



**UNIVERSITY OF  
KWAZULU-NATAL** <sup>TM</sup>

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**INYUVESI  
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

**An exploration of university students' views on intimate femicide in South  
Africa**

**By**

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## **DECLARATION**

I, Nokubonga Ngubane declare that this short dissertation is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts (Clinical Psychology) is my original work. All citations, references and sources have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted to the University of Kwa Zulu Natal in the School of Applied Human Sciences. None of the present work has been previously submitted for any degree or examination at this or any other University.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate my Masters' dissertation to the memory of the warrior women who lost their lives to intimate partner femicide in South Africa.



Image by: <https://www.2oceansvibe.com/2019/08/21/trailer-for-the-new-reeva-steenkamp-documentary-video/>

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

**VAW** - Violence against Women

**IPV** - Intimate Partner Violence

**UKZN** - University of KwaZulu-Natal

**HCC** - Howard College Campus

**WHO** - World Health Organization

**SAPS** - South African Police Service

**NDP** - National Development Plan

**Femicide:** the murder of women

**Gender-based homicide:** homicide with specific gender-related situations e.g., intimate partner femicide and suspected rape homicide

**Intimate femicide/ intimate partner femicide:** the murder of women by intimate partners or by a present or former-spouse, husband, boyfriend, same-sex partner or rejected lover

**Non-intimate femicide:** the murder of women by someone other than an intimate partner (e.g., stranger, family member or acquaintance etc.)

**Suspected rape homicide:** homicide with a sexual related element located upon investigation

*Note.* The box of terms were taken from a research paper, “Intimate Partner Femicide in South Africa in 1999 and 2009” by Abrahams, N., Mathews, S., Martin, L. J., Lombard, C., & Jewkes, R. (2013). Intimate partner femicide in South Africa in 1999 and 2009. PLoS Medicine, 10(4), e1001412.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Most of the research regarding views on intimate femicide has been conducted abroad, while views concerning the phenomena have not been researched extensively in South Africa. The aim of this qualitative study was therefore to explore university students' views of intimate femicide in the South Africa context. It explored, firstly, the student's views on the reasons for the occurrence of intimate femicide, secondly, their views on how IPV incidences are portrayed in the media and, thirdly, their views on the appropriateness of existing interventions at addressing the scourge. The study analysed transcriptions of semi-structured interviews conducted with 11 students from a university in South Africa. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data through the lens of ecological theory. The participants identified an array of intersecting factors at different levels of influence that they believe are driving femicide in South Africa. For example, participants felt that intrapersonal emotions like 'jealousy' and emotional dependence played a part in femicide. 'Participants identified parenting practices and the witnessing of childhood violence (a mesosystemic factor) as contributing towards the formation of hegemonic masculine identities, which they viewed as playing a role in femicide. The participants were critical of the tendency for the media (an exosystemic factor) to adopt a 'sensationalist' reporting style and disproportionately cover femicides committed by high-profiled individuals, which ultimately does little to educate the public on the issue. The participants viewed protection orders (a macrosystemic factor) as a mere, 'piece of paper', leaving women vulnerable to femicide. In sum, the participants proposed (in keeping with the ecological framework) that intimate femicide is a social issue that requires interventions at the individual, interpersonal, community, cultural, political, and institutional levels. Overall, this study concluded that students are aware that various factors at various levels of influence are driving femicide and that these insights might have been partly mediated by their studies. It also found that students are an active audience of media representations of femicide. Lastly, students pointed to the need for multi-level interventions to address femicide. The findings provide insight into media representations of intimate femicide and how journalistic accounts can be adjusted to encourage advocacy. The study also multi-systemic interventions that could contribute to addressing this phenomenon.

**Keywords: intimate femicide, Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, intrapersonal, interpersonal, socio-political, socio-cultural, policymaker, media reporting practices, South African university students. \_**

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Introduction**

Chapter one consists of a brief outline of the literature and identifies the gap which this study sought to address. The chapter provides a motivation for the study, briefly introduces the theoretical framework of the study, and presents the overarching aim of the study, the research objectives, and the research questions.

### **Background to the study**

On the 1st of May 2018, a scorned Thabani Mzolo (23-years-old) shot his partner Zolile Khumalo (21-years-old) with three bullets to the chest (Masuku, 2020). It is reported that she had allegedly been attempting to break off the relationship for two weeks before her demise (Masuku, 2020). The shooting occurred in her Lonsdale Residence at Mangosuthu University of Technology (Masuku, 2020).

Upon conviction, Judge Nompumelelo Radebe reported that Mzolo gained illegal access to her room through a friend whilst carrying an unlicensed firearm with him and told her to "stop making him a fool," (Masuku, 2020). Judge Radebe continued that Mzolo sneered at Khumalo, saying: "Call me a dog because I have been sniffing for you the whole day," (Masuku, 2020). Mzolo stated that before the murder of Khumalo, she had not been responding to his calls (Masuku, 2020). This single case is one of many in South Africa and is a testament to the gender-based violence (GBV) and, more specifically, femicide, that is pervasive within the South African landscape and necessitates research into this problematic phenomenon.

### ***Defining IPV and femicide***

Intimate partner violence (IPV) refers to "any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship" (WHO, 2012, p. 1). Examples of forms of behaviours that constitute IPV in a relationship include acts of physical and/or sexual violence, emotional or psychological abuse and dominating behaviours. Kicking, slapping, beating, and hitting the intimate partner constitutes acts of physical violence whilst forced sexual intercourse forms part of sexual violence (WHO, 2012). Acts such as belittling, humiliation, insulting and intimidating the other are construed as psychological and emotional abuse (WHO, 2012). Behaviours of a controlling nature include self-isolation from close friends and relatives, constant monitoring and stalking of the spouses' movements, limiting access to finances, education, medical assistance, and employment opportunities (WHO, 2012).

IPV is a significant health and social issue both globally and in South Africa, as it can contribute to strife between intimate partners and within families (Makhubele et al., 2018). IPV occurs within various cultural, and socioeconomic groups of society (Makhubele et al., 2018). According to Zara and Gino (2018) brutality against women paralyses a woman's freedom, dignity, and human rights, with homicide being the most severe act for suppressing the victim. Women experience the enormous global burden of IPV (Heise, 1998). Abrahams et al. (2013) assert that intimate femicide (IF) is the most brutal outcome of IPV. Both IPV and IF will be the cornerstone terms for discussion throughout this research paper.

The term 'femicide' was first utilised by Corry in 1801 to represent the murder of a woman (p. 49) in his book, "A satirical view of London". The term femicide was defined by Diana Russell in 1992 as a type of gender-based violence (GBV) involving the killing of a woman, commonly by males (Maluleke, 2018). Femicide includes females who died under the brutality of their spouse or former spouse, as well as young women who were slain by their relatives or fathers, as a result of a compulsive need to steer their lives, sexual preferences, identities or as a consequence of refusing a marriage coerced upon them (Russel & Hermes, 2001). The term femicide was coined as an antithesis to the gender-neutral 'homicide,' during the feminist movement in the 70s, to reflect opposition to this violence (Russell & Harnes, 2013). Most studies on intimate femicide show these murders as an extreme consequence of IPV and as a result, intimate femicide is within the scope of studies concerning IPV (Mercy & Saltzman 1989; Campbell 1992; Bailey et al., 1997; Moracco, Runyan, & Butts 1998; McFarlane et al. 2002; Campbell et al. 2003). In the same vein, theories on intimate femicide often extend from those of IPV (Mathews, 2010).

In the following dissertation, several terms and acronyms will be used interchangeably. This is because relevant literature sourced for the study refers to different terminology. For this dissertation, the following terms and acronyms are used interchangeably but are regarded as falling under the broad umbrella terms of intimate partner violence (IPV): femicide; intimate partner femicide (IPF)/ intimate femicide (IF); gender-based violence (GBV); violence against women (VAW); gender-based homicide; non-intimate femicide and suspected rape homicide.

### ***Intimate femicide in South Africa***

Violence continues to plague the South African landscape, with homicide levels reported to be five times greater than the global average (Mathews, 2010). A global systematic review on intimate femicide reflected that 30.8-45.3% of all femicides are committed by an intimate partner (Mathews, Jewkes & Abrahams, 2015). Internationally, “the regions with the largest number of females killed purely by intimate partners (not including other family members) in 2017 were Asia and Africa (11,000 each), followed by the Americas (6,000), Europe (2,000) and Oceania (200). Africa was also the region with the highest rate of females killed purely by intimate partners in 2017 (1.7 per 100,000 female population). The Americas had the second-highest rate (1.2), Oceania the third (0.9), Europe the fourth (0.6) and Asia the fifth-highest rate (0.5 per 100,000 female population)” (UNODC, 2019, p. 11).

Abrahams et al., (2009, p. 2) states that "the murder of an intimate partner is one of the most extreme consequences of GBV,". Although a man is most likely to be murdered by somebody they know, often in a public area associated with recreational activities and interpersonal conflict leading to the killing, women are most likely to be murdered within their homes (Mathews 2010). Mathews, Abrahams, Martin, Vetten, Van Der Merwe, & Jewkes, (2004, p. 1). stated that, “every six hours a woman is killed by her intimate partner in South Africa.” Data shows that an estimated 24,7 per 100 000 females in South Africa are murdered annually, a figure that is exceedingly higher than universal figures (Sibanda- Moyo, Khonje & Brobbey, 2017; Abrahams et al., 2009; Krug, Mercy, Dahlberg, & Zwi, 2002). Over 87 000 GBV complaints were filed in 2019 alone and over 180 000 crimes concerning violation of women were registered in the years 2018-2019 (Egwu, 2020). South Africa is not immune to gender-based violence (GBV) as women are killed every 3 hours (Egwu, 2020). This is a significant increase from previous statistics which reported that a woman is murdered every 6 hours in South Africa (Mathews et al., 2004). According to the South African Police Services (SAPS), there has been an insurgence of GBV cases in the year 2018-2019 (Egwu, 2020).

### **Motivation for the study**

It is argued that intimate femicide is best understood from a multidimensional rather than a one-dimensional perspective (Stout, 1992). According to an ecological approach, there is a coalition of various risk factors at multiple levels of influence that contribute to the occurrence of intimate femicide cases in South Africa. An ecological analysis frames the key aspects on a spectrum ranging from individual, relationship, community, and societal level factors (Stout,

1992). These factors range from individual-level issues such as gender, age, education, family history of violence and witnessing GBV during childhood years (Stout, 1992, Jewkes et al., 2002, Matthews, 2010). Relationship level factors include intergenerational violence, poor parenting practices, low socioeconomic status, and family honour being regarded as more important than female health (Jewkes et al., 2002; Matthews, 2010; Perrin et al., 2019). The community aspect comprises the unemployment rate, population density, challenging traditional gender roles, blaming the victim, inadequate victim care, amongst many. Societal level characteristics include poverty, economic, social and gender inequalities, weak criminal justice system as well as social or cultural norms which support violence, coverage of femicide in the media (Stout 1996; Jewkes et al., 2002; Matthews, 2010). The factors listed above are mutually inclusive, but not exhaustive of all the risk factors for intimate femicide. An ecological analysis of intimate femicide highlights that several factors intersect in a complex way to lead to femicide.

A review of previous literature shows that a large body of recent research on intimate femicide focuses on the behaviours, individual characteristics, circumstances, and life histories of perpetrators (Abrahams et al. 2009; Jewkes 2002; Krug et al. 2002; Mathews 2010; Mathews et al. 2015; Stout 1992). So, while there is a wide body of research on IPV, including femicide, a review of the literature found that there was very little research that focuses on how university students view and explain femicide. The researcher sought to focus on university students due to prevalence of IPV related issues within university residences as well as the underreporting of sexual violence between intimate partners within campus facilities (Mathunjwa, 2017). Furthermore, the killing of Zolile Khumalo in 2018 by her ex-partner at her university residence garnered widespread coverage to encourage inquiry into students' views on intimate femicide. The researcher was left wondering: do students understand the complex range of intersecting factors that drive femicide identified above? What are their views on how femicide is reported on and represented in the media? Do they believe that current interventions and policies that have been developed and implemented in their communities are effective and appropriate? The study reported in this study draws on an ecological framework, therefore, to explore how students from a South African University view, firstly, the reasons for intimate partner violence (IPV), secondly, how the mass media portrays incidences of IPV, and, thirdly, the appropriateness and effectiveness of programs and policies to address IPV.

### **Aim, objectives, and research questions**

The overall aim of this study was to explore how a sample of South African university students

understand and explain femicide.

- The study aimed to address the following research objectives:
- To explore student's views on the causes of intimate partner violence.
- To explore student's views on how the media portrays incidences of intimate femicide.
- To explore student's views on current programs and policies that aim to address femicide in South Africa.

The research questions that the study aimed to answer were:

- What are student's views on the causes of intimate femicide in South Africa?
- What are students' views on the media's portrayal of crimes related to IPV (femicide)
- What are students' views on the current programs and policies for intimate femicide in South Africa?

### **Overview of the Thesis**

**Chapter one** presents a discussion of the context of the study and delineated the problem statement in question. The chapter also presented the aim, objectives, and key questions about the study.

**Chapter two** reviews the literature related to the topic, derived from sources including journal articles, books, reports and policy documents. This chapter provides an overview of Bronfenbrenner's' Ecological Systems theory and the framing theory as theoretical frameworks. These theories were chosen for their broad, socio-ecological approach to understanding a complex and nuanced social phenomenon like intimate femicide.

**Chapter three** describes the research methods adopted in this study. The chapter explains the research design, a concise rationale for the selected sample size, selection of participants, data collection methods including semi-structured interviews, data analysis techniques and protocol observed to ensure the research output is valid and reliable. It also covers the ethical characteristics related to this study.

**Chapter four** presents the findings of the analysis of the data per the outlined research questions.

**Chapter five** concludes the thesis and presents its main overall findings, the possible implications and limitations of the study, as well as suggestions for future research.

## **Conclusion**

This study aims to explore university students' views and portrayal of intimate femicide in South Africa. Both the global and national impact of intimate femicide on the health and wealth of a nation necessitates the need for research inquiry into the phenomenon. This chapter presented a framework to the study and pointed out the justification of the study. The chapter also established the main objectives the study and indexed the research questions that would be explored throughout the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

The chapter firstly outlines the limitations of femicide research. It then provides an overview of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory which forms the theoretical framework for the study reported on in this thesis. The chapter then uses Bronfenbrenner's model to frame a review of the relevant literature that covers IPV, GBV, intimate femicide, female homicide, the range of multisystemic variables that drive femicide, and both governmental and non-governmental initiatives developed in response to intimate femicide in South Africa. The study also sought to explore students' views on how the media frames and represent incidences of intimate femicide within the South African landscape and the chapter, therefore, discusses the media's role in intimate femicide.

### **Femicide research and its limitations**

A large body of recent research on intimate femicide focuses on the behaviours, individual characteristics, circumstances, and life histories of perpetrators (Abrahams et al. 2009; Jewkes 2002; Krug et al. 2002; Mathews 2010; Mathews et al. 2015; Stout 1992). A qualitative study, for example, was conducted with twenty incarcerated men who were charged for intimate femicide offences in Cape Town, South Africa (Mathews, Jewkes, Abrahams, 2015). At the time of the killing, the men's partners had left them, or they felt their partners were about to exit the relationship (Mathews et al., 2015.) One participant's response indicated that the murder of his partner was an uncontrollable attempt to punish, an assertion of his dominance in the relationship, and a display of his masculinity for the sake of other males' observation (Mathews et al., 2015). The murder of their partners is considered a man's "desperate act of taking back the control they perceive to have lost" (Mathews et al., 2015, p. 119).

The literature calls for a more comprehensive analysis of intimate femicide (Gnisci & Pace, 2016). Studies have predominately been victim-focused and have focused on analysing official sources of data comprised of police files, medical records, and administrative archives (Johnson & Hotton, 2003). Although these studies have been beneficial in unpacking trends over time, which assists in homicide prevention initiatives and programs, official sources of data consist of "partial representation of the characteristics and dimensions of homicide and thus tend to be skewed towards providing descriptive characteristics about victims" (McPhedran et al., 2018, p. 62). The studies mentioned tend to reflect the interests of the

agency collecting those forms of data, therefore, the data embodies the administrative goals of the agency rather than those useful for research interests (McPhedran et al., 2018).

Stout (1992) asserts there is no single factor that determines homicide, violence against women, or intimate femicide. Furthermore, she quotes Yllo (1993, p. 82) who studied factors related to family violence and stated "a complicated web of factors are at work. Some of these factors are embedded in the social structure and culture; others grow out of socialisation experiences or day-to-day stresses." In a similar vein, Breines and Gordon (1983) propose that the construct of gender should be focused on when studying a social issue like IPV.

The study reported on in this thesis recognises that femicide is a socio-political phenomenon that is driven by many factors and the study was partly interested in exploring the extent to which university students are aware of the range of factors that are driving the epidemic.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### ***Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory***

Bronfenbrenner was convinced that most approaches to human development were ignorant of context and rather chose to focus on psychological vulnerabilities. He argued that human behaviour is a result of both biological factors and adaption to the environment. Although Bronfenbrenner's model has been revised into various versions over the years, the theory which will inform the theoretical framework of this study is drawn from the first phase of the development of his ecological systems theory, which occurred between 1973 and 1979 (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). According to Bronfenbrenner, "the individual's developmental life course is seen as embedded in and powerfully shaped by conditions and events occurring during the historical period through which the person lives" (Rosa et al., 2013, p. 254). Bronfenbrenner used a typological representation of a person located in the centre of multiple circles, arranged in levels from the nearest to the furthest from the person, depicting the various environments (from microlevel to macrolevel) in which the person is placed (Rosa et al., 2013). The theory was illustrated using the analogy of Russian nesting dolls, known as "matryoshka" which are sets of wooden dolls, of decreasing size placed into each other. Bronfenbrenner (1979b) stated that "the ecological environment is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the other like a set of Russian dolls" (as cited in Rosa, et al., 2013, p. 255).

### **Key concepts related to Bronfenbrenner's theory**

Bronfenbrenner adapted Brim's (1975) phraseology of microstructure, mesostructure and macrostructure and proposed the following concepts for his theory: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem (Rosa et al., 2013). In doing so, Bronfenbrenner highlighted that the focus of his attention was not on either the developing person or the context, but rather the social engagement between the developing person and his/her context (Rosa et al., 2013). Bronfenbrenner's model has been adapted to explain the development of behaviours, including intimate femicide (Stout, 1992).

#### ***Microsystem***

Bronfenbrenner described the microsystem as the most proximal context in which a person is located, such as childcare facilities, home, recreational spaces, workplace settings and in which the evolving individual engages in eyeball-to-eyeball interactions with others (Rosa et al., 2013). Essentially, interpersonal roles and various activities like those listed above, are the constitutive elements that one engages in overtime within the microsystem (Rosa et al., 2013). In connection to intimate femicide, socio-demographic variables such as age, personality, and emotions as well as the relationship of the victim to the offender are considered as some of the micro-level variables that may contribute to the phenomenon (Stout, 1992).

#### ***Mesosystem***

The mesosystem is defined as the space in which the developing person participates and is characterised by the engagement between two or more microsystems. In essence "the mesosystem is a system of microsystems" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979b, as cited in Rosa et al., 2013, p. 246). Bronfenbrenner (1979b) stated that "the developmental characteristics of the mesosystem are similar to those of the microsystem, the main difference being that rather than the activities and interpersonal roles and relations occurring within a single microsystem, they occur across settings" (as cited in Rosa et al., 2013, p. 246).

