender-based violence and femicide by shaping attitudes and behaviours within societies (Seguino, 2007). Cultural values and norms, such as the belief in male superiority, adherence to rigid gender roles, and social acceptance of violence against women, contribute significantly to the occurrence and perpetuation of gender-based violence and femicide (Fulu et al., 2013).

For instance, in some cultures, women are expected to be subservient to men, and any challenge to this societal norm can result in violence against women. Similarly, rigid gender roles that dictate what is considered "appropriate" behaviour for men and women can lead to discrimination, harassment, and violence against those who deviate from these norms. In addition, in some societies, violence against women is accepted as a means of enforcing control over them, and perpetrators often receive little to no punishment for their actions. Practices such as dowries and bride prices reinforce gender hierarchy and uphold patriarchal systems (Fulu et al., 2013). In some cultures, men are empowered to determine the conduct of women, and noncompliance is subject to punishment (Iwelunmor et al., 2014).

South Africa is an example of how cultural norms and values heighten gender-based violence and femicide, reinforcing patriarchal structures and perpetuating the gender hierarchy (Fulu et al., 2013). Some cultures in the region teach that men play a pivotal role in the family and that women must respect and obey their husbands (Ndlovu, 2016). In addition, fear of shame and losing the community's support contribute to a situation of silence, where crimes such as femicide go unreported (Gondwe, 2018).

Masculinity and femininity describe the qualities and roles typically associated with men and women. These gender roles influence attitudes and behaviours that contribute to the perpetuation of gender-based violence (Little, 2014). Masculinity means being emotionally and physically sturdy, showing no emotions, being dominant, being responsible for the family's finances, and providing protection. In comparison, femininity refers to society's conception of the ideal roles, behaviours, and features of women (UN Women, 2016). Feminine traits involve nurturing and caring for the family's emotional and practical needs, being submissive, and displaying gentleness (Randles, 2018).

Kachel et al. (2016) posit that the traits, actions, and roles culture attaches to males or masculinity garner more social status, monetary compensation, and political influence than those accorded to the feminine. The difference between the genders often serves as a foundation for patriarchal masculinity. Some scholars have used the term 'patriarchal masculinity' to describe practices promoting male superiority over women and dominance of masculinity over femininity (Jewkes et al., 2015).

2.5.2 Culture and patriarchy

Referring to society and its way of life, including a set of values, beliefs, and learned behaviours shared by a particular community, culture gives a sense of belonging and identity to people within that society (Lebron, 2013). Culture influences the norms, values, and interactions within and across social systems. Societal institutions such as churches, families, and schools play a critical role in instilling cultural norms in individuals. Cultural standards and practices remain potent mechanisms for transmitting views about acceptable behaviour for women and men and how men and women should be perceived and treated (Fakunmoju & Rasool, 2018). Norms are unwritten and informal rules derived from social systems that

dictate how individuals are expected and allowed to behave based on gender expectations and societal norms within specific cultural contexts. Cultural norms vary depending on time, place, and context. For example, in some cultures, certain behaviours are accepted, while in others, the same actions may be condemned.

Patriarchy arises from particular cultural norms and values that reinforce gender inequality by placing women in subordinate roles to men. For example, norms that dictate women's role as caregivers and men's role as providers reinforce gender disparities and hierarchical structures. Institutions like schools, churches, and the family, which reinforce women's subordination to men, perpetuate gender inequality (Sultana, 2010). Sikweyiya (2020) defines patriarchy as a social and political system in which men are considered superior to women. Patriarchal masculinities practice, maintain, and perpetuate gender inequalities. Patriarchy is more prevalent in societies with a culture of violence and where male superiority is accepted. A belief in male superiority can lead to men feeling entitled to sex with women, reinforcing gender roles and associating masculinity with women's control.

Moreover, patriarchal ideology ensures that men always have dominating or masculine roles, while women have subordinate or feminine roles (Koenig, 2018). In patriarchal power systems, male leadership is the standard, with men predominantly holding authority. As a result, women cannot defend their bodies, and men are free to abuse them, which makes them unable to fully participate in society and achieve their fundamental needs. The "cultural expectations of a patriarchy that value male power, legitimising men's dominance, aggression, and control over women" (Lawson, 2012) have an impact on men's social power.

In South Africa, where there is a robust patriarchal system, studies have shown that men tend to dominate, oppress, and exploit women in public and private spheres, with statistics indicating high rates of gender-based violence (Stromquist, 2015). Furthermore, socioeconomic status, cultural perspectives, geographical location, racial identity, and ethnic background play significant roles in shaping individuals' encounters with gender-related abuse, highlighting the intersectionality of these experiences. South African men are exposed to structures that position females below their male counterparts from an early age (Morei, 2014).

Patriarchy is still widely practised because men have always felt the need to assert their masculinity over women. Although South African society has moved away from the culture of traditional gender roles and relationships, the country still adheres to archaic norms (Heilman & Barker, 2018). Contemporary research has indicated that a perpetrator often uses physical abuse to enforce discipline or control the victim (Straus, 2017). The participants in this research intimated that they use violence to remind women to respect men and obey what they say.

Furthermore, in Nairobi, 45.5% of men aged 15 to 49 years believe that wife-beating can be justified for one of the reasons listed above (Tsawe & Mhele, 2022). Violence is deemed necessary in certain cultural contexts when the wife burns the food, argues with the husband, goes out without informing him, refuses sexual relations, or neglects the children, reflecting societal beliefs and norms regarding women's behaviour. About 36% of men aged 15–49 in Nairobi believe that wife-beating can be justified for one of these reasons.

Gender-based violence is argued to be a result of cultural values and norms that emphasise viewing 'proper' masculinity through the lens of men's ability to dominate and control a female partner (Mshweshwe, 2020). Cultural and social norms perpetuate specific forms of gender-based violence. For instance, traditional beliefs that give men the right to control or discipline women make women vulnerable to violence from intimate partners (Kouta et al., 2018).

In a research study by Nofemele (2020) on male perspectives on gender-based violence against women, participants argued that socially and culturally created norms have an impact on gender-based violence and that different gender roles place women in an inferior social position compared to men. Communities often use culture to justify and perpetuate gender-based violence by justifying actions that maintain inequality (Bates et al., 2019). Both men and women contribute to the perpetuation of patriarchy through their actions and behaviours, reinforcing gender hierarchies and inequality.

Older patriarchal women, often oppressed by men, influence their daughters and sons to obey and respect culture in support of male authority (Wood, 2019). These older women may also encourage their daughters or daughters-in-law not to report or leave their abusive spouse in

marriage (Matthews et al., 2015). According to Sjodin's (2019, p. 34) study, women are often encouraged to submit to their husbands. Culture often utilises traditional beliefs and practices regarding gender roles to justify and perpetuate gender-based violence and inequality within communities, reinforcing power dynamics that maintain gender hierarchies and perpetuate harmful norms. Nofemele (2020) highlights that despite the awareness of gender-based violence and femicide, communities like Newlands West in Durban often protect perpetrators due to underlying cultural norms and values that prioritise loyalty and silence over justice.

In this context, 'culture' refers to the shared beliefs, values, and practices of a community that influence behaviours and norms. Unfortunately, culture can also be used to justify harmful actions such as physical violence, emotional manipulation, or controlling behaviours, perpetuating inequality (Bates et al., 2019).

Elderly women who uphold patriarchal beliefs typically enforce traditional gender roles and justify dominance through controlling behaviours. This normalisation of aggression contributes to the existing power dynamics that favour male dominance and perpetuate cycles of abuse. In addition, societal pressures such as the fear of community judgement, the stigma attached to divorce, concerns about financial stability, and the expectation to maintain family unity may dissuade women from leaving abusive partners (Matthews et al., 2015). This behaviour silences victims, making it difficult for them to seek help, access support systems, and engage with justice mechanisms, perpetuating a cycle of abuse.

Women often face pressure to prioritise their husbands' desires and opinions over their own, which can diminish their autonomy and contribute to perpetuating gender-based violence. These expectations reinforce gender-based violence and unequal power dynamics (Sjodin, 2019, p. 34). Culture frequently utilises traditional beliefs and practices surrounding gender roles to rationalise and perpetuate gender-based violence and inequality within communities, reinforcing power dynamics that uphold gender hierarchies and sustain harmful norms, thus perpetuating cycles of abuse.

Despite increased awareness of gender-based violence and femicide, certain communities, like Newlands West in Durban, shield wrongdoers by ignoring abusive actions and maintaining a culture of silence, allowing perpetrators to avoid responsibility and perpetuate

cycles of abuse. This protection arises from deeply ingrained cultural norms that prioritise loyalty and silence, creating an environment where perpetrators can evade accountability and justice, thus perpetuating a cycle of impunity for wrongdoers. Community solidarity shields wrongdoers by fostering a culture of protection while victim-blaming shifts responsibility away from perpetrators, further complicating the pursuit of justice and hindering efforts to hold wrongdoers accountable.

It is crucial to prioritise dismantling patriarchal systems and cultural practices to safeguard the safety and well-being of women and girls. Community-led interventions, education, and awareness-raising programmes are necessary to shift societal norms and attitudes towards gender, breaking down harmful beliefs and practices. Changes in policy and legislation must be accompanied by changes in social norms and attitudes, promoting gender equality and ending violence against women.

It is crucial to address these cultural norms and patriarchal systems to tackle gender-based violence and femicide effectively. The involvement of the community is crucial to advancing gender equality and eradicating violence against women. Governments, civil society organisations, and individuals must collaborate to shift cultural norms and attitudes that sustain gender-based violence. In addition, men must be encouraged to be allies in the fight against gender-based violence and femicide. Men who respect and support women's rights can inspire other men to do the same, leading to meaningful cultural shifts.

Patriarchy and cultural norms play a significant role in perpetuating gender-based violence and femicide. Gender roles, societal expectations, and attitudes towards women contribute to the normalisation of violence against women. Efforts to dismantle patriarchal systems and cultural practices should be prioritised to ensure the safety and well-being of women and girls. Community-led interventions, education, and awareness-raising programmes are necessary to shift societal norms and attitudes towards gender, breaking down harmful beliefs and practices. Changes in policy and legislation must be accompanied by changes in social norms and attitudes, promoting gender equality and ending violence against women.

2.5.3 Cultural practices that perpetuate gender-based violence: lobola, polygamy, and ukuthwala

Lobola is an institution that upholds patriarchy and male superiority. After negotiating and reaching an agreement on the bride's price, the groom's family makes a payment to the bride's family. Families of substantial means may pay the entire bride price, while others may struggle to do so. In such cases, payments may be made over time to facilitate a connection between the two families (Sibisi, 2021). Lobola, however, grants men authority over certain aspects of family life and denies women their freedom and rights.

The practice reinforces the notion that a husband has purchased his wife's labour and sexuality and, consequently, has control over her. Asimwa's (2013) study conducted in Uganda demonstrated that the payment of the bride price strengthens male dominance, further subjugating women and confining their decision-making abilities within the household. Similarly, Chireshe & Chireshe (2010) observed that lobola in Shona society extends gender inequality, placing women in an inferior position. Men who have paid lobola tend to regulate women, treating them as objects to be controlled. Women are expected to submit to their husband's wishes and to respect them, reflecting a cultural belief in male authority and dominance (ME 2020).

Muthegheki (2012) associates the bride price with gender-based violence, as it often leads to a lack of dignity in women who are forced to perform hard labour and produce children once they have been "paid for." The inability to reproduce can further lead to emotional abuse, with the woman often considered useless in such a scenario. Such abuse can come from the husband, the husband's family, and the larger community. The husband may even take a second wife.

Polygamy is a traditional practice that permits a man to take multiple wives while denying women the same rights. This practice results in the subordination of women and violates their dignity (Mwambene, 2017). Furthermore, polygamy poses a health risk as it can lead to the spread of sexually transmitted diseases due to multiple sexual partners. Women in polygamous relationships are at a higher risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, as well as facing

emotional distress and financial burdens. Ultimately, polygamy undermines the dignity of women.

Moreover, "ukuthwala," a controversial cultural practice that involves the kidnapping of young girls or women, perpetuates gender inequality, is linked to gender-based violence and femicide, and violates the rights of young girls and women. These traditional practices must be re-examined to promote gender equality, protect the rights of women and girls, and prevent gender-based violence against them.

Gender constructs, such as societal expectations that women should always be submissive in sexual encounters and lack knowledge about safe sex practices, pose a challenge to their ability to negotiate safe sex. Societal norms expect women to acquiesce to men's multiple sexual partners and grant them control over sexual encounters and condom use (Jewkes et al., 2010). Sathiparsad & Taylor (2011) explicate that many South African women believe men have the right to engage in multiple partnerships with women but simultaneously perceive that women are not entitled to express objection. According to Okereke (2017), whom Ross (2010) cites, male promiscuity and polygamy are part of African tradition. Consequently, women are compelled to remain silent and resign themselves to this situation, repressing objections to behaviour that meets societal expectations. Polygamy reinforces patriarchy by enabling men to assert power over women, dominating marriage and family structures. Polygamy further perpetuates gender inequality, often resulting in men neglecting their family's emotional and financial needs, which can lead to impoverishment and abuse within the household (Jones, 2014:180).

2.5.3.1 Child Marriage and ukuthwala

Child marriage in South Africa is still a prevalent issue, despite the legal age of marriage being 18 years old. This is largely due to cultural and religious norms that prioritise marriage and childbearing over education and individual autonomy. One such practice, known as "ukuthwala," involves the abduction of a girl or young woman, with or without her consent, for the abductor to negotiate "lobola" with the victim's family for marriage. This practice is harmful and violates human rights and child protection laws. Essentially, "ukuthwala" is a traditional practice of abducting a young girl or woman without her consent, despite her

parents' permission. It is imperative to recognise the negative impact of such practices and work towards ending them to protect the rights and well-being of young girls and women in South Africa.