Concerning intimate femicide demographic variables, family dysfunction (including poor parenting practices), and parental conflict involving violence, are considered as some of the mesosystem variables that may contribute to the phenomenon (Stout, 1992).

### ***Exosystem***

The exosystem is defined as the "third circle of the ecological model" and is constituted by the space that the individual is not actively involved in, but is indirectly influenced by. This includes, for example, how events that occur in one's workplace might directly affect what occurs within the household (Rosa et al., 2013, p. 246). Given that politicians utilise their understanding of this third dimension to inform social policies, the third circle has a unique role in the genesis of the ecological theory (Rosa et al., 2013). With intimate femicide geographic spatial design, media, and media representation of IPV are considered as some of the exosystem variables that may contribute to the phenomenon of femicide (Stout, 1992).

### ***Macrosystem***

The fourth and most distal setting is the macrosystem, which includes culture and subculture, education, social, economic, political, and legal systems (Rosa et al., 2013). The trademark of this fourth dimension is that it characterises the overall ideology and belief system that exists within a particular context (Rosa et al., 2013). In relation to intimate femicide, variables include socioeconomic factors and poor social security, family and community norms, gender role stereotypes, and the social constructs of masculinity and femininity. Other related factors include inadequate legal and criminal justice systems, gun access and ownership (Stout, 1992).

### **The implications of an ecological approach**

McLeroy et al. (1988) argue that "the overall focus of the ecological model is to take into consideration the environmental influences of social phenomenon and to discover the solutions that deal with environmental causes" (as cited in Khosa, 2012, p. 15). The most pertinent detail of the ecological framework lies in its critique of traditional outlooks that emphasise "the role of behaviour in determining health" (McLeroy et al., 1988, p. 368). Therefore, the ecological model moves from placing the blame on individuals for their behaviour to acknowledging the impact of contextual factors on behaviour (Khosa, 2012). Nelson and Prilleltensky (2005) argue that the ecological model challenges mainstream psychological models that tend to focus on individual or intrapersonal explanations for a social phenomenon while overlooking or downplaying the influence of the broader social context in which the individual is embedded. They insist that from the ecological perspective, one needs to consider the social factors which can hinder the wellbeing of individuals (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005).

Nelson and Prilleltensky (2005) propose that the ecological model recognises the significance of holism. The model considers the various environmental factors at play in the context in

which the individual is embedded, and the impact of these factors on the individual's health and well-being (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). The ecological model highlights the dynamic interplay between the individual, family, environment, and community and acknowledges that any changes within an individual have a domino effect on their community, family, and broader social environment (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005).

Nelson and Prilleltensky (2005) outline four principles of the ecological model which are of pertinence: interdependence, cycling of resources, adaptation, and succession. The first principle of interdependence implies that within the ecological framework various levels are interrelated and because of this, changes in one domain will impact all the other domains (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). For example, concerning intimate femicide, if traditional gender role stereotypes are challenged at a macrosystemic level, this change will be reflected in government expenditures and advocacy for the rights of women and resources to assist victims of IPV, therefore, at a microsystemic level, women will feel more empowered to report and escape abusive relationships before the escalation of IPV into intimate femicide.

The second principle is the cycling of resources. This principle suggests that the distribution and allocation of resources should not be confined to one level within the ecological system since the levels are interdependent and interrelated. This highlights that because there are numerous factors at the different levels that drive intimate femicide, resources will be needed at all the different levels to address the influence of these various factors on intimate femicide. "The cycling of resources principle also draws attention to potential untapped resources in the systems" (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005, p. 72). For instance, a woman who is a victim of IPV should not only be provided resources to support her wellbeing within the hospital setting but sufficient resources should also be extended to her upon discharge to sustain her health. Furthermore, the "social network, non-professional community helpers or volunteers and self-help organisations (both for mental health consumers and family members)" can foster good health for the individual (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005, p. 72). This principle highlights that various factors at several levels lead to IPV and to prevent it, these factors need to be addressed at all the different levels that they exist in.

Adaptation, the third principle, implies that individuals and systems are forced to "adapt to changing conditions in an eco-system" (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005, p. 72). Further, it is proposed that "if sufficient support, garnered from all the levels of the ecological model, is provided among individuals experiencing social and health-related problems, improved health

and wellbeing is achieved," (Nelson & Prilleltensky 2005 as cited in Khosa, 2013, p. 17). It has been found, for example, that when communities build resources such as shelters and non-governmental organisations the risk of IPV is reduced (Patra, Prakash, Patra & Khanna, 2018). In addition, communities must challenge the stigma and gender role stereotypes which normalise the use of violence in intimate relationships. The fourth principle, succession, argues that sufficient time in preparing to tackle health problems among a community is pertinent, especially a national pandemic such as intimate femicide. It is emphasised that "succession involves a long-term perspective and draws attention to the historical context of the problem and the need for planning for a preferred time" (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005, p. 71).

Nelson and Prilleltensky (2005, p.78) raise the issue of power in relation to the ecological model. They argue that the ecological model does not sufficiently "take into account or highlight power difference within eco-systems." They propose that it is pertinent to consider the influence of power dynamics because it is associated with two important concepts that are related to the ecological model, namely oppression and wellbeing which is interpreted as a condition of arriving or not arriving at mental, physical, and spiritual contentment. Power is, therefore, considered as an important dynamic that contributes to intimate femicide and should be focused on in research that addresses it from an ecological perspective.

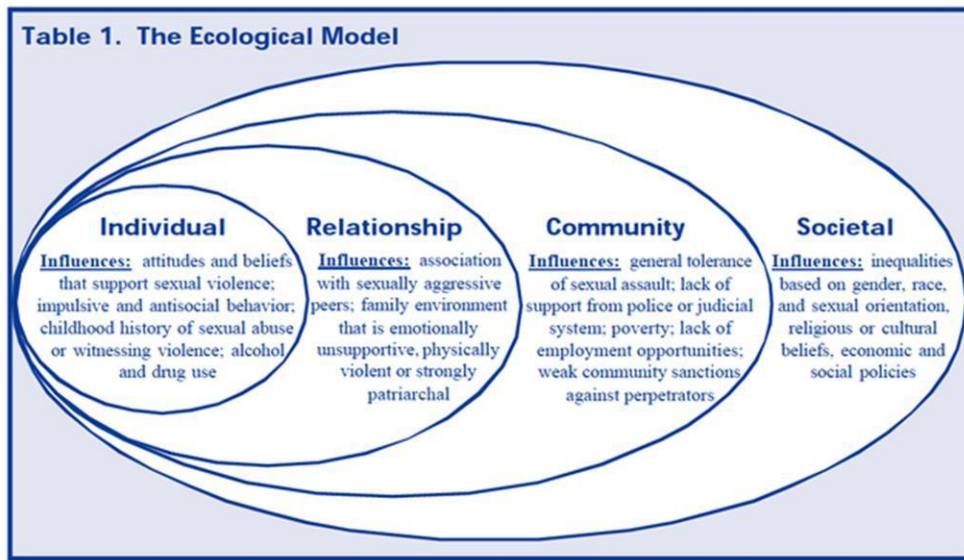
### **Framing the review of literature on intimate femicide**

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model described above will be used to structure the proceeding literature review. The model provides a useful method of reviewing the literature to identify and explore the various factors, at different levels, that influence femicide. Previously, research into femicide adopted an intrapersonal and/or interpersonal approach by using only police data, victim-focused studies or by interviewing perpetrators, rather than studying the phenomenon from an integrated perspective. Therefore, it is limited in explaining the interaction between factors at the individual and social levels. It is argued that the ecological perspective is a useful approach to inform research into intimate femicide in South Africa.

Stout (1992) puts forward that a multifactorial analysis analysis of intimate femicide is pivotal in identifying and understanding conducive environments in which violence against women seems to flourish. Equally, an analysis of only one contributing factor is biased and prone to yielding inaccurate or limited findings (Stout, 1992).

The following literature review will, therefore, be structured using an adaption of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory as discussed above. The following diagram

provides a visual overview of the various factors that drive intimate femicide and other forms of gender-based violence.



**Table1: The Ecological Models Overview of factors driving gender-based violence** (<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/SVPrevention-a.pdf>).

## Literature Review

### *Microsystemic factors*

#### *Age*

Research by Moracco et al. (2007) has indicated that younger women, rather than older women, are at greater risk of intimate partner violence (IPV), whilst alternative research has found no association between age and IPV. Mathews (2010), however, argues that in South Africa, age has a pivotal role to play in IPV, with younger women being at a higher risk than older women. Other studies have found that an age gap between intimate partners is a risk factor for IPV amidst youthful women in South Africa (Jewkes et al., 2006). Mathews (2010) argues that exploitative and controlling relationship dynamics can characterise relationships where there is a big age difference between intimate partners. Wilson and Daly (1992), argue from an evolutionary psychology perspective, that aged male partners are anxious about younger female spouses exiting the relationship for a more juvenile "gene pool", which might contribute towards IPV (as cited in Mathews, 2010).

#### *Personality and emotions*

Research indicates that borderline or dysmorphic personality is common among men who murder their intimate partner(s) (Mathews et al., 2015). Although this knowledge is useful in

attempting to understand what might drive intimate femicide, it does not provide insight into why women are the target of these men's killings (Mathews et al., 2015). In a qualitative study conducted by Mathews et al. (2015) twenty incarcerated men in a South African prison, who murdered their partners in 1999, were interviewed to explore their views on intimate relationships with women. Most of these men expressed that violence against their partner was used to regain both respect and a sense of control. Interestingly, while these men shared a collective view of progressive manhood, their vulnerabilities were evident in their pursuit of respect (Mathews et al., 2015). The men, who were coupled with whom they considered to be socially beautiful spouses, were very apprehensive of the attention their partners received from other men (Mathews et al., 2015). Some of the men expressed anxiety over the threat of losing their partner and admitted to feeling threatened by their partner being in contact with other men (Mathews et al., 2015). The jealousy evoked by the inability of these men to trust their partner appears to emanate from their insecurities concerning their self-worth and so this unresolved conflict finds room to bud in the context of their intimate relationship (Mathews et al., 2011). The intense vulnerability was reflected by the possessiveness and controlling behaviours enacted by these men towards their partners. Ironically, and disturbingly, the violent behaviour was viewed by these men as the expression of love for their partner (Mathews et al., 2015). When potential or actual threats were perceived by these men concerning their manhood, they became violent towards their intimate partners (Mathews et al., 2015). Intimate femicide was explained by these men as the final attempt to enforce control upon their partner, a need which was heightened by their fears of abandonment (Russell & Harmes, 2001). Mathews et al. (2015) describe a matrix of psychological vulnerabilities and gender ideals, which becomes the backdrop against which men regressed to the point where they committed homicide as the ultimate attempt to take back control. Ironically, the men idealised their partners and perceived them as desirable and valuable partners who reaffirmed their sense of manliness in the early stages of their intimate relationship (Mathews et al., 2015). However, because these men's sense of self was not well developed, they relied on their women partners to affirm their masculinity. These relationships were bound to fail due to their jealousy and consequent distrust of their intimate partners (Mathews et al., 2015).

An explanation for personality characteristics being intrinsic to most perpetrators of intimate femicide is offered by a psychoanalytic perspective. This perspective assumes that adverse childhood experiences prompt the development of a psychological defence mechanism known as splitting, which would have emerged at a personality level to protect the developing man from intrapsychic conflicts (Siegel, 2006). As the developing individual matures into

adulthood, splitting is demonstrated between the defences of idealisation and devaluation, that is, persons are viewed as “all good” or “all bad” Siegel and Forero (2012) as cited by Mathews et al. (2015, p. 118). Mathews et al. (2015) state that splitting is useful in explaining the separation of female partners into the "Madonna" or "whore", as women are idealised as Madonna's initially in the relationship, but with time men perceive an intense sense of betrayal by their partners, which increases their anxiety and female spouses are viewed as all bad (whores), thus enabling an acceleration of violence (Mathews et al., 2015, p. 121). Splitting adds to our knowledge of how men end up committing homicide (Mathews et al., 2015). Psychological vulnerabilities, in combination with societal norms, contribute to an explanation for why men may end up murdering their partners (Mathews et al., 2015). This assertion illustrates how a microsystemic factor (personality and psychological dimensions) interacts with macrosystemic factors (ideology and norms) to drive intimate femicide.

#### *Relationship of the victim to the offender*

Intimate femicide is linked with a history of intimate partner violence (IPV) (Mathews, 2010). Brownridge (2004) argues that homicides are associated with factors such as the state (current/ex) and the status of the relationship (girlfriend/cohabiting/wife). Garcia et al. (2007) argue that separated or divorced women are at the highest risk of femicide, followed by decreasing risk, by women in cohabiting relationships and then married women. Times of separation or divorce are crucial risk factors for the perpetration of femicide, as men may perceive the woman's attempt to exit the relationship as a loss of control (Mathews, 2010). In such instances, the use of physical violence is legitimised by men as they experience a woman's departure from the relationship as a challenge to their masculine identity (Mathews, 2010).

Some authors argue that jealousy is a normal part of a romantic relationship, and some cultures argue that jealousy is a requisite of love (Pines, 1998 as cited in Jones, 2002). The interconnection between jealousy and love is reflected in the following quote by St. Augustine: "He that is not jealous is not in love" (Buss, 2000 as cited in Jones, 2002, p. 7). There is, however, a difference between normal and pathological jealousy (Jones, 2002). While jealousy is a normal emotion, which functions as a response to a perceived threat to a primary romantic relationship, it does this by fostering adaptive behaviours to maintain the intimate bond between two intimates (Jones, 2002). At the end of the spectrum, pathological jealousy differs in the "intensity of the jealous response and in the presence of an underlying predisposition created by personality or mental disorder" (White & Mullen, 1989 as cited in Jones, 2002, p. 8). Therefore, due to strong intrinsic vulnerability or personality attributes, some individuals

may respond more swiftly and intensely to the perceived threat to their intimate relationship than others, this also constitutes pathological jealousy (Jones, 2002).

Stalking involves being spied on or followed by a love interest, current, rejected lover or ex-partner, which correlates with a heightened possibility of intimate femicide (Campbell et al., 2003). Ex-lovers are considered more prone to stalk than current lovers (Campbell et al., 2003). Obsessive behaviour and extreme efforts of control in intimate relationships are also linked with femicide (Mathews, 2010). In the study, where 20 incarcerated men were interviewed, it was found that the women the men killed were seen as essential intimate partners in their lives (Mathews et al., 2015). Surprisingly, these women were respected by the men being interviewed and these men expressed how emotionally dedicated they were to these women (Mathews et al., 2015). Most of the perpetrators stated clearly that their partners were respectful and submissive to them in the early stages of the relationship, therefore, their partners made them feel 'like men,' (Mathews et al., 2015). However, these men did not appear to acknowledge the needs of their partners, as many of the women were on the brink of either escaping or had already exited the relationship at the time of their killing (Mathews et al., 2014). The attempts of escape exhibited by these women were interpreted by the men as degrading and disrespectful. The men were clearly in need of the ongoing obedience these women displayed in earlier stages of the relationship (Mathews et al., 2015).

### ***Mesosystemic factors***

#### ***Family dysfunction***

Family upbringing and structure are useful constructs in explaining the continuation of IPV (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017). Poor parenting and unresolved trauma from adverse childhood experiences predispose most perpetrators of intimate femicide to experience issues of low self-esteem and social competence, in addition to diminishing their capacity to trust in intimate relationships (Mathews et al., 2011).

Men who committed femicide stated that they had already used violence in various contexts (Mathews et al., 2015). Their avenue to violence seemed to have begun with severely unsatisfactory childhood experiences characterised by extreme discipline from various caregivers, emotional neglect, detached parenting, absent fathers, and parental death. These early relational experiences have been said to leave an enduring mark on these men's sense of self (Mathews et al., 2015). An ingrained sense of insecurity, mistrust of others, lack of guilt and empathy, and low self-esteem amalgamate to impress deep feelings of parental abandonment and betrayal (Mathews et al., 2015). These unpleasant feelings were played out

in various contexts as they sought respect and love in affairs with others (Mathew et al., 2014). Most of the incarcerated men's lives in Mathews et al. (2014) study, were characterised by backgrounds of gang membership and poverty, which lured them into aggressive and anti-social criminal activities, all in pursuit of respect.

#### *Parental conflict involving violence*

Jewkes (2002) proposes that men who have a childhood history of witnessing violence (sexual and/or physical) experience decreased self-esteem, personality issues, and attachment difficulties and were, as a result, more prone to normalising violence, and more likely to be perpetrators of violence than those who did not have this history. Mathews (2010) also argues that an elevated risk of being either a victim or perpetrator of IPV is linked to childhood experiences, characterised by witnessing the abuse of a mother as well as being beaten in childhood (Mathews, 2010).

#### *Exosystemic factors*

##### *Geographic spatial design and GBV*

Abrahams et al. (2012) suggest that overcrowded communities are more likely to experience domestic violence and the witnessing of IPV. According to McIlwaine (2013), contemporary data on the prevalence of GBV offer limited comparisons between rural and urban contexts. Therefore, it is useful to study the association between GBV and urbanisation. Women residing in urban slums have an increased risk of experiencing GBV (Chant, 2013). The ecological model emphasises the multidimensionality of violence, and the amalgamation of different factors where social, political and economic violence is expected to occur (McIlwaine, 2013). Evidence suggests that GBV is more likely to occur in urban spaces, owing to the nature of activities that happen there (McIlwaine, 2013). Occupying residence within makeshift dwellings in informal settlements precipitates "stress-induced violence" as women in these areas are more likely to be defenceless to theft, burglary, and rape (Chant, 2013).

Studies located in India and South Africa report higher GBV incidences in low-income urban surroundings, especially where sanitation amenities are situated remotely from people's homes as women and girls are vulnerable to violent attacks if they walk alone at night (Bapat & Argawal, 2003). In addition, for example, argues that financially disadvantaged women are susceptible to violence because "they are most exposed to the risk of violence and least able to remove themselves from violent situations" (Kabeer, 1999, p. 149). Therefore, the lack of informative content about the factors that drive intimate femicide plays a significant role in its

perpetuation.

### *Media and intimate femicide*

The vast increase in media coverage of intimate femicide murders in South Africa necessitates research inquiry into how media portrays this national phenomenon. Media is a fast, global, information-transmitting resource of communication with the authority to sway personal perceptions about social issues such as IPV (Isaacs, 2016). Intimate femicide is often portrayed in popular media as the outcome of a man's experience of "losing self-control," in an endeavour to achieve control, in response to the real or perceived threat of losing an intimate partner (Mathews, 2010, p. 34). The rape and murder of 17-year-old Anene Booysen by an ex-boyfriend and a week later, the trial of Oscar Pistorius for the shooting and murder of his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp, presented to the world the reality that South Africa is a country where severe forms of GBV occur (Mathews et al., 2015). In the year 2013, several intimate femicide cases received high media coverage and hence the role of media in understanding femicide is a crucial point of interest under review (Mathews et al., 2013).

### *Media's representation of IPV in South Africa*

In a study that explored media representations of IPV by South African print newspapers, social representations of IPV in media articles reporting on men's perpetration of violence against their intimate partners were probed (Isaacs, 2016). The study found that newspaper reports on IPV were biased and did not offer a comprehensive analysis of the issue (Isaacs 2016). As a result of this, intimate femicide was framed as an extreme form of IPV, which undermines the legitimacy of other forms of violence within the relationship, such as emotional or verbal abuse (Isaacs, 2016). Additionally, the study pointed to the idea that extreme acts of physical violence in a relationship is a result of the ongoing perpetration of violence within the relationship leading the female intimate to routinely enter and depart the relationship whilst assuming traditional feminine roles (Isaacs, 2016). Such research is significant because the information that is shared by the media influences whether female survivors report their abuse and the form of support they receive from the criminal justice system, the health sector, as well as the general public (Usdin et al., 1999). Authors such as Taylor (2009) argue that media representation of IPV tends to be fragmented and biased. To illustrate, greater media coverage is garnered for femicide and intimate femicide cases whilst minimal attention is given to IPV incidences of verbal and psychological abuse (Wilcox, 2008). This phenomenon is the outcome of an issue known as 'newsworthiness' (Isaacs, 2016). Stories that are considered newsworthy entail suspense, drama, thrill, and action to anchor the attention of the audience (Gilchrist, 2010).

Duly, cases characterised by psychological or verbal abuse are deemed less interesting and, therefore, receive less media coverage (Gilchrist, 2010). An interesting finding was those stereotypical beliefs of gender role stereotypes are promoted in articles that report incidences of extreme physical IPV (Das, 2012). In such instances, women are portrayed as passive nurturers who compromise their personal needs to prioritise those of their family, whilst men are painted as dominant, superior figures who assert power over women (Das, 2012). As a result, the media continuously represents women as helpless victims of men's dominance, whilst media reports censor women's efforts to challenge these stereotypes (Das, 2012).

It is only recently that the South African media has begun to investigate more broadly how violence against women is portrayed in print media (Isaacs, 2016). Authors such as Boswell (2003) have conducted studies examining the representation of GBV against women in print media and found that narratives associated with GBV were often not positioned in the headlines or front page of the news outlet. Moreover, he found that in the cases when the media did report a GBV crime on the front page of the newspaper, it was done in a manner that either the victim remained face-less or the story was placed in the bottom of the front page, suggesting the story was regarded to be of lesser interest to the readership (Boswell, 2003). Similarly, Lewis and Orderson (2012) examined the reporting practices of GBV in two newspapers and found that journalists tend to sensationalise the subjects of violence and diminish the importance of the actual narrative of the violence that occurred. For example, the authors noted that media coverage tends to focus on the criminal facet of the crime rather than the rights or experiences of the victim of GBV, the media also provided reports that were devoid of the criminal investigation of the issue, which would offer a transformative outlook on violence against women (Lewis & Orderson, 2012). Other studies indicated that articles on GBV were positioned exterior of the business section and were mostly written by support staff rather than editorial staff therefore the articles were less likely to prompt proactive discussion or in-depth engagement (Isaacs, 2016). The aforementioned studies have touched on some of the distorted reporting practices adopted by media which hinder a transformative understanding of violence against women and are in desperate need of national discussion.

#### Social representations of IPV as an extreme act of physical violence

Newsworthiness has been reported as the reason why intimate femicide cases such as the death of Reeva Steenkamp received greater media coverage than other incidences of verbal, emotional or psychological abuse (Isaacs, 2016). The focus on the physical injuries of Reeva Steenkamp was a central focus in the court case and was considered, alongside the celebrity

status of both individuals, as particularly newsworthy. By foregrounding such cases and representing them as particularly newsworthy by printing the names of Oscar Pistorious and Reeva Steenkamp in capital letters, the print media spreads the idea that intimate femicide, amongst celebrities, is the most legitimate IPV crime (Isaacs, 2016).

#### Constructing representations of 'mundane' violence

In distinct contrast to cases involving extreme physical violence, cases that included fewer physical forms of IPV received minimal news coverage (Isaacs, 2016). Consequently, the severity of the least physical crimes was reduced and the severity was further undermined by locating these stories in less featured sections of the newspaper (Isaacs, 2016). Linguistic practices, such as referring to an act of IPV as an 'assault', further trivialise the severity of the incidents (Isaacs, 2016). A key finding was that the way the media presented perpetrators of IPV as distinguishable from other people undermines the prevalence of male violence in the country (Isaacs, 2016). Furthermore, this perception is detrimental as it "conceals the fact that male violence is an ongoing process, where the enactment of male power does not rely on extreme physical violent acts alone" (Wilcox, 2008 as cited in Isaacs 2016, p. 499).

#### Reinforcing of victim status

The over-representation of physical brutality in newspaper articles reporting on IPV tends to position a woman as a victim, rather than a survivor of the gruesome incident (Isaacs, 2016). Once more, this is achieved through the adoption of linguistic practices which portray women as powerless and unprotected victims (Isaacs, 2016). This practice negates the research accounts which discovered that "representing women primarily as victims furthermore denies the research accounts, which found that an increasing number of women in South Africa, who experienced abuse by male partners, are challenging the traditional feminine position they once occupied (i.e., that of the passive and submissive woman)" (Boonzaier, 2008, as cited in Isaacs, 2016, p. 500).

### ***Macrosystemic factors***

#### *Socioeconomic factors and poor social security*

Research has found that there is a coalition between poverty and IPV (Mathews, 2010). Many women residing in poverty-stricken backgrounds view relationships as resources of economic survival, particularly where masculinity is characterised by the provider role (Hunter, 2010). Adversely, women who are economically dependent on men are dually more vulnerable to violence and have fewer opportunities of escaping it (Jewkes et al., 2012). Some women are also fixated by beliefs of 'good womanhood' which consist of forbearance of violent and

philandering actions from intimate partners, for the sake of financially maintaining a family and a home (Mathews et al., 2015).

Access to social services and increased economic independence of women both lead to a lower risk of intimate partner femicide because women are exposed to a greater pool of knowledge and resources to escape the confines of an abusive relationship (Zeoli & Webster, 2010). A study from Tanzania found an increment of risk for IPV when men were not economically contributing to the household (McCloskey et al., 2005). A study from South Africa discovered that women who lived in poverty and supported by a third party were protected from IPV, suggesting that support systems offer women some form of protection (Jewkes, Levin, & Penn-Kekana, 2002, as cited in Matthews, 2010, p. 24). A randomised control trial assessing an intervention that included gender training, microfinance and community action led to a decline in levels of IPV within the community of women who participated in the intervention, thus suggesting that group support systems in alliance with financial independence are empowering mechanisms that act as buffers against IPV (Mathews, 2010) and ultimately femicide.

#### *Family and community norms*

Destructive social norms perpetuate GBV in society, such as preserving family honour over women's safety, for example, "protecting the family's dignity by not reporting violence/assault to avoid the stigma associated with being a victim" (Perrin et al., 2019, p. 5). The priority is the preservation of the family's reputation above the well-being and safety of the victim who is often a girl or woman (Perrin et al., 2019). Families and communities hold collective ideals and implicit notions that support behaviours that tacitly transmit the idea that violence against women in relationships is acceptable or, even worse, that it is normal (Perrin et al., 2019). These social norms prioritise family honour, purity and men's entitlement over both women and children in the family (Perrin et al., 2019).

A study by Perrin et al. (2019), which explored societal norms and beliefs about GBV framed by social norms theory, found that family norms prioritise resolving domestic violence within the family rather than reporting the matter to authorities. In this instance, the priority is to protect the family's reputation rather than the safety and well-being of the woman or girl. In such cases, when a community blames the female victim for the GBV or sexual assault, both the family and larger community respond with repudiation and punishment of her actions, consequently abandoning rather than supporting the victim (Perrin et al., 2019). This indicates the acceptance of various forms of GBV, including sexual violence, and reinforces the socially accepted idea that girls and women should adjust their actions to prevent themselves from being

assaulted by men, as men are incapable of regulating their behaviour if they are "tempted" by women (Perrin et al., 2019, p. 9). The phenomenon of bystanders (relatives and community members of the victim) normalising violent behaviour is well encapsulated by renowned author Judith Herman in her book, *Trauma, and recovery* (1992, p. 7-8): "It is very tempting to take the side of the perpetrator. All the perpetrator asks is that the bystander does nothing. He appeals to the universal desire to see, hear, and speak no evil".

The above excerpt suggests that in many instances, relatives prefer to sweep the violence committed against the female under the carpet instead of proactively exposing the perpetrator by reporting the issue to the authorities. Relatives may also know that should the family support the claim of violence they would be compelled and perhaps inconvenienced, to frequently transport her to appointments with both psychological and social work services at the local hospital. Furthermore, they would have to actively follow the progress of the case with law enforcement officials which includes attending court hearings and be forced to witness and hear the victim tell or re-tell the incident. Therefore, family members in support of the victim are forced to bear constant reminders of the violation and its disruptive effect on the family system. Hence, although some relatives do not outright deny the claim made by the victim, they may somewhat blame her for the violation to avoid some of the situations described above, but at the same time denying the victim access to the above-mentioned services.

#### *Masculinity and race in South Africa*

Abrahams et al. (2006) posit that gender inequality is perceived as one of the main factors driving IPV and is prevalent in societies that culturally endorses the subjugation of women by males in interpersonal settings. Ethnographic research with youthful men in the Eastern Cape province revealed that discipline and control in intimate relationships are enforced by violence as a means to sustain a patriarchal gender order associated with favourable masculinity (Wood et al., 2008).

Norms are assumptions of how individuals in society should conduct themselves, Gender norms are assumptions that inform how communities value girls and women and support their rights or freedom, as well as who will have power and regulate behaviour (Glass et al., 2018).

The legacy of Apartheid normalised violence and brutality as a strategy of affirming male dominance and political power, which is a social construction still deeply embedded within the minds of civilians today (Insight Newsletter, 2020). The colonial past of South Africa, in combination with war and violent experiences, influenced the formation of masculinities, which became racially based because of the socio-economic climate of the country during the

Apartheid regime (Coovadia et al., 2009). Most White men in South Africa were exposed to war through national induction into the army and this led to constructions of masculinities premised on courage, toughness, physical prowess, and respect for structural ranking of authority (Coovadia et al., 2009). Discordantly, for Black men in South Africa, apartheid significantly transformed African masculinities (Coovadia et al., 2009). Both migrant labour and urbanisation lead to the historical socialisation practices which altered family dynamics, perceptions of women and how interpersonal conflict is handled, with an increasing readiness to utilise violence and weapons (Coovadia et al., 2009). Withal, the violent political struggle led to men who have an increased tendency to use violence for conflict resolution (Xaba, 2001). Therefore, it is suggested that apartheid generated a militarised society, especially for men, with gun violence and ownership associated with dominant constructions of masculinity (Cock, 2001). A distinct form of South African masculinities is observed in gang membership which predominantly involves Black African, and Coloured men (Coovadia et al., 2009). Gangs are adversarial to both the common ways of living and the state (Coovadia et al., 2009). Gang-related masculinity is characterised by the ready use of violent weapons and criminal activities (Coovadia et al., 2009). Luyt and Foster (2001) suggested that disempowerment and the struggle of achieving manhood through common ways of living led to the adoption of a hyper-masculine identity as a substitute, which validates violence, toughness, risk-taking behaviours, and sexual entitlement which are all inflated factors in gang culture (Coovadia et al., 2009). These traditional ways include activities such as seeking employment in the mining industry, studying further in tertiary institutions, joining the army, or venturing into subsistence farming for these men to support both themselves and their families.

Violence is perceived as socially acceptable in certain contexts, provided it is not too apparent to others (Wood et al., 2008). Violence in intimate relationships is also condoned in environments where it is trivialised by law enforcement officials, with women facing the pressure of remaining in an abusive marriage despite experiencing long-standing violence (Jewkes, 2002). Regardless of the increased levels of femicide, most men do not murder their partners because there is cultural acceptance of the use of milder forms of violence as a means of dominance, punishment, and the pursuit of respect (Mathews et al., 2015).

Morrell et al. (2012) argue that both structural and social discrepancies in South Africa restrict men's capacity to achieve conventionally successful masculinity. The ability to work hard and finance the needs of their family are in keeping with ideas of successful masculinity (Morrell et al., 2012). Employment insecurities linked with narrow education has undermined this

definition of successful masculinity and led to emotional insecurity (Morrell et al., 2012). Steinberg (2006) argues that historical ideals of success led many men into violence and gang affiliation, which afforded some men power and respect both from their female partners and within the community. Against this background, the use of violence in intimate relationships is pivotal as it aids men to continue to dominate women whilst they lack power in other aspects of their lives (Mathews et al., 2015).

### *Hegemonic masculinity*

Connell (1987) cited in Matthews (2010) asserts that notions of femininity and masculinity are facilitated by patriarchy which supports a gendered order of male domination over women. Connell (1995) cited in Matthews (2010), introduced the concept of hegemonic masculinity. The concept of hegemonic masculinity has become a central concept in research. Ratele (2013, p. 4) defines hegemonic masculinity as "a shifting pattern of things men do like men that grant men dominance over women and some men over other men. Hegemonic masculinity is thus distinguished from other marginalized or subordinate masculinities in terms of cultural currency." Ratele (2008, p. 20) argues that behaviours that flow from hegemonic masculinity include "living dangerously, using illegal drugs and alcohol, engaging in violence and conflict, unsafe driving practices, and engaging in sexual promiscuity,".

Ratele (2008)) argues there is a "hierarchal" order of masculinities, with hegemonic masculinity being dominant and the most socially accepted, while alternative forms of masculinity are considered less valuable. Morrell (2005) emphasises that masculinity is a socially constructed phenomenon rather than something that is biological or innate and is, therefore, continuously evolving with changes in school, family, culture, and class in society (Morrell, 2001). Intimate femicide researchers have prompted research into masculinities to understand why men commit violence towards their intimate partners (Jewkes et al., 2002). Ratele (2008) proposes that "convinced by ruling ideas of what it means to be a man, individual men (and women) then do things to others and themselves under the influence of ruling masculinity" (Ratele 2008, p. 21). Ruling masculinities result in men engaging in a range of violent behaviours which include, but are not limited to, psychologically, emotionally, or physically abusing their intimate partners, swearing at strangers, joining violent gangs, raping women, engaging in mass killings, or participating in armed conflict (Ratele, 2008).

Moore (1994, as cited in Matthews, 2010) argues that intimate femicide is the result of a man feeling his power is being threatened. For example, when a man is under the perception that his partner is being an infidel, this has the potential to create an identity crisis, Moore (1994,

as cited in Matthews, 2010). "This threat to his male identity is linked to both his sense of losing power in his intimate relationship as well as his perception that his partner's infidelity will reflect on his inability to control her and this will influence his social evaluation by others," Matthews (2010, p. 23). Therefore, when men perceive a real or imagined threat to their identity, this may result in the perpetration of physical violence against a female intimate partner as a mechanism to "regain a sense of power and control within the intimate relationship," Moore (1994) cited in Matthews, 2010, p. 23).

### *Gender and power in intimate relationships*

Researchers like Jewkes et al. (2002) propose that male superiority can be understood as traditional ideas on how women are expected to present themselves and behave which includes both male sexual entitlement and sexual promiscuity, which contribute to IPV. In addition, changes within the role of women in society, such as the workplace have the potential to foster an identity crisis within the male intimate and thus increase the likelihood of violence committed against the female intimate (Jewkes et al., 2002). This crisis of identity is prompted by the perceived threat to his identity as a man and acts of physical violence are used to assert one's dominance over the female intimate partner.

A survey by Jewkes et al. (2002) found that females who held liberal beliefs about their relationship, such as having multiple partners, had a higher risk of experiencing violence from their male intimates (Jewkes et al., 2002). Furthermore, male sexual promiscuity was associated with ideas of male dominance and superiority which increased the risk of IPV within the intimate relationship as violence is used to subjugate the female intimate partner (Jewkes et al., 2002). A randomised controlled trial in South Africa indicated that men who were prone to commit violence toward female intimates were those who engaged in transactional sex, substance abuse, and had more lifetime partners (Jewkes et al., 2002). The hierarchical organisation of gender dynamics in society and social constructions of masculinity contribute to the normalisation of IPV (Matthews, 2010).

Interpersonal disagreements between partners in intimate relationships have been a stable contributing factor related to IPV in South Africa (Matthews, 2010). As aforementioned, violence is utilised to ascertain dominance and control over the intimate partner in the context of a presiding threat to the relationship such as the female intimate being suspected of infidelity (Jewkes, 2002). Research proves that men are prone to respond with violence when conflict arises in the relationship, especially conflict over sex which is directly related to sexual entitlement (Matthews, 2010). Changes in family structures and the growth of women in the

labour force alter the dynamics in decision-making and economic control, resulting in changes in power relations and the persistence of destructive social norms which perpetuate GBV and structural inequality (Glass et al., 2018).

#### *The inadequate legal and criminal justice system*

Although there is robust legislation on domestic violence (Domestic Violence Act No. 116 of 1998) and the availability of protection orders in South Africa since 1992, most perpetrators still "get away with murder," (Mathews et al., 2015, p. 109). This was illustrated by the legal proceedings of a 24-year-old pregnant woman who was disembowelled by her husband (policeman) in the presence of their 4-year-old-daughter in 1999 and was only convicted after 13 years, during which he continued serving in law enforcement and remarried. Likewise, Richard Mdluli, the head of crime intelligence in the national police force is awaiting prosecution following charges for the murder of a love rival committed in 1999 (Mathews et al., 2015). Disturbingly, research indicates that men who are known to be violent rarely struggle with seeking new intimate partners (Mathews et al., 2015).

Mogale, Burns and Richter (2012) recall how in 2005 Buyisiwe was reportedly gang-raped by eight men, initially inside and then again outside her friend's house. Thereafter, she was raped again at a location near an informal settlement and a railway station (Mogale et al., 2012). Following her report at the police station, six out of the eight suspects were apprehended and shortly after the seventh was also arrested (Mogale et al., 2012). Buyisiwe's cross-examination was expressed as being vicious (Mogale et al., 2012). The legal system was antagonistic and unsympathetic towards her as she had to recall the narrative again and again. She had to re-experience the trauma by recalling the order of the eight men who raped her in numerical order to prove to the courts that she was indeed raped (Mogale et al., 2012). Although she was not violated by an intimate partner, she was, however, a victim of GBV which illustrates the inadequacies and shortcomings of the criminal justice system in supporting women and possibly preventing the most extreme form of IPV; femicide.

#### *Governmental interventions*

Although GBV remains a social, cultural, and political issue, various interventions and legislation have been implemented to assist victims (Sibanda-Moyo Khonje, & Brobbey, 2017). South African initiatives to fight the scourge of GBV include signing regional agreements such as the South African Development Community Policy on Gender and Maputo Protocol (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017). Various government and non-government interventions addressing GBV will be discussed under the headings below, as well as an analysis of their

strengths and weaknesses (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017). Various interventions from the government include The Victim Empowerment Program, the 16 Days of Activism campaign, 365 Day national Action plan to End Gender Violence, Domestic Violence Act, Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act to the Domestic Violent Act, as well as Thuthusela Care Centres (TCCs). Non- governmental initiatives for discussion include Gender Links, People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA), Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre, Sonke Gender Justice, Shukumisa campaign and the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017).