Nevertheless, the practice is abusive, and girls who are either too young or unwilling may be coerced into marriage when they cannot legally give consent (Kruger, 2016). This practice supports the idea that societal expectations and norms limit women's choices and supports patriarchy, which upholds the notion that women lack the autonomy to choose their spouses. The practice affirms that it is a man's responsibility to select a wife from the available pool of potential wives, consequently perpetuating gender inequality by disregarding the human rights of women and girls and strengthening the idea that women are inferior to men. Women may hesitate to request condom use due to concerns about being perceived as unfaithful or disloyal, as societal norms expect women to acquiesce to men's multiple sexual partners and grant them control over sexual encounters and condom use (Jewkes et al., 2010). Polygamy exacerbates inequality among co-wives, creating an environment for hostility, competition, and jealousy that may escalate into violence (Ngolob et al., 2012). In the end, polygamy contributes to gender-based violence and femicide by fostering competition and jealousy among co-wives, which increases the likelihood of violence and harm, perpetuating a cycle of abuse.

“Ukuthwala” is still practised in some rural areas and is linked to forced marriage, intergenerational relationships, and gender-based violence (Tsawe & Mhele, 2022). While cultural practices and traditions can contribute to gender-based violence, they can also be used to promote gender equality through education, awareness, and community programmes. For example, in certain cultures where child marriage is prevalent, young girls are forced into marriages at a young age without their consent. This practice is prevalent in some rural areas of South Africa and has been linked to gender-based violence and femicide (Dlamini, 2020). Young girls are coerced into non-consensual sexual relationships with older men, often without their consent.

"Ukuthwala" violates human rights and is usually done to satisfy the sexual desires of older men. Nel & Mould (2014) assert that "ukuthwala" is detrimental to girls and women, resulting in perpetuating gender inequality, violence, and control. Remember et al. (2011) argue, based

on their research, that forcing a child to marry while still immature robs the girls of their childhood and subjects them to marital obligations. Education empowers women to become socially and economically independent (Sonfield et al., 2013). Holder (2010) observed, however, that in most African countries, males believe that educating a girl child is pointless because she will eventually be married off to another family. As a result, parents often opt to educate their male children, who are more likely to maintain the family surname.

Traditional men also prefer to pull young girls out of school and marry them because minors are easier to control. This act violates the child's right to education (Nasrullah et al., 2014). Isike's (2012) research on the subject showed that some male participants perceived the empowerment of women through education and affirmative action as threatening their ego and prestige as husbands. These male participants assert that if their wives were gainfully employed and could financially provide for their families, they would no longer have respect for them as husbands. Men are often perceived as the head of the household and responsible for financial provision, thereby challenging traditional gender roles by promoting gender equity.

2.5.3.2 Female genital mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is one of the many forms of gender-based violence against women, as it is violence directed at young women and girls. More than 200 million girls and women who are alive today have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM), the practice of partly or completely removing the external genitalia of girls and young women for nonmedical reasons (Mchenga, 2023, p. 1). Naishorua (2019) argues that mothers contribute significantly to the practice of FGM, despite its abusive nature. This reveals that, as much as the practice is abusive to women, there are women who still support the culture due to societal pressure, traditional beliefs, and a lack of awareness of alternative options. Such cultural practices can also have severe consequences for girls and women. FGM not only causes immediate physical pain and trauma, but it can also lead to long-term health issues such as infections, complications during childbirth, and psychological distress. Tamari & Manasi (2023) state that it has been shown that women and girls who have had FGM suffer from detrimental physical and psychological repercussions that frequently impair their overall welfare, including their ability to reproduce. FGM poses substantial risks, including physical

complications such as infections, long-term psychological trauma, social stigmatisation leading to social isolation, and sexual health issues that impact the well-being of women and girls.

2.6 Conclusion

Addressing gender-based violence and femicide requires a multifaceted approach to effectively tackle these complex issues. The root causes of gender-based violence lie in societal norms around gender roles and patriarchy, which perpetuate gender inequalities. Effective interventions should challenge existing structures by addressing harmful gender norms, promoting healthier masculinity through education and awareness programmes, and involving men in discussions to prevent gender-based violence and promote gender equality. Empowering women economically, implementing awareness campaigns, and enacting policy and legal changes are effective strategies to reduce gender-based violence. Research plays a vital role in helping us understand how traditional practices like lobola and polygamy contribute to patriarchy and reinforce the gender norms that uphold gender-based violence. In this chapter, different forms of gender-based violence are explored, such as intimate partner violence, sexual harassment, and femicide, highlighting how gender inequality leads to these acts. Engaging men in preventing gender-based violence, such as by challenging harmful cultural norms supporting women's rights and promoting cultural change through education and advocacy, are vital steps in the fight against femicide and domestic violence. Men must actively fight against harmful practices like gender-based violence and discrimination against women, challenge established norms that perpetuate inequality, and promote gender equality through their actions.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the relationship between social construction theory, gender, and violence against women. The chapter makes the case that gender norms and expectations are not innate but rather shaped by social, cultural, and historical contexts. The theory explains why violence against women is prevalent in cultures with rigid gender roles and underscores the importance of challenging entrenched gender norms to promote gender equality and prevent gender-based violence. While social construction theory has significant limitations, such as failing to address the impact of biology on gender identity, it provides a useful framework for understanding men's attitudes towards gender-based violence and designing effective prevention strategies. Innovative approaches, such as engaging men and boys in discussions about non-violent behaviour and positive masculinity, are essential to dismantling deeply ingrained gender stereotypes and achieving gender equality. Policymakers can use this approach to develop policies and programmes that promote gender equality and eradicate violence against women. This chapter highlights the need to challenge entrenched gender norms to promote gender equality and prevent gender-based violence. Social construction theory sheds light on the reasons for violence against women in communities with strict gender norms, and innovative strategies are crucial for promoting non-violent behaviour and positive masculinity. Policymakers can use this approach to develop policies and programmes that promote gender equality and combat violence against women, making society more equitable and safer.

3.2 Historical background of social constructivism

Burr and Dick (2015) argue that social constructivism is a method that examines how societal norms and expectations affect people's understanding and performance of gender roles. This theory suggests that reality is formed through language and interactions, rather than being set in stone. Social constructivists use interviews, surveys, and observations to gather data on

how individuals navigate gender roles and how societal expectations reinforce gender identities.

Social construction theory originated in sociology and is linked to interpretivism, a research approach that focuses on understanding how people interpret and make sense of the world. Those who follow social constructivism believe that knowledge and truth are created through interactions among people in society. They argue that language's ability to describe reality influences how people perceive it, rather than necessarily reflecting its true nature. Therefore, the social constructivist view emphasises how social and cultural norms affect people's daily lives and focuses on the societal and cultural aspects of psychological phenomena. Those who believe in social constructivism argue that interactions among people in society influence how knowledge and truth are formed, instead of being inherent or objective. As a result, the core principle of social constructivism is that people's understanding and perception of the world may not always correspond to how the world is.

3.3 Key Tenets of Social Constructivism

Berger and Luckman (2016, p. 15) argue that what humans "know" or perceive as "reality" is socially constructed. Social constructivism is a perspective that believes human life is greatly influenced by social interactions and relationships (Gergen, 1992). Although social and genetic influences coexist, social constructivism investigates the social influences on communal and individual lives. Social constructivism theory concentrates on how cultural and societal factors impact psychological phenomena. In other words, sociologists use the terms culture and society to refer to the shared social aspects of psychological phenomena.

The theory of knowledge known as social constructivism posits that gender, race, class, ability, and sexual orientation, which are commonly thought of as unchanging and solely biological, are the result of human definition and interpretation influenced by cultural and historical contexts (Subramaniam, 2014). Historical and cultural settings have an impact on human definition and understanding. According to McKinley (2015, p. 123), social constructivism is a "sociological theory of knowledge" in which human development is socially situated and knowledge is constructed through interpersonal interaction.

Gergen (1992, p. 2655) defined social construction as "a worldview that argues that great social and interpersonal factors shape many aspects of human life. Social construction emphasises the impact of social and cultural norms on people's daily lives." According to Owen (1995, p. 186), "all the metaphysical quantities we take for granted are learned from people around us, and all the substance of our awareness and how people interact with others is taught by their culture and society." As a result, the social environment has a significant influence on the formation and maintenance of human interactions and fundamental beliefs.

According to social constructivism, interactions among people in historical and cultural contexts shape knowledge and social dynamics to create what is perceived as the reality of a situation. Language limits people's ability to express themselves and comprehend their surroundings. Specific linguistic principles influence how we perceive the world, and therefore, language is not neutral. The social construction perspective focuses on how social groups and experiences categorise and define meaning within a cultural context. Cultural categories like "men," "women," "Black," and "White" are societal constructs that have evolved through historical processes within institutions and society.

Belonging to the larger school of thought known as social constructionism, the social construction of gender is a crucial aspect to consider. The fact that something was socially created does not diminish its power. Calzaghe & Heise (2020) argue that gender is socially constructed, with societal norms and cultural values influencing its construction. Strebel et al. (2006) highlight the diverse norms of masculinity and femininity across communities. The social construction of gender theory is crucial for this study as it explores how social and cultural factors shape gender, impacting behaviours.

3.4 Key Tenets of the Social Construction of Gender Theory

Gender is a social concept that assigns traits, roles, or values to individuals based on their biological sex, and this varies across different societies and cultures. Gender is also a structural feature of society that controls its members and influences organisational behaviours. Hossain, Ahmad, and Siraj (2016) define it as a means of controlling society's members. The social construction of gender and socialisation are ongoing processes that emerge from communication, interactions, discourses, and narratives. Socialisation occurs

within a particular social structure, with its contents and success influenced by its structural conditions. Therefore, a social-psychological analysis in micro-sociology must also consider macro-sociological aspects of internalisation. Similar to social class and race, gender categorises individuals and may lead to prejudice and discrimination. The social construction of gender theory suggests that society and cultural beliefs shape the characteristics that are associated with being a man or a woman. Therefore, individuals might see themselves as fitting into traditional male or female gender roles influenced by their cultural and societal surroundings.

3.5 Relevance of the theory to the current study

The social construction of gender theory is pertinent to this study as it aids in understanding how societal norms and gender stereotypes impact male perspectives on femicide and gender-based violence among KwaZulu-Natal University students. For example, the study could include instances where gender norms influenced participants' views on violence or specific gender roles within the university context. The primary goal of this study is to explore male perceptions of femicide and gender-based violence against women among KwaZulu-Natal University students in the case study setting. The findings of this study aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of power imbalances, socially constructed norms, and gender stereotypes. To achieve this aim, the research delves into the sociocultural, interpersonal, and individual factors that give rise to gender-based violence and femicide, specifically in South Africa. This study aims to investigate how males perceive and understand gender-based violence and femicide and provide valuable insight into how socially constructed gender roles and expectations lead to gender-based violence and femicide. Thus, the theoretical framework emphasises the influence of socially constructed norms and gender stereotypes in perpetuating gender-based violence against women and girls in South Africa.

3.5.1 Examples of social constructivism in gender roles and norms

Aminehl and Davatgari (2015, p. 15) state that social constructivism involves constructing a model of the social world and its functionality to rationalise experiences, using language as a fundamental system to build reality. This makes social construction a sound theoretical

framework for qualitative analysis to unveil information about how individuals interact with the world.

Hierarchical gender definitions portray women as less than men due to physical traits, leading to unequal power dynamics between genders. This power disparity often leads to gender-based violence (Dahal, Joshi, & Swahnberg, 2022). Unequal power dynamics discourage men from speaking up about their experiences of abuse, resulting in fewer reports of such incidents.

The influence of cultural norms on gender roles is profound. For instance, men view themselves as more powerful due to their elevated position in the social hierarchy, while girls are socialised to be submissive to men from a young age. Boys, on the other hand, are taught to be physically and emotionally strong (Ngubane, 2010). Certain tasks, such as cooking and cleaning, are primarily considered a woman's job, while men are expected to provide financial support. As a result, men who perform these tasks may be considered weak and unsuitable for hegemonic masculinity in some cultures.

Male perpetrators of violence often exploit their societal authority, especially as family leaders. Sikweyiya (2020, p. 5) argues that wives must respect men in positions of authority to prevent domestic violence. If a wife challenges her husband, she may face physical violence. The significant influence of culture on individuals and gender roles contributes to high levels of abuse towards vulnerable groups like women, children, and LGBTQ+ individuals.

People can negotiate and reconstruct gender variances by refusing to subvert or reproduce hegemonic gender differences and developing alternative narratives that can potentially shift everything at once (Risman, 2004). According to Connell (2009), gender is a social structure with embedded inequality at the institutional, individual, and interpersonal levels of every society, intersecting with other forms of inequality such as race, class, and sexuality.

Gender-related social processes do not have a fixed biological foundation, as Piccone, Stella, and Saracen (1996) highlighted. The sexes, referred to as "biological," are shaped through gender perspectives and expectations.

3.6 Limitations, Criticisms, and Challenges of the Social Construction of Gender Theory

Social constructivism has faced criticism from scholars who argue that it rejects the concept of knowledge as a direct perception of objective reality. This critique challenges the notions of both realism and relativism and raises doubts about the constancy and obviousness of biomedical reality. Craib (1997) argues that social constructivism is anti-realist because it dismisses knowledge as a direct perception of objective reality. Moreover, Bury (1986) contends that this theory undermines biomedical reality and its stability but fails to provide sufficient evidence to support this claim.