The Victim Empowerment Programme (VEP) was introduced in the post-democratic era as part of the National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS). The role of the VEP was to expand a survivor-friendly criminal justice system, reduce the impact of violence by the provision of quality services and foster intersectoral interventions which enhance a survivor-focused perspective to crime prevention (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017). The objective of the VEP is to create safer communities by offering multisectoral aid to survivors of criminal and traumatic activity (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017). VEP achieves its objectives under the Department of Justice, Department of Social Development, and the South African Police Services (SAPS). The strength of VEP lies in its interdepartmental approach and empowerment of women via income-generating programs such as Ikhaya Lethemba. The weaknesses of VEP includes the lack of coordination among sectors, ambiguity of roles within departments to achieve the objectives of VEP, incomplete evaluation systems, and lack of funding and training to workers to service GBV survivors (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017). According to Rees et al. (2014), since gender inequality and intimate partner are entrenched driving forces of HIV in sub-Saharan Africa, intimate partner violence interventions should form part of the primary health sector, within HIV prevention strategies.

The 16 Days of Activism Campaign began in the year 1991 and occurs from 15 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to 10 December (International Human Rights Day) (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017). The dates were chosen purposefully to highlight those crimes against women are a human rights violation (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017). The campaign targets all levels of society to raise awareness of GBV facilitates work surrounding GBV provides a platform for discussing and fostering effective strategies, as well as developing measures to prompt the government to implement plans to eliminate GBV (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017). Certain benefits of the campaign include the publicity of GBV (including crimes against children), encourages survivors to find assistance,

and empowers community members to denounce violations against women and children (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017). Similar to the VEP, this intervention lacks evaluation tools, departments in government do not work collaboratively, the interventions are limited to urban areas and are, therefore, inaccessible to persons living in rural areas (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017).

The 365 National Action Plan to end Gender Violence emanated from the 16 Days campaign, intervenes at the primary level (individual and community) to identify causal factors of GBV and seeks methods to remove them. Goals of the plan include extending the 16 Days campaign throughout the year, including individuals from all sexes to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign, offering post-exposure prophylactics (PEP) to survivors of GBV, empowering survivors through the provision of secondary housing and employment, and offering offender access to rehabilitation services (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017). The Plan is advantageous for its curative nature; however, it is limited by focusing on males to eliminate violence, it has limited coordination amongst the parties involved, and there is a lack of funding for support (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017).

The Domestic Violence Act (No. 116 of 1998) addresses domestic violence by ensuring survivors receive support in opening case files at SAPS, retrieving protection orders and referring individuals to VEP's, shelters or medical institutions, whilst arresting offenders (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017). The Act raises awareness of violence within homes, defends survivors by the provision of the above-mentioned services, honours the right of survivors to be treated ethically with respect, and clarifies the role of police in protecting survivors (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017). Unfortunately, the operationalisation of the Act has been compromised as some members of SAPS do not uphold respect and dignity for survivors, there is insufficient training for agents responsible for implementing the Act, there are failures in the justice system, and lack of funding in initiatives targeted at abolishing domestic violence (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017).

According to Sibanda-Moyo et al. (2017), the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act (No. 32 of 2007) targets the high rates of sexual assaults and clarifies that the definition of rape is not limited to an act committed to heterosexual women, but also includes children, men, and transgender people. Furthermore, the Act covers sexual assaults committed against persons with disabilities, children, exploitation, grooming of a sexual nature, as well as the creating of child pornography content (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017). The Act is useful in supplying services to survivors of sexual assaults to prevent secondary traumatisation

(Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017).

Thuthusela Care Centres (TCCs) were established to dispense services of the social workers, nurses, doctors, psychologists, and the police to survivors of sexual assault Sibanda-Moyo et al., (2017). TCCs operate within hospitals and survivors are taken there immediately after a sexual offence against the individual has been committed (Sibanda-Moyo et al.,2017). The survivor is assessed by a nurse or doctor and given medication immediately to prevent being infected by HIV (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017). Thereafter, the survivor has a medical examination by the doctor to gather forensic evidence, after which the survivor can take a shower, and be seen by a social worker or psychologist for support. TCCs are beneficial as they have expanded the exercise of prosecuting rape and related offences and prevent secondary traumatisation by the accessibility of services in one friendly and localised environment (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017). Antithetically, services are comprised by the lack of funding, there are few TCC's in rural areas, and limited availability of professionals trained to work with sexual assault cases (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017).

#### *Non-governmental interventions (NGO's)*

Gender Links merges with other NGOs in promoting the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development into a protocol, synchronise multiple gender networks to achieve Millennium Development Goal 3 on gender equality, utilise media to raise awareness, evaluate studies to monitor impact, and facilitate research to focus on challenges faced by women in Africa amongst many (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017).

People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) provides counselling, legal, advocacy and media services to survivors of domestic violence, as well as training people to enhance interventions of GBV (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017). POWA also conducts research on GBV to foster policy changes (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017).

Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre (TLAC) aims to provide access to justice for women who are at risk for GBV through advocacy, research and capacity building (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017). TLAC hosts public awareness campaigns and offers free legal assistance around GBV and related matters (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017).

Sonke Gender Justice aims to reinforce men to be active and support gender equality by affiliating with the government to influence policy decision-making, community mobilisation, research evaluation, and building supportive social and organisational networks (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017).

Shukumisa 'Stir' Campaign aims to disrupt political and public decision-making to strengthen the execution of the Sexual Offences Act of 2007 by collaborating with multiple departments of government: social justice, health, and legal for the benefit of sexual assault survivors (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017). Shukumisa facilitates research reports to foster state feedback towards sexual violence and to mobilise the best treatment possible for survivors (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017).

Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVSR) uses research to advance preventative strategies employable by communities by facilitating multi-departmental agreements to foster social change (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017). Change occurs at all levels of society: the personal level, via the provision of basic services, the community level through empowerment initiatives and social mobilization, and at the governmental level, by impacting policy development (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017).

Crimes against women necessitate a multi-dimensional perspective, such as the implementation of the UN-Habitat which includes multiple policy approaches at different levels of society to reform issues of urban crime (UN-Habitat, 2007). The three approaches address both the causes and effects of violence in cities (Moser, 2010). The first intervention is based on increasing safety in urban surroundings and security, by employing gender ideologies to alter urban planning, governance, and design (Moser, 2010). This includes the adoption of spatial and design frameworks and altering urban infrastructure so that outside restrooms are phased out to reduce the likelihood of VAW and GBV in urban areas and thus increase safety and protection for women (Moser, 2010).

Moser (2010) explains that the second approach is focused on adopting a gender perspective to enhance formal criminal justice systems by supporting campaigns and marches for the needs of women, as they have been vital to reducing the rates of gender-based violence (Moser, 2010). Although police stations have been established to help endangered women against gender-based violence, women often use police services stations for conflict resolution, rather than to press legal charges against the perpetrator (McIlwaine, 2013). The third approach from the UN-Habitat is a range of community-based interventions which involve the adoption of principles that consider gender, to increase urban safety, by reducing triggers of gender-based violence (McIlwaine, 2013). These are operationalised through data collection of instances of gender-based violence in cities, awareness-raising campaigns, and linking community members with NGOs, and increasing effective mechanisms to deal with the scourge (McIlwaine, 2013).

Audits of the safety of women in cities also assist in addressing GBV. Furthermore, the audits help determine the prevalence of various types of violence and environmental elements to be implemented to induce caution to the public, for example, signage, lighting, and mapping danger zones (McIlwaine, 2013). The concluding intervention involves a gender perspective for non-violent conflict resolution, a component of the social capital building, whereby both formal and informal social support systems are mobilised to decrease violence against women as survivors often mediation with their partners instead of laying charges against them (McIlwaine, 2013).

#### *Gun access and ownership laws*

The perpetrator's access to a gun and use of unlawful drugs is strongly linked with IPV (Campbell et al., 2003; Mathews, 2010). Furthermore, the risk of femicide by an intimate partner increases fivefold when an abuser has access to a firearm (Seoli & Webster, 2010). Abrahams et al., (2010) contend that a firearm is more likely to be used against a family member than to protect them from harm.

Mathews (2009) explains that the accessibility of guns render women susceptible to being victims of violence as women are unlikely to resist command when confronted with a gun by the perpetrator. However, ownership of a legal firearm is associated with the dual murder of both the victim and the perpetrator, who often commits suicide after the murder, a phenomenon known as homicide-suicide (Mathews, 2009).

Research advocates for an increment in state laws limiting access and ownership of firearms for offenders, the implementation of laws permitting the arrest of protection order violations, and enhanced police staff will collectively assist to lessen the risk of intimate partner femicide (Seoli & Webster, 2010). Access to guns within the household has been significantly linked to enhancing the risk of the lethality of an assault (Campbell et al., 2003). Preceding threats of violence with a weapon were found to be significantly associated with intimate femicide (Campbell et al., 2003). There is limited knowledge regarding the specific weapons used by men who kill women in South Africa (Campbell et al., 2003).

In complicated and varied settings, there are national and international structures aimed at enhancing community and institutional recognition of GBV as a human rights issue and enhancing access to effective GBV services across various sectors in society: education, healthcare, and justice (Glass et al., 2018).

## **Conclusion**

The chapter has provided an overview of the literature relevant to intimate femicide. It has explored individual attributes associated with being a perpetrator, the wider interpersonal and social factors that drive femicide, the media portrayal of IPV, and government versus non-government interventions targeting intimate femicide in the South African context. The literature was reviewed through the lens of the ecological theoretical framework (micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-context). This chapter has also outlined the relevant theoretical framework (Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory) that informs the current study.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

This chapter outlines the methodology employed in this study to address the research aims and objectives. The following sections are discussed: research paradigm (interpretivism) research design (qualitative), data collection (semi-structured interviews), data sampling (purposive sampling), data analysis (thematic analysis) and quality control measures (trustworthiness of the study).

### **Interpretivism research paradigm**

The current study was positioned within an interpretive paradigm. Neuman (2014, p. 104) argues that the main aim of conducting interpretive research is to “develop an understanding of social life and to discover how people construct meaning in a natural setting”. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) argue that a researcher who assumes an interpretive stance seeks to understand the nature of their social world through dialogue such as conducting individual interviews. The main reason for locating the study within the interpretivism paradigm was because the researcher aimed to explore how students understand various aspects of intimate femicide within the socio-cultural context in which it occurs (Kim 2003).

### **Research design**

Creswell (2008) argues that qualitative research does not seek to differentiate between variables or groups, rather the researcher seeks to understand individual views or those of a group of individuals. Likewise, Badat (2020) argues that qualitative research enables one to explore social phenomena which consist of the views, imaginings, and experiences of research respondents. As a result, and in line with the interpretivism paradigm, a qualitative approach was deemed appropriate to explore students’ views on various aspects of intimate femicide in the South African context. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate for obtaining a rich understanding of students’ views concerning the causes of intimate femicide, how media portrays incidences of intimate femicide, as well as their views on current programs and policies aimed to address the phenomenon in South Africa.

### **Sampling strategy**

Within social research, there are two types of sampling: namely probability and nonprobability sampling (Neuman 2013). “Probability sampling, accrued to quantitative research, is dependent on the mathematics of probability in contrast to non-probability sampling, which is aligned to qualitative research, however, it is a less accurate representation of the population,

yet a time-saving and budget-efficient alternative to sampling" (Neuman, 2013, as cited in Ngubane, 2018, p. 13). In the relevant study, non-probability sampling was the best suitable sampling strategy aligned with the research aims and objectives.

Purposive sampling was utilised in the study to select a group of individual participants to answer a specific research question for a certain purpose (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Therefore, in purposive sampling, the individuals under selection are not necessarily a representative sample for generalisability as purposive sampling is usually chosen to illicit elaborate information about the views of the select sample on specific phenomena (Neuman, 2013). Since the purpose of the research did not require a representative sample but rather an exploration of the phenomenon, from the viewpoint of a particular group of students, purposive sampling was deemed the suitable sampling technique.

For this study students from a university were selected to participate in the study because the study aimed to explore, specifically, the views of *university students* on the causes of intimate femicide, how media portrays incidences of intimate femicide, and the appropriateness of current programs and policies aimed to address the phenomenon in South Africa. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) argue that in purposive sampling researchers will select individuals to be included in the sample based on whether they believe the individual possesses the particular characteristics being sought. In this way, researchers build up a sample that suits their specific needs. In sum, "the sample has been chosen for a specific purpose... it is deliberately and unashamedly selective and biased" (Manion & Morrison 2007, p. 114). As Manion and Morrison (2007, p. 114) put it, purposive sampling accesses "knowledgeable people", that is, people who have "in-depth knowledge about particular issues, maybe under their professional role, power, access to networks, expertise or experience". Students were purposefully selected, not because they are professionals or experts on the matter of femicide, but because the researcher was specifically interested in their views on the matter.

As a University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College campus graduate the researcher selected the University of KwaZulu-Natal as their research site as they believed it would be easier to find participants on this campus, rather than another university campus that she would have been unfamiliar with. It was also convenient for the researcher to locate and set timeslots for in-depth individual interviews to be conducted at an institution she is familiar with and has easy access to.

The inclusion criteria in this study were males and female students who were registered postgraduate students at the UKZN (Howard college campus) during the years of 2018 and 2019. The students were selected from a range of colleges including Agriculture, Earth and Environmental Sciences, Law and Management Studies and Humanities. It was decided that selecting students from various schools within the university would enrich the data collected because student's ideas on the topic were likely to be informed by the various schools of thought they came from.

The researcher approached some of the postgraduate students that she knew personally who were living in the university residents. Interviewing students, the researcher knew prior had an advantage over strangers as it ensured a specific level of trust and "facilitated greater disclosure and reflexive commentary" (Burman 1994b, as cited by Frizelle and Hayes , 1999 p. 21). She visited these students to directly ask them whether they would be prepared to participate in the study. The researcher then used snowball sampling by asking these students if they knew or other students who might be willing to participate in the relevant study. The researcher then contacted these additional students telephonically to ask about their willingness to participate in the given study.

The inclusion criteria in this study were males and female participants who were registered postgraduate students at the UKZN (Howard college campus) during the years of 2018 and/or 2019. Students were approached from a range of colleges including: Agriculture, Earth and Environmental sciences, Law and Management Studies and Humanities. It was decided that selecting students from various schools within the university would enrich the data collected, because students' ideas on the topic were likely to be informed by the various schools of thought they came from. The exclusion criteria were undergraduate students or students from another University campus.

Both practical and theoretical reasons were taken into consideration when selecting the sample size (Robinson, 2014). The sample size was guided by the need to gather an adequate amount of rich data in a relatively short amount of time. According to Morse (1994, as cited in Neuman, 2013, p. 478), "qualitative research, *adequacy* refers to the amount of data collected, rather than to the number of subjects as in quantitative research. Adequacy is attained when sufficient data has been collected that saturation occurs". Therefore, the researcher ceased to recruit participants once the data from the in-depth interviews had reached saturation.

### **Participants**

In total, eleven postgraduate students, ranging from ages 18-30, were selected for this study.

They were from a range of different colleges including Agriculture, Earth and Environmental Sciences, Law and Management Studies and Humanities. The University of KwaZulu is inclusive of students from various cultures and ethnicities, although the majority of students are African (Black) and primarily isiZulu-speaking. It is due to the demographics that the participants in this study happen to all be Black African students, and not because only Black African students were sought.

The following is a brief description of each of the participants who participated in this study. A pseudonym has been used to protect the anonymity of the students:

***Participant 1: Zandile***

Zandile is 25 years old. She comes from a rural place called Greytown, which is situated in the outskirts of the Kwa Zulu Natal province. She is staying at the female students' residences and is doing her Masters in the College of Humanities.

***Participant 2: Keziah***

Keziah is 27 years old. She was raised in a township called Lamontville, located in the capital city of Durban, within the Kwa Zulu Natal province. She was staying at home in Phoenix and doing her Masters in the College of Law and Management studies.

***Participant 3: Thobani***

Thobani is 23 years old. He was raised in a township called Nanda, situated in the Kwa Zulu Natal province. He was staying at home in Nanda and doing his Masters in the College of Humanities.

***Participant 4: Njabulo***

Njabulo is 26 years old. He comes from a place called Berea in Durban, which is the capital city of Kwa Zulu Natal province. He is staying in Yellow Wood Park and is currently doing his Masters in the College of Humanities.

***Participant 5: Methula***

Methula is 24 years old. He was born and raised in Creighton, a rural district in Kwa Zulu Natal. He was staying in the male students' residences and doing his Masters in the College of Agriculture, Earth, and Environmental Sciences.

***Participant 6: Minenhle***

Minenhle is 25 years old. Originally, he was born and bred in Nkandla, a rural district located in the periphery of the Kwa Zulu Natal province. She is staying at the female students' residences and doing her Masters in the College of Humanities.

***Participant 7: Thandiwe***

Thandiwe is 26 years old. He grew up in the Amanzimtoti region in the Kwa Zulu Natal province. He was staying at the male students' residences and doing his Masters in the College of Humanities.

***Participant 8: Jack***

Jack is 24 years old. He grew up in Umlazi township in the southern region of the Kwa Zulu Natal province. He was staying at the male residences and studying his first year Masters in the College of Humanities.

***Participant 9: Zanda***

Zanda is 25 years old. He grew up in Empangeni, a small town in the southern region of Kwa Zulu Natal province. He was staying off-campus and doing his Masters from the College of Law and Management Studies.

***Participant 10: Nonkanyiso***

Nonkanyiso is 29 years old. She grew up in Durban, the chief city of the Kwa Zulu Natal province. She was staying at home, off-campus and doing the first year of her doctorate in the College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science.

***Participant 11: Zekhethelo***

Zekhethelo is 25 years old. She grew up in Esikhawini township in the northern part of Kwa Zulu Natal province. She was staying at the female students' residences and doing her Masters in the College of Humanities.

**Method of data collection**

For this study, in-depth one-on-one interviews were conducted to collect the data. Researchers such as Strange, Forest and Oakley (2003) state that an individual interview is a physical interaction that entails communication between both the research interviewee and interviewer. The research interviews were conducted in safe and private rooms on-campus to uphold confidentiality and to allow participants to communicate openly around a sensitive topic. Since qualitative research inquiry may cause individual distress, in-depth individual interviews were the most suitable data collection process because the researcher could monitor the students' reactions closely and manage any distress should it arise. As Wassenaar and Slack (2016) argue this is one of the ways researchers can uphold the dignity of the participants. Each of the individual interviews lasted 25-30 minutes long. Probing questions were used when participants gave short answers to elicit more elaborate explanations and enhance the richness of the data. Furthermore, probing was a useful tool for clarifying the responses given by

participants (Teddlie & Yu, 2007).

There are several things I noticed with the respondents during the interview process. Some respondents were more generous in their responses whilst others were reticent and struggled to find the words to explain their subjective views. With that said, some respondents could articulate themselves well in English, whilst others resorted to using their vernacular language (isiZulu language) to communicate their ideas. Overall, the respondents were all keen and interested in the research topic and expressed gratitude for being able to participate in the study.

### **Data collection process**

The researcher used a semi-structured interview schedule to guide the interviews. The interview questions were informed by the research questions (Barriball & While, 1996). The researcher asked the participants to select the interview venue of their choice (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delport, 2002) to ensure they felt comfortable and at ease. The participants were however asked to select a venue that would allow for a confidential discussion. All eleven interviews were held within UKZN, Howard College Campus (HCC) facilities because it was convenient for the respondents to meet with the researcher there.

The researcher began by establishing a rapport of trust and openness by explaining the study aims and objectives encouraging the students to feel free to ask any questions they might have about the research and the research process. The researcher reassured them that they were free to withdraw from participation at any point in the study with no negative consequences. The aim was to create a context in which each participant felt they could communicate openly and authentically (De Vos et al., 2002). By fostering such an environment, the researcher was able to elicit rich data, which assured that quality data was accumulated (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). While dialogue was encouraged, the interview schedule was used by the researcher to sustain focus on both the main issues and research questions and to ensure that all participants were asked the same core questions, further improving the trustworthiness of the data collected.

The individual interviews were audio-recorded to prevent disruption and distraction during the interview process if the researcher had attempted to take notes during the interview. Each interview lasted approximately 25-30 minutes with intermittent breaks where necessary. Although English was the primary language of instruction, some respondents code-switched between isiZulu and English, but the researcher was able to translate all the interviews into English as isiZulu is her mother tongue.

After the interviews, the researcher transcribed verbatim the audio recordings from the individual interviews. During the transcription process, the researcher engaged attentively with the data, noting additional cues and prompts that were spontaneous in the interview.

### **Ethical considerations**

The researcher recognised that ethical considerations were a critical aspect of her study from the initial proposal to the production of the report (Muringa, 2019). As Davies and Dodd (2012) suggest ethics are beyond abstract rules and principles as they are an inseparable component of the research. The researcher upheld ethical standards in practice by ensuring the following:

#### ***Informed consent***

Anderson (2011, as cited by Xu, Baysari, Stocker, Leow, Day, & Carland, 2020, p.21) stated that informed consent is the “voluntary choice ... based on sufficient information and adequate understanding of both the proposed research and the implications of participating in it”. All respondents were, therefore, given an information sheet that introduced the researcher, detailed the aims of the study, outlined the interview schedule, and explicitly stated their right to withdraw participation at any point during the interview session. The document also requested permission for the researcher to audio-record the interview. The participants read the information sheet, were allowed to ask the researcher any questions and were then asked to sign a consent form. This was all done to ensure that the participants *voluntarily* agreed to partake in the study.

#### ***Anonymity and confidentiality***

The anonymity of participants was preserved using self-created pseudonyms to conceal the student’s real identities. To maintain confidentiality, the data has been stored in a safe and secure USB. The data is stored for validation purposes and has been saved using a password to ensure it is kept safe and confidential. The interviews will be destroyed after 2 years.

#### ***Non-maleficence***

The researcher upheld the principle of non-maleficence, which is defined as “refraining from harming, implying that risks to participants should be kept at a minimum” (Ross & Deverell, 2010, p. 5). The researcher, being a trainee psychologist, used her skills to be vigilant for signs of psychological distress. A box of tissues and a bottle of water were readily available during the interviews if a participant needed a break or moment of reprieve from the interview. The researcher was also prepared to refer students to the free and accessible student counselling services on campus should they have had a traumatic response. Despite the study being a

sensitive and stressful topic, none of the participants reacted strongly or showed signs of trauma.

### ***Non-deception of participants***

The researcher thoroughly explained to participants before their consent that they were free to withdraw at any time during the study if they felt uncomfortable or triggered by the nature of questioning. Explicit details were shared with participants without feigning or exaggeration. The researcher was open about the study aims and objectives and allowed the students to ask questions which the researcher answered transparently. Furthermore, the researcher applied for ethical clearance to conduct the study through the UKZN Ethics Committee. The proposal was then reviewed by the University of KwaZulu-Natal Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee which granted the research full approval with protocol reference number HSSREC/00001204/2020 (see Appendix B). This ensured that the research was considered not to be potentially harmful to the participants.

### **Data analysis**

Qualitative data analysis is understood to be useful in revealing and explaining personal cultural practices and experiences (Flick, 2013). The current study was interested in exploring the views of a sample of 11 Black African, postgraduate students on various aspects related to intimate femicide. Data analysis allows the researcher to explore the data they have collected as well as to compare how it might be different or similar to evidence gathered by previous researchers. The relevant study employed a thematic approach to analysing data. Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that thematic analysis is a method that enables the researcher to “identify, analyse and report on patterns and themes” generated from the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 11).

### **Thematic analysis**

Braun and Clarke (2006) devised a six-step guide to analysing data in qualitative research. The guide assists researchers to use their data to respond to the applicable research questions. Braun and Clark (2006) motivate that the process of analysis follows an iterative, forward, and backward movement through the steps and is not linear in operation. This study utilised the six steps of analysis to conduct the analysis. The researcher followed the following six steps systematically to analyse the data.

### ***Step 1: Getting familiar with the data***

Braun and Clarke (2006) argue this step involves reading the transcripts twice as a way of familiarising oneself with the content before engaging in analysis of the data. This first phase was significant as it helped the researcher to immerse herself in the data before the coding process. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 16) argue that the process of immersion typically entails "repeated reading of the data and reading the data actively - searching for meanings, patterns and so on". The researcher began the analysis process by reading and re-reading the transcripts until she felt she was familiar with the data.

### ***Step 2: Generating initial codes***

Step two is a continuation of step one and involved the researcher exploring the data in a structured way and categorising numerous data set into codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). "Codes identify a feature of the data (semantic content or latent) that appears interesting to the analyst, and refer to the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon", Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 18). Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 12) assert that there is a distinction between "inductive and deductive" analysis. For the relevant research, an inductive approach was best suited for analysis since the ecological model was utilised to analyse the transcribed interviews and provided pre-existing codes as a template to guide the researcher in reading and searching for patterns in the data. The pre-existing inductive codes were the various levels from the ecological model, namely: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem and the macrosystem. The researcher utilised various colour pens to categorize each level of analysis, and as she read through the transcribed interviews, she would, using the relevant colour, highlight the factor the student was discussing. The researcher utilised various colour pens to categorize each level of analysis, and as she read through the transcribed interviews, she would demarcate the parts which resonated with the relevant level of analysis. She utilised different sheets of paper to represent the various levels of analysis of the ecological model and wrote the extract verbatim under the relevant heading. For example, when she discovered an extract which she felt belonged under the heading, 'exosystemic factors' she would transcribe the quote under the relevant heading.

### ***Step 3: Searching for themes***

This step of analysis focuses on using the codes to discover deeper themes and sub-themes. The researcher generated potential themes from the initial codes and sorted them to generate overall themes from the data. The four over-arching themes were: microsystem, mesosystem,

exosystem and macrosystem. Under these main themes, other sub-themes emerged which further delineated the initial themes. Therefore, this phase of analysis involved finding subthemes under the extracts listed for the over-arching themes. To illustrate, the researcher found sub-themes under the main microsystemic theme, under which she found the following sub-themes: *age and relationship of the victim to the offender*. For the over-arching mesosystemic theme, she found various sub-themes: *family dysfunction and parental conflict involving violence*.

#### ***Step 4: Reviewing themes***

Reviewing themes is a process whereby each over-arching theme is deconstructed to what should be included or excluded so that only themes which respond to the research question are included. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model served as a guide for reviewing old themes and assimilating new ones. During this phase of analysis, sub-themes were further deduced to elicit new sub-themes. For example, under the over-arching theme of 'exosystemic factors', the sub-theme of *media representation of IPV in South Africa* was identified, other sub-themes under these include *social representations of IPV as an extreme act of physical violence, constructing representations of 'mundane' violence and reinforcing of victim status*.

#### ***Step 5: Defining and naming themes***

Braun and Clarke (2006) posit this step is an extension of the former, which includes reviewing and refinement of themes. Defining and naming themes is pivotal to concentrating themes and taking into cognizance the ecological framework which informs the current study. For each theme and sub-theme, the researcher identified relevant data extracts and wrote an analysis for each theme. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 22) suggest that "as well as identifying the 'story' that each theme tells, it is important to consider how it fits into the broader overall 'story' that you are telling about your data". This phase of analysis attempts to move beyond transcribed quotes and explains the narrative the data was put forward in response to the research questions. For *microsystemic factors*, subthemes include *age and the relationship of the victim to the offender*. For *mesosystemic factors*, subthemes are *family dysfunction and parental conflict involving violence*. *Exosystemic factors* comprise *geographic spatial design and GBV, Media and intimate femicide* and *Media's representation of IPV in South Africa*. For the latter, sub-themes that emerged are *social representations of IPV as an extreme act of physical violence, constructing representations of 'mundane' violence and reinforcing victim status*.

For the overarching macrosystemic theme, subthemes that emerged entail *socioeconomic factors and poor social security, family and community norms, gender role stereotypes, masculinity and race in South Africa, hegemonic masculinity, gender and power in intimate relationships, the inadequate legal and criminal justice system, governmental interventions, non-governmental interventions and gun access and ownership laws.*

#### ***Step 6: Producing the report***

The concluding step entails the researcher producing a report after establishing both the dominant and sub-dominant themes from the data set. This serves to confirm the saturation and prevalence of the themes from the data. This step of analysis is found in Chapter four, which is the analysis and discussion section. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 93) assert that the report “provides a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting account of the story the data tell”. Furthermore, it displays the usefulness of the extensive procedures employed during the analysis. The researcher has attempted to relate the analysis to the ecological model rather than to limit the evidence by giving mere descriptions of the information.

#### **Trustworthiness of the study**

Trustworthiness is “concerned with how the researcher can both be convinced and also convince others that the research findings are valuable” (Babbie, & Mouton, 2004). The current study explored student’s views on intimate femicide. Trustworthiness was ensured using credible research methods and traceable sources of data to ascertain the transferability, credibility dependability and confirmability of the relevant study. The current study utilised Guba’s (1985) model of trustworthiness to ascertain the accuracy of the results of the study (Shenton, 2004). The model consists of four necessary criteria to achieve trustworthiness, namely: transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the research inquiry (Shenton 2004).

#### ***Transferability***

According to Shenton (2004, as cited in Ngubane, 2018, p. 49), “external validity is often concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations”. Similarly, Connelly (2016) argues that qualitative researchers emphasise the narratives given by individual participants, without generalising these stories. In this study, transferability was ascertained by providing “a rich, detailed description of the context, location, and people studied, and by being transparent about analysis and trustworthiness” (Connelly, 2016, p. 436).

The researcher compiled and articulated the data in a manner which would allow the reader to draw their conclusion on the transferability of the study.

### ***Credibility***

Confidence in the credibility of both the findings and the overall study is essential (Polit & Beck, 2014, p. 21). To ensure the credibility of a study, the researcher must ask, “was the study conducted using standard procedures typically used in the indicated qualitative approach or was an adequate justification provided for the variations”? (Connelly 2016, p. 436). During this study, the researcher utilised different steps to confirm the credibility of the data. The researcher continuously interacted with and reflected on the data throughout the process. The researcher utilised verified and acceptable research methods of qualitative research. For example, both the data collection methods and data analysis were adopted from previous research which was successful in studying individual views on social phenomena (Shenton, 2004). Therefore, the interview schedule and prompts were uniform during the inquiry. Credibility in the study was also maintained by the consistent analysis of the data. The researcher did not falsify any information to support predetermined outcomes.

### ***Dependability***

According to Muringa (2019, p. 138), dependability pertains to “the constancy of the data over time”. To ascertain dependability in the current study, the researcher conserved documentation of the activities which occurred throughout the process of the study. Likewise, changes and decisions made to different aspects of the study were noted.

### ***Confirmability***

In social science research, confirmability refers to “the level of neutrality or the extent findings are consistent, constant and may well be repeated” (Muringa, 2019 p. 139). To ensure confirmability, researchers keep record of all their notes and decisions throughout the progression of their research analysis (Connelly, 2016 as cited by Muringa, 2019). The notes are kept to allow colleagues or the reviewer to review the various process the researcher took in conducting the study. To ensure confirmability of the findings of the relevant study, the researcher kept notes, recordings and findings which are available for other researchers or the Supervisor to review and discuss in debriefing sessions to prevent prejudice from only one’s subjective analysis of the study.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter described the methodology used by the researcher in conducting the study. The researcher explained and justified the use of a qualitative research design and the interpretivism paradigm. The researcher explained the relevant data collection methods as well as the sampling

techniques. Moreover, the steps to generating and analysing the data were detailed as were the steps to ensure trustworthiness of the data.

## CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter, I present an analysis and discussion of the findings from my study. The chapter includes excerpts from the semi-structured interview transcripts which were classified into dominant themes and sub-themes from the generated data. Several themes emerged from the responses provided by participants and the researcher interpreted these by linking themes with research from the literature review.

### Microsystemic Factors

#### *Jealousy, anger, and emotional insecurity*

Bronfenbrenner exemplified the microsystem as the most proximal context in which a person is located, such as childcare facilities, home, recreational spaces, workplace settings and in which the evolving person engages in face-to-face interactions with others (Rosa et al. 2013). Six of the participants were in support of the view that male partners attack their intimate partners because of jealousy, anger, and insecurities. In the extract below, Nonkanyiso shares her view on how an emotion such as jealousy may lead a male intimate into assaulting his female intimate:

*“It’s jealousy. If the partner is possessive. Things like that. This is all from the news. We are thinking of femicide. Yeah, it’s jealousy, uh, yeah. Possessiveness, it is usually the two”.*

From this response it appears that Nonkanyiso above sees jealousy and possessiveness as intertwined. Furthermore, in her response, she clearly states, “this is all from the news,” thus her view is informed by exposure to how intimate femicide is depicted and reported on in the media. Contrastingly, Thandiwe expresses that intimate femicide is embedded or driven by intense emotions which may drive behaviour:

*“I feel as if people under the influence of emotion can do almost anything”.*

His reference to people “can do almost anything,” under the influence of emotion suggests that intense emotions can lead to extreme reactions and people doing things they would not likely do if they were not under the influence of these emotions. In this way, Thandiwe recognises that intense emotions can mediate decision-making.

The responses above indicate an understanding that intense emotions are one of the intrapersonal factors that lead to femicide. Such results were confirmed by the work of Ndlovu

et al. (2020) who also interviewed students who stated that emotions such as jealousy and insecurity were key emotions which propelled men into being perpetrators of intimate femicide. This aligns with the psychoanalytic perspective used to explain why male intimates may commit intimate femicide. Mathews et al. (2015, p. 121) state that splitting is useful in explaining the separation of female partners into the "Madonna" or "whore" as women are idealised as Madonna's initially in the relationship, but that with time men perceive an intense sense of betrayal by their partners, which increases their anxiety and female spouses are viewed as all bad (whores), thus enabling an acceleration of violence. Mathews et al. (2015) found that the jealousy evoked by the inability of men to trust their partner appears to emanate from their insecurities concerning their self-worth and that this unresolved conflict finds room to bud in the context of the intimate relationship. Mathews et al. (2015) argue that intense vulnerability is reflected by the possessiveness and controlling behaviour expressed by men towards their partners. The view of the role of intense emotions like jealousy and possessiveness is also confirmed in the research literature which suggests that these emotions are mediating forces. For example, Krahe (2018, p. 7) posits that "dispositional proneness to anger, and attachment difficulties, particularly jealousy, were found to increase the likelihood that men become abusive towards an intimate partner".

Jones (2002) proposes that intrapersonal factors such as emotions and personality factors contribute to intimate femicide. Zandile similarly suggested that unresolved emotions can be a source of violent behaviour among partners in an intimate relationship:

*"Insecurities, undealt with emotional issues".*

From the extract above, it is evident that Zandile believes that incidents of intimate femicide emanate from deep and personal insecurities from the male partner. Sharing similar sentiments, Zanda spoke of the relationship dynamics which form a sequel to intimate femicide in the extract below.

*But the most common, which is what your question is asking, for me it is, first of all, entitlement over the partner. Once a person has accepted that you know, that the other one belongs to them, it's like ownership over the other person. Once you feel entitled to someone, that you own them, what happens then, you begin to feel insecure when that person is with someone else. It could be anything: it can be your partner speaking to someone else, whatever the case may be. So, insecurity is another factor. Once you're insecure, usually what happens, you want to assert dominance over that person. It could*

*be asserted by financial power or the most common now is physical power: you assert dominance over that person. So, dominance is another factor, so here we have self-entitlement or a sense of ownership, insecurity and when you try to assert dominance over the other person which usually leads to violence because you are trying to overpower them, that is how you essentially trying to mark your territory over the other person- that they belong to you. That's the struggle so for me the common factors would be entitlement, insecurity, and sense of entitlement of the other person. I think those 3 usually play a role in most cases. Either one or almost all of them are always there in cases of intimate partner violence.*

In the above quote, Zanda denotes that a trio of factors works together to result in dominance and violence: a male partners' sense of entitlement and ownership leads to insecurity and ultimately violence. He emotively describes violence as a way of "marking" one's "territory", suggesting that a bruise or an injury is a mark of ownership. It is notable that Zanda studies under the *College of Law and Management Studies*. His insights are astute and link to a lot of research findings and theories around femicide/IPV suggesting that his studies have provided him with a critical lens through which to understand intimate femicide, alongside media representations and possibly his own experiences or personal observations.

Zanda suggests that the idea of being 'secure' in an intimate relationship is only an illusion that motivates an intimate partner to use coercive methods to achieve a sense of security so that the intimate partner does not abandon or exit the relationship. Another participant, Methula, expressed that most men struggle to regulate intense emotions like anger or to address self-esteem or identity issues. While Zanda saw violence as the outcome of a sense of ownership and entitlement, Methula sees it as a 'manifestation' of "deeper" internal issues that men are not able to deal with. Methula describes his point in the excerpt below:

*Someone just having anger issues that they don't know how to deal with. Uh, but I think it goes much deeper than that, it's just people having internal problems but them not knowing how to deal with them, so they end up, taking out their frustrations on the other partner. Uhm, I'd say, Uhm, it's just like internal issues, like people have self-esteem issues, unresolved identity issues, you know, things like that cause Uhm, I just think everything just manifests itself like, in the form of abusing someone is you having a problem perhaps with your self-esteem self-image, yabo (you see)?*

Methula felt that internalised anger may be a contributing factor to males committing intimate femicide. According to Methula, the anger that one partner is unable to deal with may be directed toward their intimate partner. Jack agreed with Methula when he suggested that violence in an intimate relationship is a means of asserting control over the intimate partner, as stipulated in the extract:

*So, I think yeah, it's just the need to have a control over that and altercations that come from there induce that kind of violence or sort of abuse.*

Methula acknowledges in this quote that violence in an intimate relationship is rarely a once-off occurrence and often assumes a dynamic, reiterative cycle. All the participants responses suggest that they view intrapsychic conflict as one of the significant drivers of femicide. Methula contends that it is a difficulty in managing personal emotions that leads to the displacement of frustrations onto their partners, although it was not clear why the intimate partner, specifically, would be the targeted source for the displacement of these emotions. Similar to Methula's response, Thobani suggests that a male intimate may displace his uncontrolled anger and frustrations onto his spouse, thus leading to the murder, as explained in the following extract:

*It could happen that when the male hits the woman, end up going too far so one day he might beat her, unintentionally, be so angry that he kills her. He could be so angry that he cannot control his behaviour since they couldn't control their emotions, leading to her death.*

Thobani suggests that perpetrators have a historical inability to control their emotions and impulsivity, therefore the murder is a final unintended consequence of physical abuse. Thobani's reference of an unintentional beating, unintentionally detracts the perpetrator from being responsible for the crime and indirectly portrays the perpetrator as a secondary victim of his emotions.

It is interesting to note that the participants did not refer to the age of either the victim or perpetrator, suggesting that they believe that in the context of an intimate relationship emotional processes serve as crucial triggers for the perpetration of violence, regardless of the age of either the perpetrator or victim. This is contrary to literature which found that the age gap between intimate partners is a risk factor for IPV among young women in South Africa (Jewkes et al., 2006). Similarly, Wilson and Daly (1992) as cited in Mathews (2010) from an evolutionary psychology perspective, argue that older male partners are anxious about younger

female spouses exiting the relationship for a more juvenile “gene pool”, which might contribute towards IPV and subsequent intimate femicide. None of the participants referred to an age correlation, instead, respondents emphasised the emotional processes which contribute to intimate femicide.