Scholars like Burr (1995), Schwandt (2003), and Sismondo (1993) have also criticised social constructivism for rejecting established reality. Despite these objections, social constructivists argue that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and that objective reality is not the only means of understanding the world. Additionally, social constructionists acknowledge the existence of biological differences while emphasizing that gender roles are shaped by a complex interplay of biology, society, and culture.

Although some critics question its rejection of objective reality, social constructivism offers a nuanced perspective on how knowledge is formed through social interaction and cultural influences. By recognising the role of biology in shaping gender and acknowledging that it is not the sole determinant of gender roles, social constructivism provides a more comprehensive understanding of this complex issue. In doing so, it allows for the recognition of the fluidity and diversity of gender identities, challenging traditional binary views of gender and opening up space for individuals to express their identities authentically. Social constructivism emphasises the importance of social norms and expectations in shaping our understanding of gender, encouraging a more inclusive and accepting society.

3.7 Practical Applications of Social Constructivism for Policy, Practice, and Research

Despite its critics, social constructivism has reshaped how gender is studied and understood in sociology, anthropology, and other disciplines (Jung, 2019). For instance, studies have shown how the theory has influenced the development of interventions to address gender-based violence and promote gender equity. Moreover, social constructivism allows us to

better understand the importance of intersectionality in examining multiple identities and experiences.

3.8 Future Directions for Research on the Social Construction of Gender and Intersectionality in Gender Studies

Future research could explore how social constructivism applies to understanding LGBTQ+ experiences, promoting gender inclusivity, examining intersections of social identities with gender constructions, and investigating the impact on mental health outcomes. Beyond gender-based violence and femicide, social constructivism can offer insights into various areas of gender and sexuality studies. For example, researchers could examine how social constructions of masculinity contribute to the high rates of suicide among men and how these constructions can be transformed to promote mental health and well-being. Likewise, social constructivism can shed light on how cultural norms and beliefs shape individuals' experiences and perceptions of their sexuality and support LGBTQ+ individuals' inclusion and well-being.

An essential area for future research is the intersectionality of gender with other social identities, such as race, ethnicity, class, and disability. Such research could explore how constructions of femininity differ for Black women and how these differences contribute to experiences of discrimination and marginalisation. Similarly, it could investigate how constructions of masculinity for disabled men differ from those for able-bodied men and how these differences impact their experiences of gender-based violence.

Overall, social constructivism offers a valuable lens for comprehending how gender is constructed and sustained in society. Future research should further explore the implications of social constructivism for policy and practice, as well as its applications in various areas of gender and sexuality studies. Recognising the influence of social constructions on society is essential for constructing a more equitable and just society for all, regardless of their gender or other social identities. It underscores the urgency of challenging oppressive norms and promoting inclusivity.

3.9 Conclusion

The social construction of gender theory is a critical tool for challenging traditional gender roles and societal expectations. This theory acknowledges that gender is not innate or unchangeable but rather a product of societal and cultural norms. Understanding this theory allows individuals to challenge oppressive gender norms and work towards achieving gender equity. When it comes to gender-based violence and femicide, the social construction of gender theory highlights the role of social and cultural norms in perpetuating patriarchal power structures and gender-based violence. These norms lead to the normalisation of abusive behaviour towards women and other marginalised genders. To combat this, recognising the social construction of gender can help society understand how these norms perpetuate the oppression of individuals who do not conform to traditional gender roles. Despite criticisms for allegedly ignoring biological differences between men and women and neglecting tangible experiences, the social construction of gender theory does not dismiss biological sex variances. Rather, it emphasises that these differences do not dictate an individual's behaviour or social expectations. Society should recognise biological differences while ensuring that they are not used to justify unfair treatment. Gender equality and opportunities should be based on individual capabilities and choices.

Moreover, the social construction of gender theory has played a crucial role in shaping the feminist movement by challenging gender-based violence and promoting gender equality. This theory acknowledges the intersectionality of social identities, like race, class, and sexuality, within the context of gender construction. As a result, inclusive approaches have been developed to empower individuals to combat different forms of oppression collectively, leading to policy changes that aim to reduce gender disparities. The theory of the social construction of gender is a crucial tool for advancing gender equality and challenging oppressive gender norms.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research design and methodology used in a study that aimed to investigate male perspectives on gender-based violence against women and femicide. Male students at a university campus were interviewed using open-ended questions to gather data. The interpretive research paradigm and design guided the methodology, and the chapter discusses the participant selection process, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures in detail. Potential biases are evaluated, and ethical considerations are considered to ensure the objectivity and reliability of the results. Gender-based violence and femicide are pervasive issues worldwide, with certain regions experiencing higher rates than others. University campuses are particularly vulnerable to these crimes, with male students often implicated in perpetrating them. The study sought to explore male students' perspectives and experiences of gender-based violence and femicide, providing insights into the attitudes and behaviours that lead to these issues. This chapter offers a comprehensive account of the research methodology used in the study, explaining the participant selection process, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations, providing a clear understanding of the research process.

4.2 Research approach

The research employed a qualitative methodology, conducting in-depth interviews to comprehensively examine the male perspective on gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa. This particular paradigm connotes a systematic approach utilised to scrutinise subjective and innate attitudes. Considering the study's core objective of exploring the construction of reality and prioritising participants' experiences and opinions, the qualitative method was eminently appropriate. Through conducting interviews, participants were able to articulate their thoughts in full, facilitating an accurate and in-depth depiction of multifaceted issues. The definition of this method, as explained in Burns & Grove (2003), perfectly encapsulates the research question, intending to reveal the perspectives of male students regarding gender-based violence and femicide.

Neuman (2011, p. 102) describes the qualitative paradigm as a research method that aims to unravel 'how' and 'why' individuals behave and think in reflection of their attitudes and experiences. As per Burns & Grove (2003), the qualitative approach is a systematic and subjective method focused on uncovering meaning in life experiences and situations. Viewed through an ontological lens, this method advocates for approaching reality as it is constructed, thus prioritising the research population's subjective opinions and experiences. This made the approach perfectly appropriate for this study on male perspectives on gender-based violence and femicide. Male participants shared their views on gender-based violence and femicide.

A qualitative research approach uses interviews, observations, and document reviews to investigate variables in their natural setting (Astalin, 2013). Interviews were used to collect data in this study. A qualitative research study enables the researcher to understand the perspectives of the participants by viewing the world through their eyes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The researcher sought to explore what male students understand and think about the causes of gender-based violence. Therefore, this method allowed the male participants to express themselves fully and provide more detailed information that allowed the researcher to explain complex issues.

One limitation of the qualitative research approach is the inability to generalise results to a larger population (Rahman, 2017), as it focuses on in-depth understanding rather than statistical representation. Qualitative research can also be time-consuming and labour-intensive. Additionally, managing multiple interviews and focus group discussions can pose logistical challenges, and transcribing and analysing data demands full engagement and high concentration levels.

4.3 Research paradigm

This study employed an interpretive paradigm, using individual interviews to gain insight into the subjective world of human experience, specifically exploring male participants' perceptions of gender-based violence and femicide among KwaZulu-Natal University students as a case study. The interpretive paradigm was deemed the optimal choice for this study because it embraces and considers the human aspects of social, political, historical, and contextual factors, ultimately providing valuable insight into the participants' personal

experiences and understanding. Neuman (2014, p. 104) asserts that the primary goal of interpretive research is to "cultivate an understanding of social life and discover how people construct meaning in a natural setting." According to Meyers (2019), interpretive researchers posit that access to reality (whether given or socially constructed) is only possible through shared constructions, including language, consciousness, and mutual understanding. Interpretivism includes various approaches that reject the objectivist perspective, such as social construction, phenomenology, and hermeneutics (Collins, 2018).

According to Kivunja & Kuyini (2017, p. 33), the interpretivist paradigm is used to understand the subjective world of human experience, specifically, their interpretation of the world around them. The central tenet of the interpretive paradigm is that reality is socially constructed. As a result, rather than being imposed from without, knowledge is best acquired through personal experience. According to the interpretive paradigm, reality is multi-layered and complex, and a single phenomenon can have multiple interpretations.

Interpretivist studies focus on meaning and may employ various methods to reflect on various aspects of the issue. According to Bertram & Christiansen (2014), an interpretive researcher seeks to understand the nature of their social world through dialogue, such as conducting individual interviews. An interpretivist paradigm was used in this study because the researcher wanted to investigate how students understand various aspects of gender-based violence and intimate femicide within the socio-cultural context in which they occur (Kim, 2003). The interpretive paradigm was the best choice for this study because it enabled the researcher to make sense of the data while taking into account the human aspects of the social, political, historical, and contextual factors in the area where the study was conducted (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014), thus providing valuable insight into the participants' actual experiences and understanding of gender-based violence and femicide.

4.4 Case Study Design

This research utilised a case study design to examine the viewpoints of male students at KwaZulu-Natal University on gender-based violence and femicide. The case study design facilitated a detailed comprehension of the research issue by allowing for an exhaustive exploration of individual cases. This approach permitted an extensive evaluation of male

perceptions of gender-based violence and femicide. The research employed a case study design to examine male viewpoints on gender-based violence and femicide. Case study research involves scrutinising a case or cases within a contemporary and realistic context or setting (Yin, 2014). Although Stake (2005) has categorised case study research as a study approach rather than a methodology, others have framed it as an inquiry strategy, a method, or a comprehensive research strategy. Soilen & Huber (2009) argue that case studies can be used for both descriptive and empirical research. The most conspicuous advantage of case studies is that they provide a detailed analysis of individual cases. Furthermore, the information gathered is not divorced from its context (Krusenstjerna, 2016). In a case study, the research is extensive and includes numerous variables. As a result, the internal validity of these studies is high, making them valuable.

The research outcomes, however, are not easily applicable to other cases (low external validity) (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Exploratory case studies aim to investigate any phenomena in the data that capture the researcher's attention, such as exploring male perspectives on gender-based violence and femicide. To explore male perspectives on gender-based violence and femicide, the researcher opted for a case study research approach due to men's widespread identification as the main perpetrators of gender-based violence in recent studies.

4.5 Sampling Techniques

The study employed two sampling techniques to recruit male participants aged 25 to 35 who were studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's (UKZN) Pietermaritzburg campus. The first method was purposive sampling, which involves the researcher using their knowledge of where to find the research sample (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). The purposive sampling ensured that the selected participants had the required characteristics such as age and gender. Potential participants were approached, and the researcher explained the study and answered their questions, after which some chose to participate. The second technique was snowball sampling, which was used due to the difficulty in recruiting participants during the COVID-19 pandemic (Tahertdoost, 2016).

4.5.1 Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling is best used when the researcher wants to focus in-depth on relatively small samples that share particular characteristics or to investigate topics that are likely to have unique situations (Palikins et al., 2015). The researcher used their knowledge of where to find male participants at UKZN's Pietermaritzburg campus. The participants were male students aged 25 to 35 who were studying at UKZN's Pietermaritzburg campus. The researcher made sure that the selected participants had characteristics that fit the criteria, such as age and gender. After locating potential participants, the researcher explained the study and answered questions. Following this conversation, some male students chose to participate in the research.

4.5.2 Snowball Sampling

Snowball sampling is a non-random sampling method that works well for hard-to-reach populations. The initial purposive sampling provided the researcher with a few contacts to obtain other participants with similar experiences. The snowball sampling method was continued until enough participants were obtained. The researcher ensured that the participants selected met the criteria, allowing for thorough analysis and consideration of the central themes of the study (Tahertdoost, 2016).

4.5.3 Selection Criteria and Focus

The study's focus was on men aged 25 to 35 who were studying at UKZN's Pietermaritzburg campus because they are more likely to commit gender-based violence than women (Smith et al., 2021). Male participants in this age group were deemed to be more experienced and could offer deeper insights into gender-based violence and femicide by explaining the different cultural dynamics that influence them. Recruiting male students from diverse cultural and social backgrounds at UKZN, including participants from rural areas, villages, townships, and various racial backgrounds, enriched the diversity of the research findings. The selection criteria ensured that the participants provided a comprehensive understanding of gender-based violence and femicide among men aged 25 to 35 studying at UKZN.

4.6 Biographical summaries of the 15 participants

The characteristics of the research participants are shown in Table 1. All participants were between the ages of 25 and 34. Seven (7) participants were from rural areas, five (5) were from a village, and three (3) were from a township and identified as Black. All participants were postgraduate students. Approximately 70% of postgraduate students at UKZN are Black Africans, reflecting the diverse demographic composition of the university. Participants were from the College of Humanities, Agriculture, Engineering, Science, Law, and Management. Background data on the participants' age, race, and area of origin were collected to assess if these factors influenced their perspectives on femicide and gender-based violence.

Table 1

Participant identifier	Age	Race	Ethnicity	Home
Participant 1	29	Black	Tswana	Rural area
Participant 2	28	African	Zulu	Village
Participant 3	29	Black	Zulu	Village
Participant 4	28	Black	Swati	Rural area
Participant 5	30	African	Sotho	Township
Participant 6	25	Black	Zulu	Rural area
Participant 7	34	Black	Sotho	Village
Participant 8	26	Black	Zulu	Village
Participant 9	28	Black	Hlubi	Township
Participant 10	26	Black	Swati	Township
Participant 11	25	Black	Zulu	Rural area
Participant 12	25	Black	Zulu	Rural area
Participant 13	30	Black	Zulu	Rural area
Participant 14	31	Black	Xhosa	Rural area
Participant 15	25	Black	Zulu	Village

4.6 Data Collection and Participant Selection

Semi-structured interviews were utilized in this study to gather data from participants (Braun & Clarke, 2019). This approach allowed participants to provide comprehensive and unrestricted responses, and they were given the flexibility to express themselves in either English or IsiZulu. Before the interviews, all participants were provided with an informed consent form to maintain confidentiality and anonymity during the data collection process (Polit & Beck, 2017). Additionally, individuals who willingly participated in the study demonstrated their consent by filling out a formal consent form.

The use of semi-structured interviews was critical in obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives and ideas. This qualitative research instrument enabled participants to offer open-ended comments, leading to richer and more comprehensive feedback (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The researchers found that using semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, along with probing questions, was the most effective approach for collecting data (Nowell et al., 2017). Participants had the opportunity to request further explanation from the researcher regarding specific matters, which enhanced their understanding. In addition, posing thoughtful inquiries following initial answers facilitated a deeper comprehension of the discussion.

For the interviews, participants were given the option to use their mobile devices to record the conversation. They were required to sign a consent form indicating their understanding and agreement before doing so. The interviews were conducted in various locations, without a specific site being designated, to allow for flexibility. Participants were allowed to choose a location that was convenient and met their needs. Appointments were arranged with the participants in advance of the interviews to minimize any interference with their study schedules or study periods.

Participants were interviewed in both English and IsiZulu, accommodating those who preferred to respond in IsiZulu. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher conveyed appreciation to the participants for their participation in the study. The researcher provided an introduction to the study's topic to the participants and gathered their biographical

information, which included details about their lives, ages, and places of origin (Polit & Beck, 2017).

Each participant underwent an individual interview with the researcher, and the duration of the interviews ranged from 17 minutes to over an hour, depending on the participant's availability (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The researcher made sure that the interview covered all aspects of the phenomenon being studied and asked for clarification on the participants' perspectives. The researchers opted to use face-to-face interviews as they provided a comprehensive means of communication and allowed for the mutual interpretation of nonverbal cues.

Though semi-structured interviews offer greater flexibility, there is a potential drawback in terms of inconsistent data collection and subjective interpretations of responses (Nowell et al., 2017). The researchers mitigated these potential drawbacks by ensuring thorough preparation and planning for this interview format. In addition, semi-structured interviews have the potential to go beyond the planned time frame as participants tend to provide more details or share personal anecdotes. It was also challenging to recruit male participants between the ages of 25 and 35. However, the researcher managed to conduct interviews with 15 subjects using snowball sampling (Nowell et al., 2017). During the interview, participants were notified that they could access emotional support from the onsite counsellor at UKZN or the student services site if necessary.

4.7 Recording and transcription

The researcher used a voice recorder to record the interviews and transcribed them manually for utmost precision. Participants were required to give their consent before being recorded using a voice recorder. Hand transcription is a widely used and effective method for qualitative research, as noted by Braun and Clarke (2019). During the transcription process, the researcher focused on accurately transcribing the participants' comments and sentiments regarding the discussed topics. This included translating from IsiZulu to English. Throughout the participant interviews, the thoughts and topics that arose were recorded on a notepad before, during, and after the transcription process. The researcher identified recurring patterns in the student interviews that were pertinent to the research question.

4.8 Thematic content analysis

Thematic content analysis was utilized in this study to identify, categorize, and code recurring themes in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). This approach is a widely used method for analysing qualitative data. The data underwent a thorough thematic analysis, where patterns were identified, organized, and assigned codes. The researcher thoroughly analysed the data to identify recurring themes, subjects, concepts, and patterns of meaning and subsequently grouped related components. Thematic analysis was suitable for this study as it effectively establishes and explains the data while drawing inferences related to the research question. In the last phase of data analysis, the researcher ensured that all the emerging themes from the data were consistent with the research questions presented in the study.

4.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations played a pivotal role in this study. The study followed ethical guidelines by ensuring participant anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. All participants provided informed consent, and the data was securely stored to ensure confidentiality. The gatekeepers granted access to research venues and participants, while the UKZN registrar issued an approval letter in response to a case study request. Participant identities were concealed during the transcription process and were only identifiable by their assigned numbers. Before commencing the interviews, a statement was provided to obtain permission, emphasizing that participation was voluntary and that individuals had the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time. The data was securely stored on a USB drive for confidentiality purposes, and the interviews would be retained for a period of five years before being permanently deleted. The researcher meticulously adhered to ethical guidelines throughout the study procedures.

4.10 Establishing trustworthiness and credibility

The study required a high level of trustworthiness and credibility. The study's trustworthiness was ensured through meticulous data analysis methods, thematic categorization, and confirmation of data relevance to the research objectives. The study's credibility was upheld by incorporating only pertinent and exact data in the final analysis. In a study conducted by Stahl and King (2020), they identified four crucial factors that contribute to enhancing the

reliability of qualitative research: dependability, reliability, and credibility. The credibility of the study was established by carefully analysing the interview data to ensure its relevance and accuracy in addressing the study objectives. The final version contained only precise and pertinent information that directly related to the research.

4.11 Examination of study limitations and implications

The study offered valuable insights, but it also acknowledged limitations such as a small sample size and potential biases (Polit & Beck, 2017). The findings are specific to the study context and may not apply to a broader population due to the limited sample size and context specificity. The study's ability to generalize qualitative research results is hindered by the limited sample size. Originally, the researchers had planned to conduct interviews with 20 participants. However, they quickly reached data saturation during the data collection process as participants provided similar responses. Therefore, the researchers opted to conduct interviews with a sample size of 15 individuals. Aside from a smaller sample size, there are no negative impacts on the results. The sample size was not reduced to the extent where additional data needed to be collected. The sample size remained adequate for the chosen approach, and the obtained results were satisfactory.

The limited number of participants in this study provides valuable insights, as the qualitative research method necessitates such constraints due to its inherent complexities. Qualitative research often involves extensive data gathering and processing procedures, which can result in a limited number of participants. As a result, the conclusions drawn from such research may have reduced applicability. When interpreting study results, researchers must acknowledge the limitations of non-probability sampling, small sample sizes, and the subjectivity involved in qualitative research.

The findings of this study may not apply to a broader context or population of other higher education institutions. The study's findings are specific to the data collected at the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The study results were expected to provide insightful perspectives on gender-based violence and femicide, while also adding to the existing academic literature on the topic.

4.12 Conclusion

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the methodology and research design used in the study to gain a comprehensive understanding of male students' perspectives and encounters with gender-based violence and femicide. The research employed semi-structured interviews and thematic content analysis while following ethical guidelines. The study had some limitations, such as a small sample size and potential biases. In the next chapter, we will present the significant findings, discussions, implications, and recommendations derived from the study. This chapter covers participant selection, data collection, analysis, ethical considerations, and limitations. The research thoroughly examined ethical concerns, validity, rigour, and potential biases. Various qualitative methods and techniques were used to gather data, which were carefully examined to provide a comprehensive study of the perspectives and experiences of male students regarding gender-based violence and femicide. Chapter Five offers a detailed examination of the key findings, discussions, implications, and recommendations derived from the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and themes that emerged from the responses of research participants. The chapter explores how male students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) Pietermaritzburg campus perceive femicide and gender-based violence against women. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with open-ended and closed questions. A qualitative methodology was used to collect data. A thematic content analysis approach was used to analyse themes that emerged from the collected data. The participants revealed various forms of gender-based violence, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. The study found that a lack of awareness and understanding of gender-based violence among students contributes to femicide and gender-based violence against women. Therefore, more education and support services are needed to address these social vices.

5.3 Data presentation

5.3.1 Participants' understanding of gender-based violence and femicide

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that men understand the various forms of gender-based violence. Most participants mentioned that gender-based violence is not limited to violence directed at women, but some men are also victims of gender-based violence, and women can be perpetrators. The participants also mentioned that gender-based violence is not only physical but can also be emotional and financial. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

"I understand that it's violence directed at everyone, not specifically women, but it is any form of violence, especially the ones that are not important, which can be hate speech, emotional damage, and money abuse also is one of those. It is another form of gender-based violence because other people are abusing each other financially, but you find out that those things get neglected". (P2)

“Ummm, I think gender-based violence is any form of violence directed to a person of another gender. Yeah, that is gender-based violence in general. It could be emotional or physical, but it is any form of violence that is directed at the person of another gender”. (P3)

“Ummm, I know gender-based violence, basically as a violent activity; that is being violent against a person of specific gender without necessarily being a female. It can still be female violence against a male or male violence against a female; that is my understanding of gender-based violence. Femicide is extreme violence against women themselves, leading to death”. (P5)

“Gender-based violence is the abuse of a person based on their gender. Also, the way women dress makes it easy for them to attract people who have evil thoughts. When a person sees the way you are wearing as a woman, they will start to feel like having sex with you. Then after I have raped her, I realise that I can get arrested, so the best way to conceal the act is to kill her”. (P4)

Therefore, some participants observe that the way women dress makes men rape women, which usually leads to the man killing the victim. Men usually abuse women who wear skirts that men believe are inappropriately short. They justify their actions with vocabulary that undermines women's dignity, labelling their clothing as an "insult to culture." According to Mtshai (2019), the dress code is not an invitation to sexual assault. Women should be able to wear whatever they want without the fear of being raped, just as men should be free to dress as they want without the fear of condemnation.

As Orth, Andipatin, & van Wyk (2021, p.1) express, "I am sick to death of being taught what to wear, what to do, and how to behave as if any of it would somehow prevent rape." Therefore, it is not women's responsibility to prevent sexual assault. Instead of perpetuating the vulnerability narrative, men should be taught not to rape, since it appears that vulnerable women are always at fault.

Umraw (2015) reported that a 17-year-old girl who was raped in Pietermaritzburg's "Emgodini minibus taxi rank" told the police that the men insulted her, saying she was "too full of herself" and that she wanted to show off her body because of her short dress. Therefore, victim-blaming normalizes gender-based violence and perpetuates the cycle of underreporting or not reporting (Gordon & Collins, 2013). According to Wells et al. (2018),

participants believed that women who wear short skirts contribute to gender-based violence. This linked men's use of violence to women's actions and attire, conveying the message that women, not men, are responsible for the violence. The participants shared the following:

“Gender-based violence is affecting us at our campuses. Some residences have mixed genders. When there is a mixed gender, you find out that the male student is tempted to have a girlfriend in residence. Last year we had several similar situations, not one, and not two. I was a chairperson at Denison’s residence and the guy had beaten his girlfriend, maybe due to their conflict. He was doing that within the premises”. (P15)

“The other thing contributing to gender-based violence is alcohol, as it tempts one to commit gender-based violence. Just imagine when you are not in sober senses... Generally, alcohol perpetrates violence. It has happened that the male student beat his girlfriend, or the girlfriend beat up her guy because it is not always the case that only men beat up girls. There was a situation here in Malhebe’s residence where they were drinking and the girl took a bottle and hit the boy”. (P15)

Contemporary research indicates that intoxicated men are more likely to exhibit violent behaviour in relationships, both intimate and casual. Therefore, there should be more focus on the connection between substance abuse and sexual behaviour (Townsend et al., 2011). It is important to note, however, that not all men who consume alcohol commit gender-based violence, and men who do not drink alcohol may still commit such violence. Zinyemba & Hlongwana (2022) found that men's reasoning abilities may decline when they are intoxicated, which can increase the likelihood of gender-based violence. These findings support Ngonga’s (2016) study, which linked alcohol consumption and gender-based violence, with some men using alcohol as an excuse for their violent actions.

Gordon & Collins (2013) argue that some university campus hangouts have been identified as places where alcohol and drug abuse, as well as sexual activity, are prevalent and where gender-based violence may occur most frequently. According to Anderson & Naidu's research (2022), a significant percentage of sexual assault victims on college campuses were under the influence of alcohol at the time of the attack, and binge drinking has been identified as a facilitator of sexual assault perpetration and victimization.

A recent incident at the University of KwaZulu Natal Westville campus involved a student being raped (Marriah-Maharaj, 2023). The victim reported that a male friend asked her to wait in his room for her transportation, and while they were watching a movie, he began removing her clothes and forcibly assaulting her. A similar incident occurred at Stellenbosch University, where a female student was raped by a fellow student in a university residence (McCain, 2022). These cases demonstrate that gender-based violence is not limited to the broader society but is also present in higher education institutions in South Africa.

5.3.2 Language barriers as a hindrance to efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence and femicide

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that some men did not understand femicide and gender-based violence. When participants were asked what femicide is, four out of 15 did not know the term. After the interviewer explained the meaning of the term, they understood the meaning but did not know the term used. This, however, did not impede their ability to answer the question. This demonstrates that there is a language barrier that prevents people from understanding gender-based violence, even though they are aware of the problem. Oparinde & Matsha (2021, p.2) argue that "language possesses the power to influence, through the ways it shapes and is shaped by culture and society." The word femicide may not be familiar to some participants due to the terminology used in awareness campaigns. Thus, language socialization is crucial for cultural members to pass the message to novices (Brown & Gaskins, 2014).