The participants collectively suggest that intrapersonal factors contribute towards femicide and this is aligned to many of the theories which attempt to explain intimate femicide/IPV. Baron & Byrne’s study in 2004 (as cited in Matthews, 2010) shows that a social psychology perspective proposes that cognitive dissonance is the reason for violence in an intimate relationship and it is this dissonance that allows men to suppress their feelings and defend their violent behaviour to protect their self-image. Festinger in his earliest studies of 1957 (cited in Nicholson & Lutz, 2017, p. 478) defined cognitive dissonance as “a situation in which two attitudes or an attitude and a behaviour conflict, causing feelings of uneasiness and immorality”. For example, although a male may believe that abusing his partner is wrong, he may justify or downplay his actions to her or diminish their impact to protect his self-image and convince both himself and his partner that the relationship is healthy, nonetheless. Male intimates seek to protect their self-image by exerting violence upon their intimate partner, to not only assert their masculinity but to make a display of their male prowess and dominance in the relationship. Contemporary ethnographic studies with young men in South Africa revealed that key constructions of masculinity include attaining obedience over women and violence is used as a method of ascertaining both control and respect in the relationship dynamic (Matthews 2010).

## **Mesosystemic Factors**

### ***Background and Upbringing***

Bronfenbrenner (1979b) states that “the developmental characteristics of the mesosystem are similar to those of the microsystem, the main difference being that rather than the activities and interpersonal roles and relations occurring within a single microsystem, they occur across settings,” as cited in Rosa et al. (2013, p. 246). Four of the participants suggested that background and one’s upbringing may lead to intimate femicide. Keziah expressed the view that a man’s upbringing plays a role in influencing how he acts out his behaviour in intimate relationships. For Keziah, a child raised in a family where there was constant arguing and physical assault will inevitably internalise and model those behaviours. She explains this in the following extract:

*The contributing factors, to me, the first would be upbringing, Uhm, how that boy child was brought up into being a man, Uhm, what they saw as a child? Did he see his father beat up his mother and his other staying with him? The child might interpret that as love, you know and when he grows up simply regurgitates what he saw at home and interpret that still as love and expect his father to stay because his mother put up with his father in that relationship. So, he does not know any other way to express love or voice what he doesn't like except to inflict violence. Another thing is society, where one grew up and was raised, Uhm, shapes how one thinks. A person from a village doesn't think the same way as an urban person. A person from a village does not respect women, they regurgitate how they witnessed women being raised from home whereas a person from the city might act differently because of their knowledge of the law and thinks twice and remembers they can't do something because it's wrong, because of rights, you know, consequences, you know and actions, so yeah society plays a part.*

Keziah's states that a child who witnesses a father beating his wife may come to "interpret this as love" and he may not know "any other way to express love". Secondly, Keziah argues that a child who is brought up in a village is, in her opinion, more likely to witness this abuse, than a child from the city or an urban area. Keziah proposes that an urban child is more likely to be exposed to the law and human rights that might educate them on the consequences of abuse and prevent it. As far back as 1998, Heise cited research from Hotaling and Sugarman (1986) who found that 94% of studies showed a relationship between men who witnessed their fathers committing violence against their mothers as children and later abusing an intimate partner themselves. This finding suggests that the perpetration of violence in adulthood is linked to childhood experiences consisting of witnessing violence at home (Heise, 1998).

This view appears to reflect Keziah's knowledge of both the law and consequences of violence against women as she is exposed to the constitution and socio-legal resources to deal with such matters since she is a postgraduate student in the College of Law and Management studies. Her response was synonymous with that of Thobani who also argues that childhood exposure to violence forms the basis of infliction of violence upon intimates in adulthood. Participants suggest that regular witnessing of violence among intimate partners in childhood normalises the perpetration of violence in adulthood. In the extract below, Thobani explains how childhood exposure to violence is referred to as a form of "social learning":

*Okay, I think it's one's upbringing. Say, perhaps one was raised in an abusive home or maybe one grew up witnessing abuse within the home. Say, for example, a child grows up to see his/her mother being abused by their father so as a result, the child ends up modelling that behaviour as an adult. What do they call it again? Uhm, social learning, when you end up doing and acting out the behaviour you were exposed to as a child. This person as an adult could end up being physically abusive to their female partner and belittle women altogether.*

Sharing similar views, Keziah, Thobani and Zekhethelo also express that the intimate relationship becomes a space for a repetitive form of an earlier childhood experience. Zekhethelo acknowledged how childhood exposure to traumatic events imprints on the mind of the developing individual and is re-enacted in interpersonal relationships if left unresolved:

*Uhm... for example, with background, it could be that when you were growing up, you were exposed to the violence at home or maybe in your surrounding neighbourhood and I think that goes hand in hand with the psychological because that then affects your mind and how you handle situations in relationships and how you yeah ...interpret things.*

Zekhethelo's view is important as it considers the interaction between personal psychology and wider environmental factors which are a key tenet of the ecological model that highlights that attention should not be on either the developing person or the context, but rather the social engagement between the developing person and his/her context (Rosa et al., 2013). Therefore, Zekhethelo argues that children who witness violence between parents within the home, re-enact this violence in other microsystems such as within an intimate relationship. The students suggestions are also in line with the findings of Jewkes (2002) who argues that men who have a childhood history of witnessing violence (sexual and/or physical) experienced decreased self-esteem, personality issues, attachment issues and were prone to normalise violence and were, therefore, more likely to be perpetrators of violence than those who did not have this history. A similar conclusion was reached by Mathews (2010) who argues that an elevated risk of being either a victim or perpetrator of intimate femicide is linked to childhood experiences characterised by witnessing the abuse of a mother as well as being beaten in childhood. Traumatic childhood experiences might impinge on self-esteem differently for men and women, in addition to normalising the use of violence (Mathews 2010).

## **Exosystemic Factors**

The exosystem is defined as the “third circle of the ecological model,” constituted by the space in which the individual is not actively involved but is indirectly influenced by, such as events that occur in one’s workplace directly affects what occurs within the household” (Rosa et al., 2013, p. 246). According to Guy-Evans (2020, p. 1), mass media, parent’s places of work, parent’s friends and the neighbourhood are examples of the exosystems. All eleven research participants expressed that the news reports on intimate femicide are heavily skewed and biased. Taken together, the key theme that emerged from participants is that the media often blames the woman in an incident of intimate femicide.

### ***Blaming the victim***

Media frames are important sources of communication and social constructions of reality as they determine which crimes are selected for public review and which crimes will undergo investigation (Branch, 2019, p. 26). Gillespie et al. (2013) argue that media frames are made up of three main elements: context, language, and sources. Previous research indicates that media utilises victim-blaming language by “focusing on the behaviour of the victim, including blaming the victim or excusing the perpetrator” and referencing the “actions, or lack of action, on the part of the victim preceding her death which, in turn, deflects responsibility from the perpetrator” (Branch, 2019, p. 31). Njabulo argued that the media often adopts an accusatory stance towards the woman for ‘provoking’ the man to commit violence as seen in the excerpt below:

*I’d say most likely, how it is reported in the narrative, I would say the blame is on the woman. Yeah, I would say that. The blame is shifted on the woman and the male is, or like, the woman is the one that provokes the man. I could say yeah, the woman always plays the provocative role, they are the provokers and then it’s like the guy had no other resort but to just lash out and hit her, so yeah... She should’ve known better than to, you know, provoke him, and to say all those things that could upset him.*

Njabulo points out that media often portrays women as ‘provocative’ tempters in relation to men. From his perspective the media uses indirect victim-blaming language like ‘provoke’. Such terminology focuses on the actions committed by the victim rather than those of the perpetrator and duly blames the victim for the criminal event. This suggestion is supported by literature conducted by Branch (2019, p. 31) who stated that indirect victim-blaming language “provides both possible motivations and justifications as to why the crimes occurred, and in many cases deflects responsibility and criticism from the perpetrator”. It is likely that Njabulo’s

views on the social constructions of gender in both the contemporary social world and the media are informed by his studies in the College of Humanities where social construction and post-modernism are modules of study.

Branch (2019) argues that newspaper articles construct reality through funneling their narrative of events so that stories coincide with societal norms, beliefs, and stereotypes. In the following extract Njabulo comments on how the media constructs Black men as the “exclusive” perpetrators of femicide, when in reality it is not the case:

*Locally, the focus is... it's racial, I'd say it's racial as if, like, male intimate partner violence, is a Black, it's exclusive to Black people only. Yeah, I'd say that which is not the truth, yeah, it happens to all races and all people from various backgrounds. The media is supposedly sharing information with the public, but it is just one-sided and tries to dictate segregate people into black and white, as if girls are all like this, all black people behave or think like this- which is not the case.*

Njabulo argues that media does more than just cover a story, it reinforces norms and ideologies of, for example, race and gender which serves to segregate people. Zekhethelo also critiqued how gender-role stereotypes perpetuated in the coverage of intimate femicides enforce blame upon the woman, as seen below:

*I think, at the moment, the way media portrays these incidences is still on its own a gender-based thing because I feel like, if it's a woman doing something to a man, the first question is, what did she do? Normally, it's like, people would ask what did she do? She might have just been defending herself, but we don't know the full story.*

Zekhethelo's response shows insight into the fact that the media does not report on alternative possibilities of the events leading to the intimate femicide, and, therefore, indirectly feed into the problem rather than addressing it. Like Zekhethelo, Zandile feels strongly that the media assumes that intimate femicide is a consequence of a woman's actions, thus solely blaming the woman and normalizing male behaviour:

*The media tends to blame the women for staying. No one wants to understand why the person stayed, like the circumstances that led the person to stay in an abusive relationship.*

Zandile believes that the media, inadvertently, justifies the murder by arguing that women stay in abusive, cyclic relationships and femicide murder is an inevitable ending to the cycle. In

making such assertions, the media forgets the woman is dually at risk if she attempts to exit or escape the relationship. Zandile's insight is confirmed by Das (2012) who emphasizes how the media generally displays women as helpless recipients of men's cruelty in traumatic relationships and women's efforts to oppose their victimhood is often omitted in media (Das, 2012). Collectively the students point out that journalistic accounts of intimate femicide are more descriptive than informative. Research conducted by Branch (2019, p. 29) states that victim-blaming terms used by the media include references of the victim's failure to curb their demise by including the following details: "how they did not prosecute their offender and not report acts of violence, how the victim failed to attend her court dates or did not make an attempt to leave the abusive situation". All these examples communicate the reasons why victims are responsible for their victimisation, instead of focusing on how and why the perpetrator committed a criminal offence.

In the following quote Minenhle reference that there might be "a deep story" behind the femicide but emphasises that this is not a justification for hurting someone and yet this is the view that the media perpetuates.

*Even if there is a deep story, I still feel nobody is allowed to hurt somebody just because they had a misunderstanding ngamagama (words). So usually, they protect the guy over the chick. It's how it is in the media.*

The "deeper story" alludes to the fact that there are complex factors leading to the femicide, but that these factors are not explicitly investigated or reported on by the media. Citing Bullock and Cubert (2002), Gillespie et al. (2013, p. 226) state that "distinction about the relationship between the victim and the offender is important for accurately portraying the context of intimate partner abuse that culminates in a homicide". She proposes that media disregards the inclusion of both the psychological and contextual reasons leading to intimate femicide.

What was striking about the participants' responses is that there is a common thread that the media reports disproportionately on intimate femicide. Research by Isaacs (2016) indicates that the way the media presented perpetrators of IPV as distinguishable from other perpetrators of crime undermines the prevalence of male violence in the country. Furthermore, this perception is detrimental as it "conceals the fact that male violence is an ongoing process, where the enactment of male power does not rely on extreme physical violent acts alone". Wilcox (2008, as cited in Isaacs, 2016, p. 499). Research has shown that many perpetrators of extreme physical violence have engaged in prior acts of violence (Isaacs, 2016). All the

participants felt that the media communicates that intimate femicide is a consequence of a women's conduct or behaviour towards her male intimate. This implies that women are responsible for the violence perpetrated against them and thus women are disempowered by the media when the responsibility of the murder is placed upon them. This view is perpetuated by the fact that so little is reported in the media from the perspective of the victim's family in the events leading to intimate femicide. The media employs a frame that ultimately leads to 'blaming the victim' which functions by, "minimising the perpetrator's action by focusing on the behaviour of the victim" (Gillespie, Richards, Givens, Smith, 2013, p. 234).

### ***Biased reporting to boost viewer ratings***

The collective consensus among respondents was that biased reporting of intimate femicide by the media is motivated by the need to boost ratings. Respondents argued that specific cases of intimate femicide received more coverage than others based on the socio-economic status of the victim/perpetrator and the level of notoriety of the victim/perpetrator in society. Branch (2019, citing Chermak, 1995) elaborates that the personal features and attributes of both victims and perpetrators of crime are indicators of the amount of coverage their stories will receive. The selection of cases for news coverage is dependent on intrapersonal features such as social status, race, occupation, and race of both parties (Branch, 2019). Therefore, uncommon cases often garner more news coverage as they are seen as captivating to the public and thus generate more sales for advertisement in media houses (Branch, 2019). Specifically, cases which involve "worthy" victims who are demised in the hands of "unworthy" perpetrators are intriguing as they link with captivating stories about bad versus good people in society Lin and Phillips (2012, as cited in Branch, 2019). In the following extract, Thobani suggests that the media's coverage of intimate femicide is influenced by the power wielded by some of the accused and how this might impact the outcome of the case:

*In my understanding, you know someone, when I see in the media, most of the time when the accuser is a public figure like that, or a celebrity, or someone who has money, most of the time. Omotoso, for example, is somebody who has a lot of power. Most of the time, I see their cases being dragged and delayed and their punishments are usually not as intense as the punishments of a person, like any random person, who does not have that much power as celebrities do or like that of public figures do. That tells me that, like, there is inequality in terms of punishing crime. So, these people who have money can get away with almost anything because they can pay their way out of it.*

Thobani is of the view that perpetrators of intimate femicide who are of a higher socio-economic ranking or influence in society tend to receive front-page headlines and prolonged media coverage of the trial and sentencing. This implies that media houses are primarily concerned with the criminal justice outputs of the case which are considered ‘newsworthy,’ rather than the phenomenon of intimate femicide as a social issue. Therefore, increased coverage is garnered for those of higher social ranking as this boosts the economic ratings of the publishing house. Previous authors have stated that media is the primary source of information in society and is instrumental in determining the profundity of the stories that are published (Branch, 2019). Moreover, the personal characteristics of the trio: the victim (s), the perpetrator(s) and the crime scene are equally important deciding factors in considering newsworthiness, Taylor (2009) as cited in Branch (2010). Keziah expresses her concerns with ‘newsworthiness’ in the coverage of intimate femicide murders in the extract below.

*I don't think the media goes in-depth into the notion of femicide. They focus more on the incident, the scene, the horrors of it, what happened and all of that. But I don't think they go into, you know, the history of it, what led to that. For the media, I think it's for the media it's about the headlines and what sells.*

Keziah believes that the media does not discuss the nature of femicide but limits discussion to the physical brutality of the murder and, therefore, fails to inform the public about the contextual factors about intimate femicide. In keeping with Thobani’s view, Keziah agrees the media is focused on headlines that boost ratings. The participants' views are confirmed by findings of media bias in news coverage concerning intimate femicide as newspapers are under pressure to release ‘newsworthy’ material which yields high ratings and sales. Previous literature has defined ‘newsworthy’ articles as those encompassing dilemma, thrill, and drama to captivate readers, (Gilchrist, 2010, p. 492, as cited in Isaacs, 2016). As forementioned, the properties of a crime help determine newsworthiness as the more unusual accounts frequently sustain the attention of the media (Branch, 2019). Chermak (2015, as cited in Branch, 2019, p.22) discovered that “stories involving very young and very old victims, or victims of high social status have received more prominent coverage”. Similarly, academic writers such as Lin & Phillips (2012, as cited in Branch, 2019) argue that the nature of the relationship between the victim and perpetrator has been a greater predictor of newsworthiness than the personal attributes of the victim or the perpetrator in isolation. This argument supports Keziah’s understanding of the reasons for intimate femicide cases receiving widespread coverage,

although lacking in-depth. As she states, “I don't think the media goes in-depth into the notion of femicide”. In the following extract Nonkanyiso expresses how media sensationalise stories rather than showcasing what can be done to address femicide:

*They sensationalize it. They sensationalise it, and it becomes a story, in most cases, I feel like they don't address the real issue, so it's going to be more about Reeva than it will be about Oscar and how he cannot get away with things and so forth instead of talking about femicide, what can we do, to make sure that it doesn't happen again. So, it's usually sensationalizing a big portion, it becomes a story than them dealing with the issue of aibo, this is what's going on and stuff, I think this is what happens.*

Research by Sutherland et al. (2016) defined sensationalism as the extent to which an article is provoking and captivating- this occurs through the selection of the stories, the details which are emphasized, imagery and language used to portray a particular narrative of events. The authors also argue that “media reporting on violence against women frequently offers audiences a perspective that is provocative but not necessarily representative,” (Sutherland, 2016, p. 19). Nonkanyiso's references the excessive use of sensationalism in the coverage of intimate femicide. She implies that in doing so, the notion of intimate femicide as a public health issue requiring social responsibility is negated by the media's narration of events. Furthermore, she suggests that media reports of intimate femicide work against the promotion of public knowledge and awareness of the conditions that may prompt the occurrence of intimate femicide. Authors such as Kouta et al. (2018) argue sensationalist comments stir intimidation and enforce gender stereotypes. Gilchrist (2010) as cited in Isaacs (2016). This is an important insight into front-page coverage which does not equate to an in-depth discussion of the phenomenon.

#### ***Focus on the perpetrator.***

The research participants collectively suggest that the media tends to focus on the perpetrator. In the following extract Methula comments on the Reeva Steenkamp case and how the media reported on the issue:

*Like for instance, in the Reeva Steenkamp (and so forth) it was like Oscar killed Reeva, you know, and Oscar was like the Olympian guy, the one with the medals, you know, so it was more about his image than about really Reeva getting shot and killed.*

Methula's response focuses on how the media focused on the attributes of the perpetrator "the Olympian guy", and "the one with the medals" which inadvertently shifts the focus from the victim. Focusing on the perpetrator is a media strategy that focuses on the attributes of the perpetrator, thus implying that domestic violence occurs within a localised group in society (Branch, 2019). Likewise, Thobani commented on the effects of focusing on the perpetrator in the extract below:

*Uhm, okay most of the time the media focuses on, I'd say focus on the perpetrators rather than the victims. So, it is like, the victim, like any effect that could've caused the crime on the victim is disregarded.*

Thobani argues that the media detaches responsibility of the murder from the perpetrator by making use of victim-blaming narratives which stir emotions of shock and surprise to media consumers which make the perpetrators seem as 'abnormal' members of society. This claim assumes that perpetrators with the potential for committing violence against women are identifiable by both their intimate partners and the public Branch (2019). A similar notion is echoed by Keziah who expresses that the media often focuses on the criminal aspects of the crime, as seen in the extract below:

*The only information they put out is the perpetrator when they will be sentenced and where they will go for trial. They forget the victim. In the criminal justice system, it's the state versus the criminal in all this the and the victim is side-lined.*

Keziah offers a distinguished opinion which is likely informed by her studies as a Masters' student in the College of Law and Management studies. She suggests that contextual and biographical information about the victim is underreported. It is very likely that her astute view is influenced by her exposure to such cases and how the media publishes information that supports their defence. The editors and producers of media houses are key determiners of newsworthiness, from the selection of stories, the length of coverage, the attended court proceedings, as well the framework used to analyse the story (Chermak, 1995, as cited in Branch, 1999). Correspondingly, journalists are influenced by their subjectivities when reporting news, these include the level of education, political party affiliation, demographics, and work experience. Orderson (2012) reflects on how the newspaper often trivialises and sensationalises incidents about violence against women by minimising focus on the victim's experience, which functions to deflect the perpetrator's responsibility for the crime.