Kouta et al. (2018, p.56) emphasize the importance of understanding femicide from a cultural standpoint by taking into account its unique characteristics. Femicide crimes, such as honour killings of women, can result from a variety of factors such as adultery, homosexuality, divorce, sexual assault, or refusal to marry. Femicide frequently goes undetected due to a lack of recognition, and it is easily confused with homicide, which involves killing one person without regard for the victim's gender. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

“Okay, I do not think I know what femicide is.... Okay, please explain to me”. (P1)

“Femicide What type of abuse is femicide?” (P3)

“Please explain to me first the term femicide. Maybe I know it, but I am not sure”. (P14)

“I also did not have much information about this before coming to University, where I learnt most stuff. I knew that gender-based violence is when they beat you up critically that you even go to the hospital. When you do not understand it, you see it as gender-based violence, but when I got here, I understood that even if you slap or speak ill in an abusive manner to a person, that is gender-based violence. Gender-based violence goes hand in hand with culture.

You know how Zulu men are; they love portraying themselves as strong”. (P11)

The majority of participants in the study indicated that they did not know the terms "gender-based violence" and "femicide" until they were in high school, with some learning the terms at university. However, all participants noted that while they were unfamiliar with the terminology, they were aware of the violence in their communities. Participant 11 suggested that before attending university, he believed gender-based violence occurred only when a person was severely beaten to the point of hospitalization. Thus, the terminology used during awareness campaigns may not be fully understood by some people in rural areas.

According to Gqeba & Gqeba (2020), the majority of people living in rural areas are illiterate. Since most campaigns are usually run in English, illiterate people are disadvantaged because most of the terminology is not adequately explained in their language. Therefore, lack of exposure in rural areas is a major contributor to gender-based violence and femicide. This implies that some individuals in rural areas may be experiencing and perpetuating gender-based violence without recognizing the behaviour as abusive. As a result, people in rural areas are at a higher risk of experiencing gender-based violence and femicide, and victims may not know how to report the abuse due to a lack of information. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

“Ey, this gender-based violence thing... I first found out it here at university... I have no understanding or learning about it, I learnt about it here, but only in terms of the incidents of it that are being spoken about. I see them even at home”. (P4)

“I only came into contact with the term as I grew up, but it’s always been there. It came with modernity and enlightenment, and us, being educated and exposed to proper channels of social dynamics, we knew that there is what we call gender-based violence and femicide but the abuse, the killing and all those sorts of social ills have always been there in society. So it’s the term that I only came in contact with at a very later stage”. (P9)

“I heard about it at university, as I said that I grew up in rural areas. In the rural areas, I did not notice it as gender-based violence. When you stay in rural areas, you sort of become a robot and you do not understand most things; you think everything is okay. When I came to university, they were talking about any action you make towards a woman or a man. That is when I first heard about it in 2012”. (P14)

5.3.3 The root cause of gender-based violence and femicide

Gender-based violence is influenced by policies, regulations, social, and cultural norms and attitudes at the societal level. For example, norms that promote male dominance over women and norms that endorse gender-based violence as an acceptable method of conflict resolution. The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that there are numerous root causes of gender-based violence and femicide. Participants have indicated that such violence is often treated as a family issue that goes unreported. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

“That one is straightforward, women stay in relationships even when they are abused. I will use my background as a social worker. The cases we would get are that the woman is getting abused, and also the child is getting abused, but if the child tell the woman that the uncle is abusing her, she will say ‘keep quiet my kid because we will not have food if we arrest him’. So women would stay where they are abused”. (P3)

“What causes this crime is that gender-based violence is not treated the right way. It is hidden, so it keeps happening over and over again because it is not something that people have an awareness of”. (P4)

“They say gender-based violence is a problem, but it is not visible because traditional sayings state that dirty things should not be taken outside the family. So, if it happens to a person, it ends within the family. This usually occurs when the person who perpetuates violence is the breadwinner in the family or supports the community. For example, if an uncle rapes a child,

the family would say that it should be hidden because if it is spoken about outside the family, it would be a disgrace to the family". (P4)

According to the National Research Council (2014), family members who rape children sometimes keep the victims as custodians and are the primary source of income for the family. As Jewkes (2005, p. 1819) puts it, "Women are sometimes forced to choose between having a house and food on the table and taking action against a spouse who is assaulting their child." According to Sjudini (2019), this norm benefits males by allowing them to retain power without having to account for their actions. When violence is considered private, confronting it becomes difficult.

In section 5.3.4, it is mentioned that male-female interactions are often shaped by societal norms and expectations, perpetuating a gender power hierarchy. This power dynamic can influence the way individuals communicate, with men often being perceived as having more authority and dominance in conversations. In addition, these gendered power dynamics can affect the content and tone of communication, leading to differences in language use, interruptions, and overall levels of participation between genders.

Some participants (for example, P9) provide detailed information on how socialization and gender construction influence people's worldviews, with men being socialized to be dominant and abusive to women. The participant further asserts that patriarchy uses socialization to enforce certain social norms, traditions, and social duties to maintain men's dominance over women. Men then use these norms to abuse women, resulting in gender-based violence. The participant further refers to men's behaviour of beating women as "animals trapped in a human body" and argues that there is a lack of training on how men should treat women.

The theory of social constructivism argues that individuals' opinions about the world shape possible explanations for social phenomena (González, Biever & Gardner, 1994). According to the theory, people acquire social phenomena through their parents, friends, religion, culture, and educational system, all of which reinforce social norms in various ways that occasionally cooperate in deceptive methods. This is supported by the following responses from in-depth interviews:

“There is just too much; we live in a society that exalts manhood in a boy because we assume that a boy is like a cup and he finds his own way, or that men are born. This is falsehood; manhood is socially constructed. You are taught how to be a man. You are taught behaviour. You are socialised into manhood. There is a passage through which one passes at this particular moment, because of this behaviour. We see that at some point you are made to sit down and given rules on how to behave and how to conduct yourself as a man, not just for your own self as an individual but for the greater construction of the community because the society is constructed, progressed and developed through ethos and confinements that are fruitful for the society as a whole. So now the issue becomes that we have men that are never constructed by actual men. We have animals trapped in a human body”. (P9)

“We are taught that women are nothing; women must be submissive to men. So if a woman raises her point, men do not like that and they end up using violence instead of communicating”. (P6)

“I can provide two things. One would be insecurities, and the other one would be the disagreement. People tend to be violent when they disagree with one another. Maybe they believe being violent and aggressive will solve the problem, so only those two are the root causes”. (P7)

When there is miscommunication between couples, there is a high chance that the other person will feel disrespected. Communication is crucial in reducing gender inequality and providing tools for personal development and empowerment. P6 highlighted the impact that miscommunication can have on gender-based violence and argues that misunderstandings among partners can lead to such violence. The participant further suggests that instead of resorting to verbal communication, violence is often used to solve conflicts. As Darj et al. (2017) state, it is only through good interaction throughout their lives that partners can truly learn about each other. The participants shared the following:

“One of the causes is that women speak a lot and men quiet. Therefore, since I cannot talk, I will end up beating you because I cannot agree with you further. Sometimes when men beat women, they make things worse. Lack of communication between the partners is the problem”. (P10)

“I think it is fundamentally a lack of understanding and knowledge of navigating relationships”. (P13)

“Again, it is the lack of communication, criticism, and attitude towards women. If you are with a woman and you are discussing the issue of gender-based violence, they will shout at you. It happened to me last week. I worked with them when we tried to discuss the problems they are having in relationships. They are defensive and always want to shift the blame to men without understanding that men are human beings; they feel and they are not steel”. (P14)

“Exactly, poor communication and inability to discuss and agree on things is a major cause of gender-based violence. Moreover, if there is an economically empowered woman providing for the family the man might feel like he is being undermined and that is where the insecurities start to affect us based on our upbringing as black men”. (P7)

5.3.4 Financial dependency

Many factors contribute to gender-based violence, and poverty or a lack of economic independence is one of them. Participants in South Africa have identified poverty and unemployment as major causes of gender-based violence and femicide. They argue that this is also one reason why women stay in abusive relationships. According to Rakovec-Felser (2014), it is frequently observed that women remain in violent relationships for financial reasons. In some cases, a woman's boyfriend can be her only source of income if she is unemployed and socially isolated.

This theme reflects the dependence of women who are not sufficiently economically empowered to support themselves financially. The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that financially vulnerable women face challenges in reporting gender-based violence due to their dependency on abusers and lack of reliable family. They may be concerned about the effect of reporting on their children and the lack of alternative financial support. Thus, fearing retaliation from abusers and lacking accessible resources can further discourage them from seeking or reporting abuse.

According to STATS SA (2022), women who do find employment typically hold vulnerable jobs marked by poor pay, low productivity, and challenging working circumstances compared to males. Just 5.8% of working women hold managerial positions, compared to 9.8% of employed males. The jobs with the highest proportion of female employees were elementary

(22.3%), sales and services (18.5%), clerk (16.4%), domestic workers (11.9%), and technician (11.2%). This proves that South Africa is still unequal in terms of men holding management positions compared to women. This forces women to stay in abusive relationships because they are not employed, and giving women low positions makes them vulnerable to gender-based violence from their bosses. This also undermines women's ability to lead. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

“It is this thing of dependency. When you entirely depend on someone, that person starts to think that he has absolute control over your life; you cannot do anything he does not agree to. You will do what he wants because you are dependent on him. Once you give a man the impression that you cannot survive without him, he will take you for granted because he knows you are entirely dependent on him. Dependency is a root cause”. (P12)

“It differs; some stay because they know that their man has money and they are not working. She thinks that if she gets out of this relationship, she will suffer, so the only way to survive is to stay there even if it is abusive. Then other ones are cultural reasons. It is believed that a woman only gets married once. When you get married, you belong to that family. Leaving your marriage is a disgrace. You cannot get it, but it is a disgrace when you go back home. You are looked down upon as a person who failed from marriage, and whom your parents failed to raise you well”. (P10)

“To be a man is very nice. Obviously, you love to be a leader. You cannot be a man and not be a leader. It is in a man’s nature to be a leader. When a man speaks, you can hear and feel that a leader has spoken. That is the nice thing about being a man. When you find a home where the man is not a leader, there is no peace in that home. It is nice to find a woman who will respect you; that is why some men prefer to marry a woman who is not working because they can see that the woman is dependent on them. Working women usually have ‘the I do not care attitude’, but not all of them. So, if the woman does not respect her husband and the husband feels he is no longer in control of the relationship, then the man no longer enjoys being part of that relationship. Imagine being controlled by women (laughs)”. (P10)

5.3.5 Gender inequality

According to Darj et al. (2017), gender inequality is the basis for gender-based violence. Thirteen out of fifteen participants stated that men and women are not equal in societal rank.

Men are dominant while women are subordinate. Most participants implied that equality between the two genders would never take form because of the cultural norms and values that are in place. Participants further indicated that inequality between men and women is necessary and provides stability for society to function because both men and women know what is expected of them. Moreover, gender inequality is most prominent in rural areas as they mostly have patriarchal norms with different gender roles. The following responses from in-depth interviews help to illustrate this point:

“The root cause might be the fact that another gender is getting opportunities and advancing in life because men get more opportunities compared to women”. (P1)

“No, they are not equal, especially in the rural areas because of our cultural beliefs and the community. There are some things that are done by women and not men, and the other way around as well. Some things are considered more important for women; for example, if you go and report a case as a woman, it will be taken more seriously than a case reported by a man—for example, rape cases of women and men. Women will be taken more seriously compared to men. So, we are not equal”. (P2)

“Ummm, theoretically, I think so, but it depends on the society that one lives in; it could not be accurate. We live in a 50/50 society. However, when you go to rural areas, they do not consider such issues and believe it is only a minor that considers them, and especially intellectual people. However, theoretically, we are 50/50 and created equally, but in reality, it is not so”. (P3)

“In our society, women are not equal to men. There is that 50/50 phase that nearly blindfolded us. Even the fact that we have never had a female president tells you a lot, even the fact that Nomsa Dube was the first premier after 28 years. You cannot tell me that after 28 years, we still do not have a female premier. This shows that even in the higher position, society is still not equal”. (P15)

Participants indicated that patriarchy exists in South Africa because there has never been a female president, despite many years of freedom. Even among members of parliament, there are more men than women, which means that more men are still occupying higher decision-making positions. In 2021, women in Parliament occupied 46.58% of seats in the South African parliament. Some men still say they would never have female bosses, as women were

deemed culturally unfit for leadership positions such as the presidency. Zinyemba & Hlongwana (2022, p.8) argue that “women’s non-recognition of men as the head of the household is a violation of cultural norms, thereby contributing to gender-based violence”.

Participants intimated that the unequal presentation of job opportunities between genders might be the root cause of gender-based violence. According to STATS SA (2022), in South Africa, women participate in the labour force at a rate of 53.0%, while males do so at a rate of 64.4%, a difference of 11.4%. Although more and more women are assuming leadership positions in various settings, including government and business, the convention still holds that males should hold positions of authority since power still has a male face. According to Bukuluki et al. (2013), such inequalities contribute to women’s subordinate position by ensuring they remain dependent on their husbands, reducing their capacity to partake in decision-making at home and in the community.

“I come from the village in the community. There is a uBukhosi (chieftaincy); people who rule the kingship are men, so they are the people who make decisions on how the society is supposed to function, how should a man behave, and how a woman is supposed to respect a man. The entire structure of my community is patriarchal; that is why we have gender-based violence”. (P3)

“Ey, they are equal; as I had said, okay, let me look at time from a believer’s perspective because I am a believer. In front of God’s eyes, we are all equal irrespective of who was created first; where we are all equal. So, by the way, I view this, there is nothing that women can fail to do that men can do and the same applies to men. These people are equal, just that each person has a role they should play. There is a role that a woman must play and a role that men must play. All these roles are equal. So, none is better than anymore. Without these roles, it would be hard to sustain life”. (P4)

“In terms of what? Because of this equality, if you are going to use the umbrella approach, then you are going to lose the whole concept of everything. Equality in terms of what? Societal? Again, society is built by people, and among these people, there are rules to play; there has never been a part where we say a woman is a provider and a protector, so it means a man’s role is very different from that of a woman. So, if our roles are not of the same significance, then we are not equal, not to say there is a role that is greater than the other. So even in the societal set-up, we can never say this one is equivalent to that one because when

this one is lacking it shows you. You usually hear Xhosa people say the father is the pillar of the home. It, therefore, goes without saying that this home needs the mother's warmth". (P9)

In line with Mshweshwe (2020), participants indicated that domestic abuse is perceived as a private matter, and victims frequently receive no help or assistance. An imbalance of power is common in societies where male dominance is characterized by providing for the family and being the head of the household, particularly when gender roles are firmly established. Typically, women are responsible for children and household duties. These norms are often observed in many communities, which may contribute to gender-based violence. The participants shared the following;

"They will never be equal. Yes, the government is trying to make them similar, but it is impossible. That is how they were created. That is why a woman can get pregnant, but a man cannot". (P10)

"No, that will never exist even if the government regulations tried, but it only exists in some departments. There are some departments in which it will never exist". (P11)

"Tough one; according to the fact that we are in a democratic state, I can say yes, but according to my culture, I cannot say that. Remember, I said that in the household where I was raised, I was made to know that I should not depend on women's money as a man. There are people who say they will never marry a woman who earns more than they do; there is sense in it. Let me make this example; a friend of mine had not registered yet, so he was staying in his girlfriend's room here in residence. He said that he felt like this woman was his ripping his balls off (Lentombi ingiphuca amasende). I asked how, and he said because even when she is wrong, I need to be the one apologising because I need a place to sleep. So now imagine marrying someone who earns more than you, then that person will not beg you for anything. We were groomed to know that a woman is supposed to be dependent on a man as he needs to provide. Now when she earns more than you do, that means you are the wife now". (P12)

P12 suggests that women should be submissive to men and earn less because if they earn more, they would disrespect their husbands. This assertion is based on the idea that men want to control their wives, and if the wife earns more, he will not be able to control her. In some

cases, men resort to physical violence to meet their demands because if women are the ones who are working, they may not be willing to take care of the men.

Participants in the study emphasized that gender-based violence is normalized, condoned, and justified in their communities. This is because it conforms to deeply ingrained cultural conceptions of male dominance and female subordination. They also highlighted how the socialization of males and females leads to unequal power relations, with males being dominant and females helpless. The oppressive nature of patriarchal standards that marginalize and silence women and non-conforming genders was consistent with the research findings. Despite several male participants' statements to the contrary, they still take pleasure in their privileged position. The participants shared the following:

“No, when I talk about this from the traditional perspective, women are supposed to understand that we are not equal and we will never be identical. Even if they were to debate that and come up with scientists and publish studies, we would never be equal. I am now talking according to God and our ancestors; a man will always be dominant compared to women. However, the women are mistaking this for infallibility. When it is said that a man is dominant, it does not mean that everything a man says is correct”. (P14)

*“Historically, as Africans, we come from a place where women were regarded as people who were supposed to stay at home but now that women are equal to us, they can do the same thing that we can do. This becomes a problem for a person deeply rooted in culture when women speak to him differently than he is used to. Even though modernisation has taken place, women can be bosses at work. However, some men do not accept that. Some men say that *Angeke ngiphathwe umfaz* (I will not be controlled by a woman). Some people still speak to women like that, as if a woman is not a human being. However, now that we are in a democratic state, it is better some women can do ‘man’s jobs’ better than men”.* (P12)

“I told you I am a Nazareth member; my church is the church of iziQhaza. If you want the core of the Zulu Monarchy, you will find it in Nazareth. This means that most of the followers in that church are Zulu people as it is a Zulu-led church. The positions in church are what we were arguing about at church. This is also what we were arguing about in our gathering here in our session as students who are Nazareth members. Therefore, in our church, we have a demarcation. Our church has been demarcated into 4. Inhlalisuthi, Omama, and Intethelelo (these come from amakhozana, but they have children or are no longer virgins) sit behind

Omama. Then there is amakhosazana. This demarcation is in terms of leadership positions. Men mostly occupy these positions; it starts from Umhlambulili, Umshumayeli, Umvangeli, Umfundisi, and Inkosi Yesizwe. The only position that women occupy is Umkhokheli only”.
(P15)

Religion is an intangible component of culture that has a significant impact on people's behaviour and social interactions. According to Mudau (2017), religion frequently allows the perceived inferiority of women as symbolic violence, which is perpetuated through social representations. Religious principles wield substantial influence over the figurative and subjective worlds. Page 15 highlights the gender inequality present in the Amanazaretha church and the resulting impact on gender-based violence. The participant elaborates that the church positions women as subordinate to men, with men predominantly occupying leadership roles within the church.

5.3.6 Culture and patriarchy

Referring to the deeply rooted pattern of male dominance and female subordination, patriarchal ideology grants men unequal social authority and power within a patriarchal structural power framework, while portraying women as performing labour and being helpless and submissive (Duma, 2016). Gender-based violence against females and nonconforming genders is a structural form of violence rooted in patriarchal ideology, as evidenced by the above excerpt. According to Mudau & Obadire (2017), women are culturally viewed as inferior in a patriarchal society. This patriarchal societal structure encourages men to believe that they are entitled to power and control over their partners, while femaleness is a devalued and repressed phenomenon that does not affect males similarly. Lassier (2011) notes that the guilt and stigma associated with reporting gender-based violence often prevent women from revealing the reasons for their injuries. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

“Yeah, especially patriarchy, so it is patriarchy that influences this thing because it says that a man should be listened to, so in that way, some people take that advantage”. (P2)

“Men abuse women because they want to be dominant. A woman may try to challenge the man’s domination and that could lead to gender-based violence. I am not sure how man is

constructed, but they do not like to be challenged. They always want women to be submissive". (P11)

"Yes, I think so. I believe gender-based violence and femicide are influenced by culture because, in most cultures, women and men are expected to behave in a certain way. The men are the provider; they are the ones who go out there and hustle for family, while women are supposed to be down to earth, be in the house, and take care of children". (P1)

Mshweshwe (2020) notes that gender-based violence is often attributed to societal beliefs and norms that promote "correct" masculinity through men's ability to dominate and control their female partners. This violence is sometimes used to uphold traditional gendered hierarchies (Bloom, 2008). Research suggests that in several African cultures, husbands are still considered the head of the family and have the right to rule over their wives (Sikweyiya et al., 2020). The use of violence by men in situations where a woman violates gender standards is culturally acceptable because husbands are expected to lead the home, maintain order, and establish gender hierarchies, which are all crucial elements of a good marriage.

According to Mshweshwe (2018), gender-based violence and femicide arise from a complex interplay between culture and the construct of masculinity, which is central to patriarchy. Study participants recalled cultural norms, attitudes, and beliefs associated with the perpetuation of sexual harassment. They also believed that culture had a significant impact on gender-based violence and femicide. The following responses from in-depth interviews serve to illustrate this point:

"Yes, I think femicide and gender-based violence are embedded in culture because of the justification of these things that are happening in the community that causes gender-based violence. People justify those by saying our culture as the Zulu nation says that a woman must respect a man. That is where the problem starts". (P3)

"Like I was saying, some of the norms of culture do not put much value on women in terms of being on the same symmetric level as men. Men are always regarded as higher than women; you know if men have to say a word women have to obey. Therefore, if you live in that kind of set-up of one being less autonomous than the other or having less dignity than the other, you tend to overlook humanness and see women as property". (P5)

I believe so. Based on our culture as Black African people, there are certain things which we say that these duties are for men and these duties are for women. Now it goes back to my previous two points. Disagreement and insecurities promote gender-based violence. Let me just give an example, if a man must provide, and he provides but does not feel appreciated by women that will encourage gender-based violence because of the effort he is making. (P7)

These findings show that patriarchal cultural practices supporting male dominance must be acknowledged by women to prevent domestic violence. The social construction of gender theory recognizes the importance and symbolic significance of African cultural systems (Ngubane, 2010). To overcome gender inequality and domestic abuse, it is crucial to critically interact with traditional practices and their patriarchal tendencies. This process must be done sensitively, taking into account cultural sensitivities and the importance of preserving local traditions and values. The interpretation presented by the participants highlights the significance and effects of gender and power stereotypes that are taken for granted and advance a 'culture of abuse' in the sense of sexual harassment. One participant shared the following:

“Yes, we believe that the man is the provider, let alone being the protector and all those things. Culture dictates that a man is a provider in the situation. When we are dating I provide, and down the line, you do me wrong. I deal with you physically, so what we are fighting for is not that you are doing me wrong, but you are doing this after everything I have done for you”. (P9)

In the traditional African culture, male children are taught that they are responsible for providing for their families and are the heads of their households. This has instilled feelings of superiority in men and made them conscious of their wives' dependency on them. Both genders are advised about their roles and responsibilities in family and society, which are shaped by cultural norms that position women lower in social status. Consequently, these affect how African men and women view the roles of the leader and follower in marriage. To eradicate gender discrepancies in African countries effectively, all facets of their cultural context must be examined.

Participants emphasized the significance of gender stereotypes in fostering a culture of abuse, including sexual harassment. These unfair gender stereotypes can result in inequality in

relationships since they principally stem from society's preconceived ideas of how women should act (Vandello & Cohen, 2008). Several participants revealed that they were constrained to follow cultural norms.

P10 emphasized that a man must be an authority figure and "control" the family. In addition, he stated that being a leader was gratifying. Respect is awarded to those in command because they hold the power. This matches Mshweshwe's (2020) argument that men relish being in command since it allows them to direct everything in their household. Mshweshwe further suggests that male dominance over women causes gender-based violence and femicide when men misuse their authority.

The societal norms and values that demand men to provide for their families pose a challenge for unemployed men who are unable to fulfil this role. Participants intimated that women anticipate men to support them regardless of whether they are employed or not, yet unemployed men may feel overwhelmed and view themselves as having failed society. A study by Mahlangu et al. (2022) contends that men experience stress when they cannot provide. This tension can drive some men to become physically and verbally abusive as they strive to regain their dignity.

Several men felt their wives were questioning their masculinity, and they were infuriated by the continuing obligation to provide meals. Men may have exerted force and influence to regain some of their power and assert their leadership. This demonstrates that societal expectations influence gender-based violence and femicide. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

“I think being a man goes with... uhm... What can I say? With the things you are doing because being a man, you need to be a man through your actions. You can be grown up without being a man. You need to have some values to be considered a man”. (P2)

“To be a man, in my opinion, is to be a family man. I think to be a man, you need to be able to make things happen, to provide and uplift your family member. You do not stop by being a breadwinner but also assist others to have means so that they can afford things and be independent”. (P3)

“(Laughing) Being a man is to be supportive. When you are a man, you need to be supportive and protective. If there is anything wrong that happens, you can make positive decisions. Men are known to be strong leaders who can take positions and make decisions. Men are the ones who can resist when there are critical situations because women are weak, so men are the ones who are strong and able to stand such situations”. (P4)

“To be a man, I realised that you must provide. It does not matter whether you are working or not. Women understand and know that you must provide. That is proof that women always want to be provided for; whether you are working or not, they do not care”. (P8)

“It means to be an entity of responsibilities and process because manhood is a construction which evolved to cater for the society’s needs. So, you are not a man alone but a man within society. So, as a man, you must be a male in relation to everything, but your manhood must be within responsibilities; it must not overlap with other personalities. Let us say, for example, I am a man as an individual, and you are a woman; you are a thinking entity and independent entity. My manhood must never, at any point in time, be about dominating your existence. Remember that there is no given principle of manhood; you learn and unlearn within manhood. It is never stagnant and is something that is forever evolving. So, for me, manhood is both a process and a responsibility. I even term manhood as a unity within diversity, a reflection that never repeats itself and step aside with a regular movement. So as a man, you lose and find yourself within responsibilities, incidents and experiences that build and dismantle you”. (P9)

P9 argues that manhood is associated with responsibilities given to men as it is socially constructed. Males who are taught to internalize emotions and follow conventional male gender standards are more likely to engage in risky behaviour, experience depression, and have poor physical and mental health (Smith, Mouzon, & Elliott, 2018). This suggests the importance of educating young men and boys about patriarchal masculinities in most nations. This discovery, however, was not surprising to the scientific community.

5.3.7 The Regulation of women’s bodies

The need for men to police women's bodies and behaviours is deeply rooted in patriarchal systems that seek to control and dominate women. This need stems from societal expectations and norms that dictate how women should look, act, and behave. By exerting control over

women's bodies and behaviours, men reinforce power imbalances and perpetuate gender inequality. This harmful practice not only limits women's autonomy but also perpetuates harmful stereotypes and reinforces harmful notions of female inferiority.