Furthermore, a report compiled by Sutherland (2016, p. 10) stated that "media reporting has a 'murder-centric' focus, whereby reports of homicide often take precedence over-reporting of other forms of violence". Since homicide is the umbrella term for different femicides, including intimate femicide, the authors point towards the murder-centric bias employed by the media in news coverage of intimate femicide cases as well.

The findings above suggest strongly that while the media may problematically represent intimate femicide, the students are a critical and active audience of the media. The active audience theory in media and communication studies proposes that "audiences are not merely passive receptacles for imposed meanings but rather individual audience members who are actively (albeit often unconsciously) involved—both cognitively and emotionally—in making sense of texts" (Chandler & Munday, 2011, para. 1). The university students education may have partly facilitated this ability to critically analyse media representations of intimate femicide.

Livingston (2000) argues that the impact that the media has upon viewers does not depend solely on the quality of the content presented by the media, but rather on the viewers ability to select what they are exposed to and how they interpret and construct their own meaning from media representations. Therefore, viewers use personal experience and preference to sieve out meaning from media texts and broadcasts (Livingston, 2000). In the case of the students, it appears that their university studies have assisted with the sieving of meaning. In sum, students are not passive recipients of the media, but are rather active audiences, engaging in an active and critical manner with its content.

## **Macrosystemic Factors**

### ***Interim Protection Orders (IPO's)***

The fourth and most distal setting is the macrosystem, which distinctively embraces institutional structures of culture or subculture, including education, social, economic, political, and legal systems (Rosa et al., 2013). All eleven participants agreed that women are often discouraged from completing protection orders. Various respondents felt that the protection order was only "good on paper" and insufficient in protecting the victim from the real danger of the perpetrator. Due to this, the inadequacy of protection orders emerged as a theme. Under this theme, the sub-theme of high attrition of interim protection orders emerged.

### *Inadequacy of interim protection orders (IPO)*

Respondents such as Methula stressed the limitation of the protection order from preventing harm, as noted in the extract below:

*It can't prevent me from doing something, it will only deal with me, consequently, afterwards.*

Methula notes that protection orders impose legal consequences upon the perpetrator after he has committed violence against the victim. Although there is robust legislation (Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998) and protection orders in South Africa have been available since 1992, most perpetrators still “get away with murder” (Mathews et al., 2015, p.104). A striking view offered by Nonkanyiso is that inadequate implementation of protection orders is due to the lack of effective monitoring of adherence to the protection order as seen in the extract below:

*Whose monitoring them? Like, what does a piece of paper mean? Like, if I say I have a protection order against you, so what? And if you bridge that protection order who is going to be there in that particular moment and what can they do in that particular moment? You shoot me, I'm dead and then what? The media will let you know if there was a protection order, you know, how do you then enforce that? What are the penalties if umuntu (person) does not comply with that protection order? What happens? Do black people even go for protection orders? Or is it a white people thing?*

Nonkanyiso's view is similar to that of Methula who argues that inadequacy of implementing IPO's is owed to the consequences being enforced after the violence has already occurred. They both argue that more needs to be done to monitor IPOs to prevent the rise in intimate femicide cases. They allude to the inadequacy of monitoring the IPOs as the reason for the victims' reluctance of involving law enforcement officials, despite ongoing violence within the intimate relationship.

Nonkanyiso also stated that there is racial disparity concerning the number of IPO applicants among different race groups. Her view is clearly linked to her studies as a PhD candidate in the College of Environmental Science. Her view is informed by her knowledge of South Africa experiencing pre-democratic land and racial segregation, which impacted access to resources such as health, sanitation, legal aid, employment, leisure activities and education. As a result

of this, black people residing within the cities were prone to accessing legal aid (formal means) to settle interpersonal disputes whilst traditionally in rural villages, people would settle disputes within the family or local community (informal means). She suggests that paradoxically, urbanisation may have not altered the way most black people would resolve conflict within relationships as they are less prone to reach for help from law enforcement than White people. The effects of urbanisation and the experience of violence in cities are explained in the literature by McIlwaine (2013) when she states that although cities offer more resources for women to effectively compact interpersonal violence, by offering access to both institutional and economic support this cannot, however, be equated to the increase of women seeking out this form of support. She contrasts this notion by stating, “processes of urbanisation can create heightened risk factors for women, making them more vulnerable to violence at the same time as they may create opportunities for them to deal more effectively with it, whether through informal or formal means” (McIlwaine, 2013, p. 65).

#### *Lack of police sensitivity (IPO's)*

The key findings which emerged from respondents were that many victims drop out of the process of completing protection orders. Njabulo cited the inadequate service delivery at police stations in the service of law enforcement officials as problematic in the excerpt below:

*I think the police make it difficult, like in the police station, the SAPS specifically, I don't think they make it that easy for someone coming in to report domestic violence, a woman coming in, they are not cooperative because of the whole culture, you know, Uhm...The patriarchy, the masculinity, so it is like, it is almost as if, violence is normalised. Yeah, so it's like you're not taken that seriously, you're not assisted like, you won't find the police officer talking you through like, this is how you fill the form, you are pointed like, you get the form there for the protection order, no assistance, no care. Uhm, which is very discouraging, they make you feel like this is a normal occurrence at some point in your life this will happen. This is wrong, it shouldn't happen, so the police play a part in normalising violence.*

Njabulo felt that law enforcement officials lack the skillset to foster a cooperative, supportive environment for reporting GBV crimes and that, rather, the experience of reporting the crime becomes a tedious and belittling encounter at police service stations for victims. Furthermore, Njabulo argues that law enforcement officers minimise the violence at SAPS stations, thus rendering it difficult for victims to report incidences of IPV because of the stigmatisation they

incur at the service of officials. This finding is supported by Artz (2011) who posits that the reduction of IPO applicants is owed to the compromised implementation of the criminal justice system legislation, a persistent cycle of violence as well as the incompatibility between criminal justice activists and law enforcement officials which dishearten applicants from completing the legal process.

Alternatively, Methula offers a striking consideration of dependency issues that deflect victims from undertaking legal proceedings:

*Most of the time is, the victims most of the time end up dropping the charges because they are reliant on the person who is abusing them so also, a means of allowing people or victims of abuse to be able to stand on their own two feet financially.*

Methula suggests that some victims relinquish the pursuit of the IPO application due to co-dependency on the perpetrator. This implies that some victims may tolerate violence within an intimate relationship because of the transactional nature of the relationship for survival. Previous research evidence from the literature states that structural barriers for attrition of cases include ‘personal reasons’ such as financial or childcare dependency and permission to leave work (Artz, 2011). In the following extract, Minenhle suggests that the dependency may not just be financial, but also emotional. These ‘emotional’ dependency needs, may deter victims from completing IPO’s, despite ongoing abuse:

*There are always feelings involved just like when you are putting a restraining order against your own family. There are feelings involved so it’s hard to implement policy without considering that.*

Minenhle expresses the difficulty in lodging formal, corrective measures to punish the perpetrator whilst they form part of their mesosystemic interactions. This finding is supported by Dawson and Gartner (1998) who report that since intimate relationships differ in the level of psychological, financial, and emotional investment between both parties, therefore the degree of expectation from both individuals is also affected. This generates differences between both the conflicts and problems that arise within the intimate relationship. Previous research indicates that although police stations have been established to help endangered women against GBV, women often use police sanctions for conflict resolution than to press legal charges against the perpetrator (McIlwaine, 2013).

### ***Early intervention***

The key response that emerged from 7 participants is that early intervention initiatives are a crucial buffer against intimate femicide. Respondents argue that early intervention efforts could mediate the escalation from ongoing abuse to intimate femicide. The participant's responses suggest insight into the fact that the intimate femicide would not have been the first act of violence perpetrated by an intimate partner onto a victim. This claim is supported by research from Branch (2019, p. 22) which states that "when cases are not framed as intimate partner violence and domestic violence, it illustrates that the incident was an isolated event and not associated with past incidents of violence". Literature by Branch (2019, p. 22) indicates that "a woman is more likely to be killed by her intimate partner when that partner has exhibited violent behaviour in the past".

Zandile stressed that interventions within the schooling system might prove useful in curbing the prevalence of intimate femicide:

*I think it must be in you know your education system. It must be nailed at the primary level that violence is not acceptable, and not just that. I think there must be campaigns, where whoever is involved in these policy-making things are reaching out to young people at a very young age to say, if you saw it at home, growing up, it's not the norm, it's not acceptable, so yeah.*

Zandile argues that information and knowledge about violence against women should be widespread and that continuous awareness campaigns should be the norm. She suggests that this knowledge be coupled with resources and services to assist and inform potential victims. She suggested that violent behaviour is normalised and reenacted within the homestead where one engages daily. She implies that much time during childhood is spent at either home or school so there should be mechanisms to educate the public between the interacting mesosystems. Zandile's view seemingly has been informed by her upbringing, being a girl from the rural district, and growing up to be educated in a tertiary institution in the College of Humanities.

Keziah shared a similar view to that of Zandile in support of infiltrating the education system with knowledge on intimate femicide as seen in the excerpt below:

*At school, there should be lessons educating children about where to go after rape not what to do once it has happened. They must put more thought into IPV go to*

*communities and rural communities where patriarchy is more relevant. Don't go into cities and preach patriarchy, there should go deep in Empompomeni, eMbumbulu they should go everywhere in fact because the people know in the cities come from the rural communities and spread this propaganda in the city. They become with this mindset and fashion even though they now live in the city. Yes, it occurs mostly in rural communities, but it occurs everywhere. All men and women need to be educated about everything.*

Furthermore, Keziah argues for the consistent dissemination of information about intimate femicide in both rural and urban schools to ensure consistency and equality in the knowledge and services offered to the public. This suggests that there are differences in the experience of intimate femicide and geographic context. Keziah also states that both men and women ought to be educated about intimate femicide to not place the burden on women solely, but promote an integrated, social responsibility about the issue. This finding is comparable with research outputs that indicate that women living in African countries, especially those from rural areas, are prone to justifying their husbands' use of GBV, (McIlwaine, 2013). Previous studies from McIlwaine (2013) suggest contemporary data on the prevalence of GBV offer limited comparisons between rural and urban contexts suggesting that more research is needed into the association between GBV and urbanization.

### ***Harsher punishment***

The participants argued that harsher punishment of intimate femicide incidences is fundamental in reinforcing the seriousness of the offence as a punishable crime. Methula's response below advocates for harsher punishment to decrease the occurrence of intimate femicide in society:

*I think uhm, harsher punishments should be like, uhm, given to convicted offenders cause right now, most people do it because they know ukuthi charges will be dropped, courts will not really uh, follow up with everything that's going on after the incident has been reported.*

His opinion considers the broader social impact of how media covers every intimate femicide incident and how the legal ramifications affect what other men perceive to be the consequences of enacting violence against women. Methula's view is possibly informed by his acquired knowledge about socialisation practices in his studies from the College of Humanities.

Similarly, Nonkanyiso shared a similar opinion concerning enforcing stringent punishment for intimate femicide crimes:

*I think that is important. Serious repercussion for breaching of any policy of, serious repercussions, kwaziwe ukuthi akudlalwa (let it be known that there are no games) or you'll kill someone and then go for trial which lasts for months and then, weeping family members and parents weep that oh, 'she was a very bright student' and all that stuff, come on, let's talk about stuff that matters, like keep it moving.*

Additionally, Nonkanyiso suggests the reduction of lengthy trials for perpetrators which disempower both the deceased' family and members of the public witnessing the criminal procedure of such crimes in the media. She argues for a more informative than a descriptive journalistic recollection of intimate femicide to bolster the collective impact of such crimes. Authors such as Kouta et al. (2018) argue that intimate femicide should not be referred to by other names in the media, because substitute terms such as 'love crime,' or 'crime of passion,' are often misleading. Furthermore, previous researchers argue that referring to intimate femicide in the media instead of using alternative terms enhances public awareness of intimate femicide.

### ***Regular awareness***

The key reaction elicited by participants was that there should be regular IPV-related campaigns so that members of society remain informed of the available sources of assistance. Some of the research participants such as Thobani argued in favour of regular awareness to highlight the importance of the phenomenon, as seen in the extract below:

*I think the media can play a role in terms of, yes, I think they must play a role in creating awareness, in terms of intimate partner violence itself and the effects or consequences it causes upon the victims. I think there need to be awareness campaigns in schools, Universities, communities to make people aware that this is what is happening, these are the issues society is facing and these are the effects that this violence causes upon the victim and like, they should be encouraged not to do this thing. More awareness, I think.*

Thobani suggests that the media employ effective reporting practices to spread both knowledge and awareness of the dynamics of IPV as well as provide sources of refuge for victims. He further cites that awareness campaigns should reach "schools universities and communities,"

as these are contexts in which intimate femicide occurs. Thobani argues that discussions concerning intimate femicide should occur within mesosystemic interactions to reduce the likely perpetration of intimate femicide. In a similar vein, Methula argued in favour of informative, consistent campaigns on intimate femicide:

*You know and most of the time they just highlight that one profiled incident whilst this is something that goes on everyday life so if they were reporting about it because they cared, we would hear a lot more stories about these things in, like a weekly or daily basis but we only hear about it once in a while when a high-profiled person has been involved in such an incident.*

Methula suggests that the media only covers high-profile cases of intimate femicide, “once in a while” as a once-off occurrence which minimises the social depth of the issue. Authors such as Branch (2019, p. 26) argue that if intimate femicide is constructed as an isolated event that occurred “out-of-the-blue” then it would not constitute crimes within the spectrum of domestic violence. As a result of this, readers may perceive intimate femicide as unrelated to previous acts of ongoing abuse in a relationship, ignoring the fact that violence against women is a common indicator of intimate femicide later on. A consequence of this is that intimate femicide is diminished as an urgent issue in need of systematic remediation from all levels of society.

Nonkanyiso supports the idea of consistent coverage of intimate femicide targeted at a variety of people in a variety of contexts:

*I think indaba of just letting people know that proper dissemination of information across all genders, all spheres, nje, across the board, regularly, not if there is something that is going to happen.*

Taken together, both Nonkanyiso and Methula support regular awareness of IPV-related crimes as essential in conscientising individuals about the issue and likewise providing resources for potential victims, friends, or family members of women at risk to access. Sibanda-Moyo et al. (2017) state that certain benefits of campaigns are the publicity of GBV (including crimes against children), encouraging survivors to find assistance, and empowering community members to denounce violations against women and children. The need for systematic intervention and awareness campaigns in the fight against intimate femicide in South Africa is extensively advocated for by researchers in the field (Matthews 2010).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter set out to present, analyse, and discuss the key findings. The data was analysed using Braune and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach. In this case, the key themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data were presented and analysed through the lens of the socio-ecological perspective and literature on the topic.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION**

### **Introduction**

The previous chapter presented the analysis and discussion of the findings. The present chapter summarises the overall key findings of the study, discusses the implications of the study, outline the studies limitations, and makes suggestions for future research.

The study reported on in this thesis adopted an ecological framework to analyse the views of eleven university students regarding the factors driving intimate femicide, the portrayal of intimate femicide cases in the media, and interventions aimed at addressing the scourge. The study was motivated by a review of the literature which found that there was limited research that focuses on how university students view and explain intimate femicide and this study aims to add to the existing body of work.

The study was informed by three critical research questions:

1. What are students' views on the causes of intimate femicide in South Africa?
2. What are students' views of the media's portrayal of crimes related to intimate femicide?
3. What are students' views of the current programs and policies for intimate femicide in South Africa?

To address these questions, a qualitative research approach embedded within an interpretivist paradigm was employed because the researcher aimed to explore how students view various aspects of intimate femicide within the socio-cultural context in which they are embedded. Individual semi-structured interviews were utilised to generate data. Eleven postgraduate students, ranging from ages 18-30, were purposively selected and interviewed using semi-structured interviews. These students were from a range of different colleges including Agriculture, Earth and Environmental Sciences, Law and Management Studies and the Humanities. Due to the demographics of the university, the participants in this study happen to have all been Black African students. Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis approach was utilised to identify, interpret, and report on the main themes of the study. The following section provides a synthesized overview of the main findings of the study.

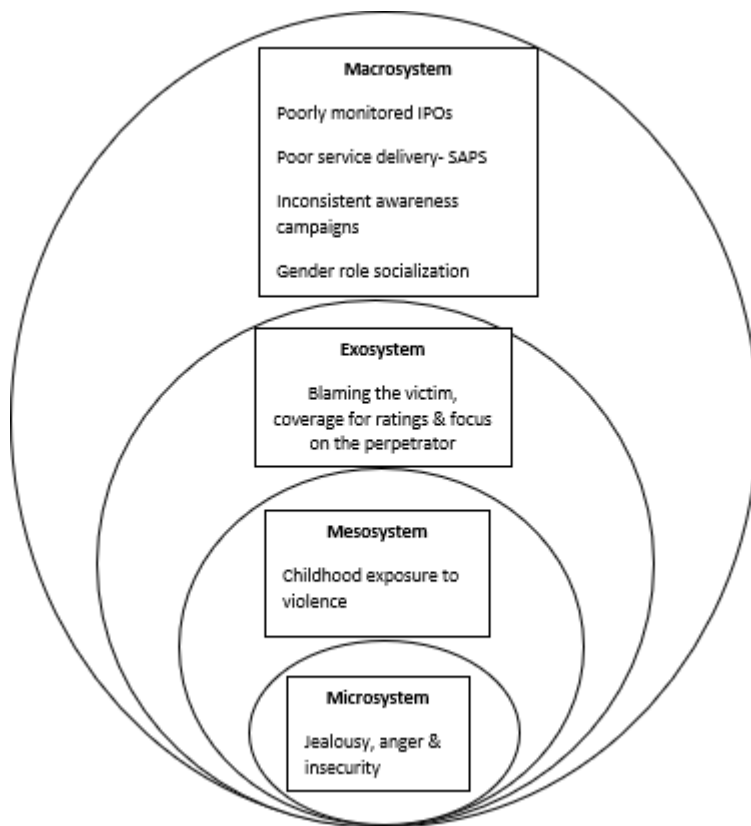
### **Key findings of the study**

This section discusses the key findings of the research. When the findings and discussion of the study are considered as a whole, four key findings emerge:

1. Students are aware of various factors at various levels of influence as driving femicide
2. Students' views on femicide appear to be mediated by their studies
3. Students are an active audience of media representations of femicide
4. Students point to the need for multi-level interventions to address femicide

*Students are aware of various factors at various levels of influence as driving femicide*

The following diagram presents a schematic overview of the various factors at various levels of the ecological model that the students collectively identified as driving femicide from their perspectives.