The most notable aspect of this view was how these men saw themselves as possessing an authoritative gaze from which they could "monitor" the actions of their female companions. The standards of behaviour by which a woman should present herself and live, from dress code to general behaviour, are prescribed and enforced by men. The apparent distinction between a set of behaviours for a "wife" (seen as the one to whom the cultural prescriptions apply) and a "girlfriend" (presumably not as faithful to cultural prescriptions) demonstrates the implied appropriation of an appropriate, and hence "acceptable," dress code for a woman. P12 stated that he would never marry a woman who wears trousers. His wives must wear long dresses in his father's yard. Furthermore, he argues that this culture has been "instilled" in him, and the church rules also influence it. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

"In today's world, it is not very clear. I do not even know that anymore because we consume so much information at a very fast pace, and you must deal with all the ideas that are being thrown at you; some are your thoughts, and most of them are not. I am not confident in saying this is my opinion. This is not the case. However, from what I understand, a man is masculine, protective, loving, and kind; a man has a beard. Also, from what I know, a man is the male person even though it is controversial now". (P13)

"First, it is the way I was told of what a man is. I am Xhosa. Xhosa people are indoctrinated. When you return from the initiation school, you are told what a man is. A man is a man by being aware of himself, respecting other people and respecting himself. A man is a man because of how he thinks and does things. That is what I was told in my culture. A man must be humble, but also, as you know, men always have pride in their tradition. Women are supposed to understand that we are not equal and we will never be identical. Even if they were to debate that and come up with scientists and publish studies, we would never be equal. I am now talking according to God in relation to our ancestors. A man will always be dominant compared to women. Even as men, we can only be successful with women because a man needs to work hand in hand with a woman. That is how it was created". (P14)

“Being a man is... generally being a man is not about how powerful you are compared to other people but generally ... at times I hear people say that I am a man, and I can never listen to anyone. Well-being comes with understanding where you come from as a man. A man is a man who knows what the world is ‘akukona kwazwilakhe’. If we are discussing about something, you must understand that at some point, we will agree with you, at some point, we will not. It is not always that we will agree with you, and you are not always correct. A man is someone who takes responsibility”. (P15)

“As we get educated our worldviews changes. I do not think all the things that, according to my church, one must do to be regarded as a man are valid. Your manhood should not be determined by the things you do or other people’s standards. In my culture, you are not a man if you have one wife; the first wife is regarded as your father’s wife, and the second is yours. I grew up with that mentality; I love Isithembu a lot. Even now, I am dating two girls, and they both know each other. I told them about it, and I also told my mother, who also believes in Isithembu. Yes, I love big families. I also have a child; I impregnated my young girlfriend when she was doing her first year. In their culture, her father called me and told me that if I want to be part of them, I needed to pay damages. I went to them to pay the damages, two cows and two goats with also other things. I now take her as my wife because I have paid the damages for my child; she also feels like I have paid Lobola for her. I will never marry women who think they will wear trousers in my father’s yard. That is the culture that has been instilled in me; the church highly influences my beliefs”. (P12)

According to Jack (2014), women are socialized to accept sexual, physical, and emotional abuse without protesting. Running away from an abusive relationship is viewed as a sign of weakness by the bride and her family of origin. Men are socialized to be ready to use violence to assert and protect their status, power, and dominance. Men expend fewer emotional resources, which makes them more likely to resort to violence to settle disputes.

Rowlands (2023) argues that traditional proverbs, such as "mosadi o hwela bagadi," encourage women to remain in violent marriages. The phrase means "a woman must suffer the anguish in the marriage till she dies." Women who choose to leave such abusive relationships face ridicule, slurs, and the stigma of failure in life. "Mosadi o tshwara thipa ka bohaleng" (a woman holds the knife at the sharp end) or "Ingcwaba lentombi lisemzini" (the grave of a girl child is at her in-laws) are identified as driving causes that put pressure on

women to stay in abusive marriages (Mohatle, 2015). "Mosadi o tshwara thipa ka bohaleng" emphasizes that a woman is supposed to endure pain even though she is feeling the pain. "Ingcwaba lentombi lisemzini" means that a woman is supposed to die in her marital house because that is where she is buried. This forces the woman to remain in an abusive marriage, regardless of the abuse.

Seventy-three percent (73%) of the respondents, both male and female, indicated that most rural women tolerate domestic violence due to various reasons, such as cultural practices and customary norms. From the findings, some rural women, on some occasions, tried to convince the perpetrator (35.9%) to seek help outside, such as with relatives, neighbours, or NGOs (4%) (Aphane & Mofokeng, 2018, p. 197). The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

"I think that is culturally influenced, where they say you must persist in marriage even if it's no matter how hard it is. When you marry, you must know that you will accept any situation. So now women end up accepting that situation to the extent that they are struggling to be independent; they trust men to stand for them. So if one gets a man that has money and supports her, even if the relationship is not well for that woman, she stays because of the benefits". (P4)

"I do not think it is love. I think they are staying because of benefits because she knows that she will be fed and also her child will be fed and live the life she wants to live and appear in the community as if she is happy and loved. However, in the bedroom, she is getting abused. I think they are staying because of the status that I am loved, and they know in the community. Money and good living appear to be good living to other people, but deep down, it is not even close". (P3)

"I think one of the reasons is that they are afraid of being embarrassed. You know, when you have been with someone and then all of a sudden you are no longer with them, you get worried about how society is going to treat you. So I think they stay because of what the society might think. Also, maybe they stay because the husband provides for them". (P1)

"I think it is because of society. I think they fear... You will hear some women saying, "If I go, where will I go, or what will people say? How will my family look at me". Sometimes it is all about lack of... self-confidence and lack of safety when returning home. They are afraid

of being turned into a laughing stock when they get at home. When they could not keep the marriage, people will say “you are useless women”. So it is all about the external forces which provide the reason why they stay”. (P5)

“With rape, women sometimes accept gifts from men without knowing that there are consequences that come with these gifts. A man can never give you gifts without expecting things in return”. (P10)

Turner (2002) suggests that women who have experienced abuse may fear their abusers' reprisal if they try to flee or leave the hostile setting. The abuser may have made explicit threats such as threatening to damage, kill the victim, or jeopardize the safety of their children. Shame also encourages women to remain in violent relationships, as it may stem from the fear of being discovered and being made fun of for their lifestyle choices. Some women may choose to remain in their unhappy relationships out of fear of looking bad, even if they are abusive. The following responses from in-depth interviews help to illustrate this point:

“Most of the time women stay in relationships because there are children involved. Also how someone is groomed at home before they get married; they are told that they must respect their husband. Some people stay because they are scared of what people will say when they divorced and the pressure they get from outside. There are care factors; some stay because they truly love their partners, so they always have hope that the partner will change but he never changes. There are people who abuse women because of their background and how they grew up. When a man grew up in a home where his mother was beaten by his father, these people typically need help to overcome the traumas that they went through”. (P11)

“Isithembu is one thing that is abusing women. That is why I am saying culture has something to do with gender-based violence”. (P15)

Isithembu/polygamy is a cultural tradition that is still followed in several regions of Africa (Futhwa, 2011). Several reasons are given that allow a man to marry additional wives. If the current wife cannot have children, or if the current wife cannot give birth to a male child, a man is allowed to marry additional wives. Rahaman et al. (2022) discuss polygamy as a prevalent practice that oppresses women and supports male dominance in patriarchal and traditional societies. Due to their restricted socio-political rights, women in polygamous relationships lack authority, experience gender-based violence and discrimination, and lack

self-confidence. As Ahinkorah (2021, p.3) observes, women in "polygamous marriages had the highest prevalence of physical violence." The battle for resources between senior women and younger spouses in polygamous homes is one of the probable explanations for the result, as the interaction between household members is often worse.

5.3.8 The impact of lobola on gender-based violence and femicide

Lobola is a traditional practice that has both positive and negative effects on gender-based violence. According to Matope et al.'s (2013, p.195) study, a male participant justified his abuse of his wife by saying, "I paid ten cows, she does not work, and I do everything for her as I do for my children, so I discipline her now and then to remind her of her place." This proves that Lobola oppresses women, putting them in a marginalized position, as the Lobola has already been paid. Page 15 argues that one of the leading causes that force women to stay in abusive relationships is Lobola. They cannot return the Lobola, and the husband would want his Lobola back if she went back home.

The payment of Lobola is viewed as a right to chastise wives who do not submit to their husbands. Shope (2006, p.65) asserts that "Lobola is an enduring custom that offers insight into past and present gender and power relations." The South African cultural system compels a man to pay a certain amount of money or cattle to the family of the woman he loves to receive her hand in marriage. This custom is widely known as Lobola. There are compelling arguments that this exchange causes power struggles in marital affairs. For instance, Kethusegile et al. (2000, p.2) note that "some husbands claim that they can do whatever they want with their wives because they paid Lobola for them." In this case, Lobola becomes a tool of "othering," perpetuating the fallacy that women are properties under their husbands' ownership.

According to Ludsin & Vetten (2005, p.15), 84% of South African women in Mpumalanga, the Eastern Cape, and Limpopo agreed that men can beat their wives if they misbehave after paying Lobola. Although Lobola repayment is not usually required, some men may insist on it, which causes women to feel trapped in abusive relationships if they cannot repay the Lobola. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

“There are a lot, including the fact that now I have paid lobola for you, and you must cook. Paying lobola also makes men oppress women. Also, this belief in women that a man must provide everything is the reason why men oppress women because I am the one feeding the family; therefore, I am the boss here”. (P11)

“I think that thing is killing us. Lobola sooner or later, will overcome us, and it is bound to; it will not take us many years. Now I mean that Lobolo means ‘Kamina ka Wena’, in deep Zulu that was being used by our grandfathers with Whites that you give me the mirror, and I give you 11 cows. Now if I give you 11 cows and you give me your child, it means I own that person. I am saying this is what is killing us. It is this trading system used to be justified by our monarch”. (P15)

“When you think, besides lobola, why would they stay? You find out that they have a home, but they do not have anything. When you leave your marital house, the husband and his uncles go to your house to fetch their lobola; there is nothing that says when the bride has left, a man should not take back his lobola. It is an embarrassment when the community see them fetching the lobola from the in-laws, the very same community that witnessed when you got married. So all of that pressure is usually on a woman; a man will not lose anything because he will fetch his lobola and go pay for another one, so that is why they stay in abusive relations”. (P15)

“Amm, one of them, I can say, is culture... culture plays a huge role in how we view women and culture has a huge role in downgrading women. I must pay lobola for women. Therefore, it means buying women; it means a woman is my property”. (P5)

5.3.9 Violence internalisation and normalisation

Violence internalization and normalization refer to the process of individuals becoming desensitized to violent behaviour and accepting it as a normal part of their environment. This can lead to an increased likelihood of engaging in violent behaviour themselves or tolerating it from others. Individuals may come to accept violence as a means of conflict resolution or communication and often become perpetrators themselves. Normalization is a social mechanism whereby ordinary events that are not challenged but internalized are taken for granted and considered inevitable. Those who deviate from the norm may be disciplined or punished.

Most participants in this study revealed that men commit gender-based violence because they experienced it while growing up. Children who witness gender-based violence are shown to suffer from poor mental health and academic performance (Sabria & Granger, 2018). Despite growing concerns about the prevalence of sexual violence among teenagers, there is a lack of research that provides a thorough understanding of the various risk factors influencing teenagers who become victims or perpetrators of rape (Petersen, Bhana, & McKay, 2005). Early adolescence is a crucial developmental stage for introducing programs aimed at reducing the likelihood of males becoming sexual abusers.

Domestic violence prevents children from engaging in constructive social engagement. Children can be affected by domestic violence even if they have not experienced abuse themselves (Stewart, 2012). Domestic violence has an impact on all members of the family, including children. The absence of routine, structure, and consistency in households with domestic violence can affect children's feelings of security, confidence, and limits (Sawyer & Burton, 2012). For any youngster who witnessed domestic abuse, the fundamental requirement for a safe and secure household is not satisfied. Paragraph 6 explains the negative impact that growing up in an abusive environment has on a person.

Overall, it is important to recognize the harmful effects of violence internalization and normalization and to take appropriate steps to prevent it. This includes providing education and resources to help break the cycle of violence and create safe environments for all individuals, particularly children. The participants shared the following:

“I grew up in a home where my father used to beat up my mother, so it is something that I grew up being aware of, but I did not know the whole name that it's gender-based violence. I only took it as violence. I think it is about abandonment issues, psychological issues, and traumatic issues that were not dealt upon most of our fathers. We are taught that women are nothing; women must be submissive to men. So, if a woman becomes a feminist or raises her point, a man mainly does not like that, and they end up using violence instead of communicating”. (P6)

“I can provide two things. One would be insecurities, and the other one would be the disagreement that I talked about. People tend to be violent when they disagree with one

another. Maybe they believe being violent and aggressive will solve the problem; so only those two are the root causes". (P7)

"One of the causes is that women can speak a lot and men are quiet. So now when I cannot talk, I will end up beating you because I cannot argue further with you. Sometimes when a man is beating a woman, he thinks it's a solution, yet they are making things worse. Lack of communication between the partners is the problem. With rape, women sometimes accept gifts from men without knowing that there are consequences that come with these gifts. A man can never give you gifts without expecting things in return". (P10)

"Yes, everything has bad and good sides. There are situations where they beat you, and you also understand why you were beaten because you know you were wrong. You mostly understand later on why you were beaten. While it is still happening, you do not understand. However, killing is wrong because you cannot undo that. With beating... it happens that a person does wrong and deserves to be beaten. You are correcting her, and she will thank you later on". (P10)

"Sometimes one has to assume that gender-based violence has much to do with upbringing, background and socialisation in which human beings find themselves in. Suppose you grew up in a society that does not ridicule, normalise, and internalise such behaviour. In that case, it is a way of doing things that when we talk past each other, not through each other when we are disputing. I must now dominate you physically in a way that you cannot come back". (P9)

Women have normalized being abused because society tolerates such behaviour, and continues to treat women as less than human beings (Gordon & Collins, 2013). Gendered violence is associated with gender power that exists in society; this gendered power leads to exposure to gender-based violence because it usually favours men (Sen & Östlin, 2008). By subjecting women to physical violence, men reinforce the gender inequalities that exist in society, thereby continuing to keep them subordinate. The normalization of violence against women is linked to widespread cultural beliefs and values that sustain and justify gender-based violence as a normal component of male-female relationships (Rodelli et al., 2022).

According to Khosa-Nkatini & Mofokeng (2023, p.2), in most African communities, "abuse is still considered Western; that when a man beats his wife, it is not considered abuse but rather a man putting his wife in her place." This supports what P10 intimated that gender-

based violence has been normalized to an extent that women understand that at times, when they are wrong, they need to be beaten as a form of correction, not abuse.

The incident described by P10 indicates that patriarchy operates to prevent women from acquiring paid employment. When women do not listen to their husbands, they are forced to comply through violence. Ademiluka (2018) argues that patriarchy imprisons women, deprives them of opportunities, and keeps them oppressed, which is evident in the incident described by P10. This norm that women should be beaten but not "too much" is discussed as a "good beating" (Jakobsen, 2014). Gender-based violence in heterosexual relationships is acceptable by cultural norms firmly ingrained in socialization.

The study found that one of the possible contributors to the failure of women to report gender-based violence incidences, especially if they are not severe, is that violence is normalized, and it can only be taken seriously when a person is brutally injured. The participants shared the following:

“Exactly; I have a Xhosa friend who once said to me that if her boyfriend does not beat her up, she feels like the boyfriend does not love her. When she is wrong, the boyfriend needs to beat her up. Some women approve of gender-based violence, and they feel like it is a good thing”. (P10)

“Ummm, in rural areas, the cultural practices do influence gender-based violence because when you look at older people, and you are talking with them, they will show you a scar that here I was beaten by your grandfather. They believe that when they are wrong, it is suitable for them to be beaten, which is wrong”. (P10)

Odero et al. (2014) discovered that gender-based violence is often viewed as an expression of love. This cultural perception of violence as love has negatively influenced women's thinking. In patriarchal societies, violence may be promoted to maintain unfair power dynamics between men and women and to subjugate women. The submission of wives is often taught within marriage, resulting in a cycle of inferiority for some women. It is essential to challenge and dismantle these harmful cultural norms to achieve gender equality and put an end to gender-based violence. These norms not only perpetuate gender inequality but also create an environment where women are more likely to be vulnerable to abuse and violence.

Moreover, the study revealed that many students are exposed to gender-based violence, and incidents frequently occur in higher institutions, often going unreported.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter examined the perceptions and experiences of gender-based violence among fifteen male participants at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Pietermaritzburg campus. Through thematic analysis and social construction of gender theory, nine key themes emerged, which are participants' understanding of gender-based violence and femicide, language barriers as a hindrance to preventing and responding to gender-based violence and femicide, the root cause of gender-based violence and femicide, financial dependency, gender inequality, culture and patriarchy, the regulation of women's bodies, the impact of lobola on gender-based violence, violence internalisation, and normalisation. These provided a comprehensive understanding of how male and female participants perceive and encounter gender-based violence and femicide.

The normalization of violence against women is a significant concern, and immediate attention is needed. Education plays a crucial role in challenging social norms that support gender-based violence and promoting respectful relationships. Supporting resources and services for those experiencing violence and reporting it are essential. Addressing gender inequalities and promoting gender-equitable attitudes and behaviours is crucial. Early intervention programs should prevent violence internalization and promote healthy relationships between boys and girls. Emphasizing mutual respect, communication, and consent can break the cycle of violence and create a more gender-equitable society. Involving parents and caregivers in these programs ensures consistent messaging and support.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores male perspectives on gender-based violence against women and femicide at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg campus. The chapter provides a summary of the study, as well as the findings and recommendations. The first section presents the summary of the study, followed by the findings, and offers recommendations for more research, as well as ways to address gender-based violence and femicide.

6.2 Summary and conclusions

The purpose of this research was to explore male perceptions of gender-based violence and femicide at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). The study sought to understand the role that the social construction of gender, specifically the structure of masculinities and femininities through patriarchy and culture, plays in perpetuating gender-based violence and femicide. In addition, the study examined the relationship between gender-based violence and women's financial dependency on men. The research was conducted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Pietermaritzburg campus, and the findings cannot be generalized to a broader student population.

A study has found that gender-based violence is a significant problem not only in South Africa but also in other countries. While it affects all genders, women are most prominently affected. Various forms of gender-based violence exist, but femicide and domestic violence are the most notable. Previous research has revealed that men have identified various factors that lead them to abuse and kill women, but such acts are not intentional in most cases (Nofemele, 2020).

The research study unearthed a vast number of findings and insights. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge and address the intersectionality between gender-based violence and other forms of oppression such as racism, ableism, and homophobia. For instance, some male students had limited knowledge and understanding of femicide. The study found that

many cultures perpetuate gender-based violence and femicide through their norms and values, which mostly favour men by giving them power over women. The research findings revealed that the participants emphasized that gender-based violence is normalized, permitted, and justified in their communities, partly due to the practice of complying with deeply ingrained cultural conceptions of male dominance and female submission.

Patriarchal cultural practices, such as “ukuthwala” and lobola, are also among the causes of gender-based violence due to the power they give to men over women and their bodies. In addition, the study found that gender inequality has a significant impact on gender-based violence, as it gives men more power and opportunities than women and places women in subordinate positions dependent on men. Thus, the research study offers significant insights into how male university students perceive femicide and gender-based violence.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Education and awareness-raising initiatives: Education and awareness-raising initiatives are essential in creating awareness about gender-based violence and femicide among male students in institutions of higher learning. These initiatives can take different forms, including training sessions, workshops, and campaigns. For example, universities can introduce gender studies as part of all students' orientation materials, regardless of their level of study. This will help students become more aware of gender relations and their human rights. They would better understand the current gender-based violence and sexual harassment rules and how to prevent them.
2. Zero-tolerance policy: Institutions of higher learning should adopt a zero-tolerance policy towards gender-based violence and femicide. This policy should be enforced by holding perpetrators accountable for their actions. Support services should be provided to victims of gender-based violence and femicide. These services can include counselling, medical care, and legal support. For example, universities can create a code of conduct that prohibits any form of gender-based violence and femicide and set up a system to report any incidents. The system should ensure that victims receive adequate support, and perpetrators are held accountable for their actions.

3. Multi-sectoral approach: Addressing gender-based violence and femicide requires a multi-sectoral approach that involves collaboration between different stakeholders, including government, civil society, academia, and the private sector. Such collaborations should aim to address the root causes of gender-based violence and femicide, such as gender inequality, poverty, and patriarchal cultural practices. For example, universities can collaborate with NGOs and governmental agencies to develop programs and interventions aimed at addressing gender-based violence and femicide. Academic research can also inform the development of evidence-based interventions.
4. Gender-based violence and femicide campaigns: Gender-based violence and femicide campaigns should be conducted in all languages to ensure that even the uneducated can understand. The impact of culture and patriarchy must be strongly highlighted to address the cultural norms and values that influence abuse. Campaigns should include men and boys, who need to learn appropriate behaviour and respect for women. For example, universities can collaborate with NGOs to develop campaigns tailored to different cultural contexts and languages. The campaigns can be designed to raise awareness about gender-based violence and femicide and empower men and boys to take action against it.
5. Support centres for victims of gender-based violence: Support centres for victims of gender-based violence need to be established, mainly in rural areas where there is less knowledge and support for gender-based violence victims. These support centres would serve as a safe space for victims to run for help and for proper advice on reporting incidents of gender-based violence. For example, universities can collaborate with NGOs and governmental agencies to create support centres for victims of gender-based violence. These centres can provide counselling, medical care, and legal support to victims. They can also serve as a platform for raising awareness about gender-based violence and femicide.
6. Future research: Future research should incorporate a larger, more representative sample that includes participants from various ethnic groups. This will permit the generalization of the findings and help to further ongoing research. For example,

universities can collaborate with other institutions of higher learning to research male perspectives on gender-based violence and femicide. The research can be conducted in different cultural contexts and languages to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue. The findings can inform the development of evidence-based interventions aimed at ending gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa and beyond.

6.4 The Study's strengths and limitations

The research study aimed to investigate male perspectives on gender-based violence against women and femicide at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Pietermaritzburg campus. The study also explored how cultural beliefs and patriarchy influenced the participants' perceptions of femicide and gender-based violence. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data from students, and the quality of the research study was maintained.

The sample size was small, and the study only focused on one campus out of the five campuses in UKZN, which could limit the generalizability of the findings. Despite this limitation, the study provides valuable insights into how cultural beliefs and practices contribute to gender-based violence and femicide. The male participants acknowledged the significance of education and awareness in preventing gender-based violence and femicide.

The study highlights the need to implement comprehensive strategies to prevent gender-based violence and femicide on university campuses in South Africa and other countries. These strategies should focus on changing cultural beliefs and practices that promote gender inequality and violence against women. To gain a more nuanced understanding of this issue, it is essential to conduct more comprehensive research, involving other stakeholders such as female students, faculty members, and campus administrators.

6.5 Future research

To permit the generalization of the findings, future research should incorporate a larger, more representative sample that includes participants from various ethnic groups. It is important to do an evaluation research study on men's perceptions and comprehension of femicide and gender-based violence against women. Future studies on the socio-cultural dimension of

gender and how it contributes to the continuation of violence in South Africa should also be conducted.

6.6 Conclusion

This study on gender-based violence and femicide, with male scholars at the University of KwaZulu-Natal as the case study, highlighted the impact of gender-based social constructs and women's economic reliance on men. The research revealed that many countries, including South Africa, are grappling with gender-based violence, particularly femicide and domestic violence. The research also revealed that gender-based violence is normalized and rationalized in male scholars' communities, based on deeply rooted cultural beliefs of male dominance and female subordination. Traditional practices, like “ukuthwala” and Lobola, perpetuate gender-based violence, promoting male superiority and power over women. Gender imbalances are at the heart of gender-based violence, leaving women overwhelmingly dependent on male support while giving men greater opportunities. The report recommends the inclusion of gender studies at all levels in universities, encouraging male scholars to participate in awareness-raising initiatives, opposing cultural values that propagate gender inequality, conducting campaigns in all languages, establishing support centres in rural areas, and educating young boys on appropriate behaviour and respect for women. These recommendations offer practical solutions that prioritize gender equality and fairness, serving as a call to action for all stakeholders to effect positive change in addressing gender-based violence and femicide.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Interview Questions

1. Research participant background

- 1.1 Age?
- 1.2 Race?
- 1.3 Ethnicity?
- 1.4 Where did you grow up?
 - a) Village
 - b) Township or
 - c) Suburb?
 - d) Other

2. Insights and understanding of gender-based violence

- 2.1 What do you understand or know about gender-based violence and femicide?
- 2.2 Where did you first hear about gender-based violence and femicide
- 2.3 Is gender-based violence and femicide a problem?
- 2.4 Have you ever witnessed any incidences of gender-based violence at home?
- 2.5 What do you think the attitude toward gender-based violence is in your community?
- 2.6 What do you think are the underlying influences of gender-based violence and femicide

3. Culture, masculinity, and femininity

- 3.1 What does it mean to you to be a man to you?
 - a) Is there a difference between a man and a boy?

3.2 Do you think men and women are equal?

a) Please elaborate.

3.3 What is a manly attitude towards women?

a) What have you observed the way men treat women, in your opinion?

3.4 What are your thoughts on men who abuse and murder women?

3.5 Why do you think men perpetrate gender-based violence and femicide?

3.6 Would you report it if you knew someone abusing a woman?

a) Please explain your response.

4. Suggestions for reducing gender-based violence and femicide

4.1 What methods or programs do you believe should be implemented to reduce gender-based violence?

4.2 What punishments do you believe should be given or imposed on men who abuse and murder women?

4.3 Do you believe it is critical to research gender-based violence and femicide?

Appendix 2

Informed consent

Dear Participant,

My name is Nomandla Sixolile Billie (217034805). I am a master's candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus. The title of my research is: *Male Perspectives on Gender-based Violence against Women and Femicide; A Case Study at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus*. The study aims to explore the male's insights and understanding of gender-based violence and femicide. I am interested in interviewing you to share your experiences and observations on the subject matter.

Please note that:

- The information that you provide will be used for scholarly research only.
- Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have a choice to participate, not to participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Your views in this interview will be presented anonymously. Neither your name nor identity will be disclosed in any form in the study.
- The interview will take about 30-40 minutes.
- The record as well as other items associated with the interview will be held in a password-protected file accessible only to myself and my supervisors. After 5 years, in line with the rules of the university, it will be disposed of by shredding and burning.
- If you agree to participate please sign the declaration attached to this statement (a separate sheet will be provided for signatures)

I can be contacted at: the School of Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus, Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg. Email: billienomandla@gmail.com; Cell: 073 909 6204; 081 805 333.

My supervisor is Sihle Lamula who is located at the School of Social Sciences, Pietermaritzburg Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Contact details: email Lamulas@ukzn.ac.za. Phone number: 033 260 5097

The Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee contact details are as follows: Ms Phumelele Ximba, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Research Office, Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za, Phone number +27312603587.

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent/do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....

Appendix 3

Ethical clearance approval letter



24 May 2022

Nomandla Sixolile Billie (217034805)
School Of Social Sciences
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear NS Billie,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00003955/2022

Project title: Male perspectives on gender-based violence against women and femicide: A case study at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus.

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 14 March 2022 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 24 May 2023.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

1/1

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