**Figure 5.1. A diagrammatic representation of the various components identified by students at various levels of the ecological model that drive femicide.**

The factors that students identified as driving intimate femicide ranged from intrapersonal emotions, inappropriate media representations, to insufficient protection orders. In sum, the students expressed a holistic understanding of the various factors which drive the intimate femicide pandemic. The researcher was impressed with the fact that the students' views were in line with much of the research that has explored IPV and femicide. When considered as a

whole, their views confirm that the issue of intimate femicide cannot be understood in isolation to the context in which it occurs. It is tempting to explain femicide from an individual perspective, focusing on intrapersonal factors like emotions, however, as the students indicate, it is a deeply complex issue that is driven by several factors at intersecting levels of influence.

Under the *microsystemic factors*, participants reported that intense emotions such as jealousy, anger and insecurity are some of the intrapersonal factors that lead to intimate femicide. Although intrapersonal factors are key driving factors of intimate femicide, participants argued these are not exclusive of other contextual factors too. The students confirm the literature that proposes that intimate femicide is partly the outcome of individual internal conflicts and feelings that are stirred over time by the changing dynamics of an intimate relationship. The participants argued that perpetrators of intimate femicide were individuals who had a diminished ability to reflect and restrain their abusive tendencies towards their partners as participants argued that the murder was the final consequence of prior acts of violence.

The participants pointed out that mediums of socialisation in society, such as close friends, family members, community members, and mass media collectively contribute to the social construction of how men and women are expected to conduct themselves in society, especially in intimate relationships. They argued that violent masculinities are normalised in society and that gender role stereotypes are communicated in various social spheres making it appear that women *ought* to remain submissive even if experiencing enduring abuse from an intimate partner. This in turn prevents victims from reporting their abusers prior to the escalation of the violence into intimate femicide. Furthermore, informants pointed out how they believe that victims are often forced to 'weigh' the costs of leaving the abusive relationship, prior to the murder, as there are always co-dependency factors to consider in either staying or leaving the abusive relationship. Participants argued that women are taught to be submissive and passive amid their partner's philandering ways and violent rages, whilst men commit violence towards their intimate partners in the name of 'love' and because they are not taught to manage complex and difficult emotions in the context of hegemonic masculinity. The participants suggested that most perpetrators of intimate femicide were likely to have either experienced or directly witnessed GBV as an expression of love within their mesosystemic interactions during their childhood and may have internalised and re-enacted this similar behaviour onto their intimate partners in the only way they knew. Collectively, respondents proposed that adverse childhood experiences normalize the use of violence for conflict resolution in intimate relationships.

The findings of *exosystemic factors* suggest that mass media's representation of intimate femicide in South Africa is problematic and contributes to the femicide epidemic. Taken together, the key themes which emerged from participants is that the media often blames the woman in an incident of intimate femicide. Secondly, respondents argued that specific cases of intimate femicide received more coverage than others based on the socio-economic status of the victim/perpetrator, and the level of notoriety of the victim/perpetrator in society. Lastly, participants argued that mass media reports intimate femicide disproportionately by adopting strategies such as focusing on the perpetrator and sensationalising the murder. The participants felt that media houses provided journalistic accounts of intimate femicide cases which suit their financial agendas to garner an audience and boost sales and as a result biographical and contextual information leading to the murder was often omitted during publishing. Research informants noted how the linguistic terminology utilised in the coverage of femicide murders often blamed the victim for their murder, thus inadvertently excusing the perpetrator and detracting personal responsibility for their actions. This finding is supported by previous research which indicated that media utilises victim-blaming strategies by focusing on the behaviour of the victim and the lack of preventative actions on the part of the victim. Participants argued that high-profiled individuals who committed femicide often received lengthy media coverage and underwent trial for longer, due to media housing investment in the criminal aspect of the crime rather than informing the public of the gravity of the phenomenon in the South African context. The participants point out that the media representations instil hopelessness in their readers, leaving them with the impression that they or a loved one would not receive the public support, services and justice needed to escape the confines of their own or loved one's abusive relationship.

The participants identified that a significant *macrosystemic factor* driving femicide is the inadequate implementation and monitoring of protection orders to ensure that they are adhered to. This finding is confirmed by literature that demonstrated that compromised implementation of the criminal justice system legislation, a persistent cycle of violence as well as the incompatibility between criminal justice activists and law enforcement officials dishearten applicants and dissuades them from completing protection orders. Various respondents felt that the protection order was only "good on paper" and insufficient in protecting the victim from the real danger of the perpetrator. Participants proposed that some victims relinquish the pursuit of the IPO application due to co-dependency on the perpetrator. They suggested that the dependency may not just be financial, but also emotional. At the macro level the student's also

viewed problematic gender norms as resulting in the emotions that contribute towards violence escalating to the level of femicide.

With regards to interventions, the participants showed a clear preference for early intervention initiatives as a crucial buffer against intimate femicide. Participants support the inclusion of content around the topic in the education system because schools function as a ‘second home’ for most people and are where traditional gender stereotypes and socialization practices are learned and reinforced. They proposed that superiority complexes between genders such as men feeling entitled to dominating women, and women submitting to that dominance, might be mediated by the discussion of intimate partner violence and femicide within the education system. Respondents argue, therefore, that education on these crimes should be integrated within the curriculum of all levels of education, from primary school to higher education, so that all citizens receive psychoeducation on the topic. The respondents also support regular awareness of IPV-related crimes as essential in conscientising individuals about the issue and likewise providing resources for potential victims, friends or family members for women at risk to access relevant services.

Conclusively, the informants identified numerous factors at different levels which highlight the difficulty of the issue. Hence, from their perspective it is important to consider all the interrelated levels of the ecological model and their impact on each individual in society instead of limiting understanding to just one.

### ***Students’ views are mediated by their studies***

As stated above the researcher was impressed by the students’ understanding of the complex set of factors that drive femicide. As shown in the preceding section they provided insight into a range of intrapersonal, interpersonal and macro factors that result in IPV and finally intimate femicide. As the researcher engaged in the analysis it became apparent that the students’ views on intimate femicide were partly mediated by the degrees they have studied. For example, Zanda spoke of the relationship dynamics which preclude an incident of intimate femicide. He stated that a trio of factors worked together to result in dominance and violence such as a male partners’ sense of entitlement and ownership, feelings of insecurity, and ultimately violence. He emotively described the violence as a way of marking one’s territory – suggesting that a bruise or an injury is a mark of ownership. Notably, Zanda studied under the *College of Law and Management Studies*. His insights are astute and link to a lot of research findings and

theories around femicide suggesting that his studies have provided him with a critical lens through which to understand intimate femicide.

Keziah expressed that the media often focused on the criminal aspects of the crime by emphasizing aspects of the crime such as the length and location of the trial. Keziah offered a distinguished opinion which was very likely informed by her studies as a Masters' candidate in the College of Law and Management studies. Her view is likely to have been mediated by her exposure to such cases and how the media reports on criminal trials.

An alternative opinion was offered by Nonkanyiso who stated that there is racial disparity concerning the number of IPO applicants among different race groups. She also suggested that paradoxically, urbanisation may have not altered the way most Black people would resolve conflict within relationships as they are less prone to reaching for help from law enforcement than White people. Her view is possibly linked to her studies as she is a PhD candidate under the College of Environmental Science, and is informed by knowledge of South Africa experiencing pre-democratic land and racial segregation, which impacted access to resources such as health, sanitation, legal aid, employment, leisure activities and education. As a result of this, Black people residing within the cities were prone to accessing legal aid (formal means) to settle interpersonal disputes whilst traditionally in rural villages, people would settle disputes within the family or local community (informal means).

Njabulo argued that the media often adopts an accusatory stance towards the woman for 'provoking' the man to commit violence. Njabulo points out that media often portrays women as 'provocative' tempters in relation to men. His argument suggests the idea that media uses indirect victim-blaming language. Informants such as Minenhle suggested that 'emotional' investment and dependency needs, may deter victims from completing IPO's, despite ongoing abuse, because victims consider their abusers as family members who still form part of their mesosystemic interactions, thus rendering it difficult to report them to third party law enforcement officials. In the same vein, Thandiwe expressed that intimate femicide is embedded or driven by intense emotional feelings which may drive behaviour. He adds that intense emotions can mediate decision-making and thus lead to extreme unprecedented reactions which one may come to regret later. The responses above indicated an understanding that intense emotions are one of the intrapersonal factors that lead to femicide which is a view that may be informed by his personal experiences or studies under the College of Humanities. Thobani argued that childhood exposure to violence forms the basis of infliction of violence

upon intimates in adulthood. He referred to childhood exposure to violence as a form of “social learning”. Likewise, participants such as Zekhethelo argued that children who witness violence between parents within the home, re-enact this violence in other microsystems such as within an intimate relationship. Zekhethelo’s view is important as it considered the interaction between personal psychology and wider environmental factors and is a key tenet of the ecological model. Zandile suggested that violent behaviour is normalised and re-enacted within the homestead where one engages daily. She argues that information and knowledge about violence against women should be widespread and how continuous awareness campaigns should be the norm. She implies that much time during childhood is spent at either home or school so there should be mechanisms to educate the public between the interacting mesosystems. Methula felt that difficulty in managing personal emotions leads to the displacement of frustrations onto their partners. His opinions consider the broader social impact of how media covers every intimate femicide incident and how the legal ramifications affect what other men perceive to be the consequences of enacting violence against women. Respondents such as Jack concurred with Methula in that violence in an intimate relationship is a means of asserting control over the intimate partner. His view may likely be influenced by his exposure to IPV-related issues or his studies under the College of Humanities.

What is common amongst the students in the preceding paragraph is that they are all studying in the College of Humanities. There is level of commonality in their opinions in that they focus on intrapersonal and interpersonal factors which drive intimate femicide. They also have a sense of the ways in which these intrapersonal and interpersonal factors are mediate by wider social and contextual factors. It is suggest that this may be due to the students’ exposure to content which are core features of study within the College of Humanities.

Although this relevant study did not intentionally seek to identify the direct correlation between the participants’ studies and their views on intimate femicide it was an interesting discovery that emerged during the analysis of the student's responses. In addition, the researcher is aware that the informants’ studies are not exclusively responsible for their views, which are likely to be influenced by various intersecting factors including personal experiences related to IPV and/or femicide as well as the students’ exposure to media representations of GBV related issues.

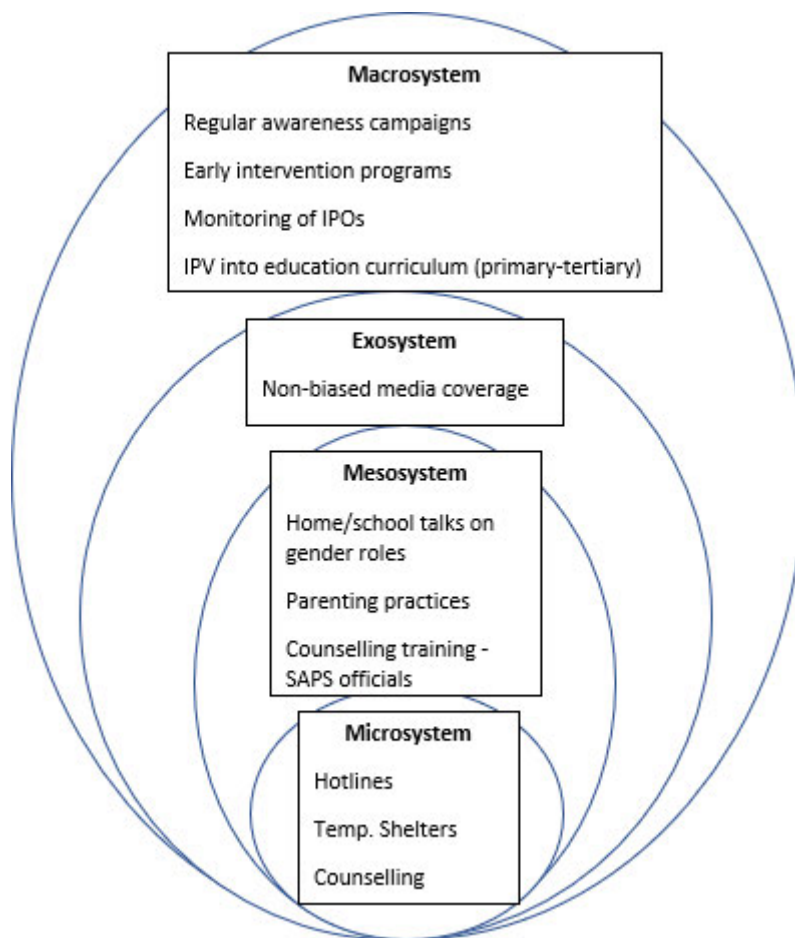
### ***Students are an active audience of the media.***

The students demonstrated that rather than being passive recipients they are an active audience of the media. Linked to the finding above about how their studies may have mediated their views on the factors that drive femicide, it is also possible that their studies may have facilitated some of the students' ability to critically analyse media representations of intimate femicide. An example is when Methula, who studied under the College of Humanities, stated how the media focused on the attributes of the perpetrator in the Reeva Steenkamp versus Oscar Pistorius trial. He expressed that the media used terms such as, "the Olympian guy" and "the one with the medals" which inadvertently shifted the focus from the victim to the perpetrator. Similarly, Keziah, a law and management student, expressed that the media often focused on the criminal aspects and that contextual and biographical information about the victim was underreported.

Therefore, the students are active audiences of the media as they critically engage with the media representations. The majority of the participants cited the media's subjective bias motivated by the need to boost economic ratings as a reason for their sensationalist reporting styles. Therefore, the students did not passively accept that the media presents the "truth" pertaining to coverage of intimate femicide cases. Instead, students used their sense of autonomy to dispute the validity of the version presented by the media concerning the coverage of intimate femicide cases.

### ***Students point to the importance of multi-level interventions to address femicide***

The students, in their discussion of the factors that drive the epidemic, the problematic ways in which the media represents femicide, and the limitations of interventions, point to the importance of interventions at multiple levels of influence to combat the rate of intimate femicide.



**Figure 5.2. A diagrammatic representation of the various levels of the ecological model with corresponding interventions for each level of influence identified by students.**

The respondents detailed exploration of the multiple factors and levels of influence confirm that interventions from the different levels of the ecological model in society are needed to conquer the rate of intimate femicide in South Africa. For example, the students stated how emotions such as jealousy and insecurity drive intimate femicide, but that these emotions cannot be separated from social constructions of violent masculinity, men’s sense of entitlement and ownership over women, normalisation of violence in relationships, as well as gender role stereotypes. Therefore, respondents suggested interventions at the *microsystemic level* should cater for the emotional state of both perpetrators and victims by offering hotlines, temporary shelters, and free counselling services. At the *mesosystemic level*, participants argued that there should be stringent training of law enforcement officials to offer a supportive environment that ensures confidentiality for victims who report incidences and apply for IPOs. As previously mentioned in the literature, emotional wellbeing in reporting would assist individuals in making an informed rather than an emotional decision when filing out an IPO. Furthermore, participants argued for more forum discussions within households and schools

on effective parenting practices to shield and protect children from childhood exposure to violence as well as challenging gender role stereotypes as they are re-enacted within these contexts. Furthermore, at the *exosystemic level*, informants suggested more robust protocol be observed in the journalistic coverage of intimate femicide cases to empower victims and present non-biased texts and broadcasts to the public. Within the *macrosystemic level*, respondents argued in favour of regular awareness campaigns, early intervention programs, adherence, and monitoring of IPO as well as the integration of IPV-related issues into the education curriculum from as early as primary to tertiary level schooling.

Collectively, it would be advantageous if both men and women receive counselling on the mesosystemic level, so both learn effective coping strategies to manage their emotions and acquire conflict resolution techniques within their respective microsystems. However, for these workshops to be applicable and effective, especially for perpetrators, this needs to be complemented with addressing gender role socialization both through education at the mesosystem as well as the norms around gender at the macrosystem, because all the levels of the ecological model are interrelated and have a domino effect on one another. Therefore, each intervention that occurs within the microsystem affects all the exterior levels and vice versa, interventions from the macrosystem trickle down and affect all the levels down to the microsystem.

The students also suggested that informative content regarding GBV-crimes and social constructions curtailing masculinity and femininity should permeate the education system from primary to tertiary schooling, by adopting a “prevention is better than cure” response to intimate femicide. Moreover, students offered insight into the limitations of the current interventions which could be researched more intensely in future research such as the effective monitoring of interim protection orders to yield a higher rate of completion of protection orders, a non-biased journalistic narration of intimate femicide cases, and inconsistent awareness initiatives of intimate femicide in society.

### **Implications of the study**

It is suggested that future research could explore student views concerning intimate femicide through a combination of individual interviews and focus groups to provide even richer data of the phenomenon. Furthermore, future research interests could also consider mixed methodologies (both qualitative and quantitative) to explore more formally how factors like

age, gender, and education mediate views on femicide. It is also suggested that future research could explore the insights of students who have lost friends or loved ones to femicide. The research showed that participants critiqued shortcomings of the current interventions concerning GBV-related issues and raised concerns that could be researched more extensively, such as how law enforcement officials are trained to offer assistance to victims reporting GBV concerns at SAPS service stations. This includes the protocol of filling out IPOs at SAPS stations as well as monitoring of IPOs.

The findings that the students' studies may have mediated their nuanced and complex understandings of the factors that drive femicide at multiple levels suggests that IPV and GBV-related issues could be more formally included in the university curriculum and across the various disciplines as an intervention.

The respondents' critique of media representations offered insights into how these biased representations can be addressed. For example, the students suggested regular awareness campaigns which are informative concerning the driving factors of intimate femicide, the contextual information of victims in reporting, and accessibility to services or hotlines for potential victims in reporting. They suggest that campaigning against femicide through policy and mass media would stir conversation among mesosystemic interactions aimed at reducing inequality between men and women in both home environments and schools so that children grow up being made aware of such issues. Furthermore, the students provide important critiques of the media that could be useful considerations for journalists and broadcasters of intimate femicide cases.

### **Limitations**

Due to time constraints, the researcher gathered a limited sample size which meant that she could not include more students from each of the disciplines at the University. If she had been able to interview more students from the various faculties/colleges, she would have been able to draw more conclusive insights into the ways in which studies in various faculties/colleges mediate views on femicide. This could be expanded on in future research.

Although the researcher strove for diversity by selecting students from various faculties, obtaining equal number of students across each faculty was an added limitation to the study. The researcher discovered that there appears to be a relationship between the students' faculty and responses provided and notes that this can be further explored in future research.

The findings of the current study are not generalizable to other populations as there are

deviations in socio-cultural contexts that might yield varying results. The relevant study utilised one method to gather data by semi-structured individual interviews. The research could have generated more descriptive data if data was gathered using a combination of both individual interviews and focus group discussions.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has attempted to identify and discuss the central findings of the study. The researcher has outlined the implications of the study, areas in need of further research and the limitations of current study.

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## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Informed Consent Form

Appendix 2: Schedule of Questions

Appendix 3: Letter of Ethical Clearance

Appendix 4: Turnitin report

Appendix 5: Ethics approval

## Appendix 1: Informed Consent Form

### Informed consent letter

I (full names) \_\_\_\_\_ consent that I have been informed about the study that is done by Nokubonga Ngubane from the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, School of Applied Human Sciences, Discipline of Psychology.

I agree to participate in this study but of my free will without fear or discrimination. I understand that I am not forced to participate in this study. I understand and have been informed that this is a voluntary participation and I can withdraw at any time I want.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

I have been informed about any available compensation or medical treatment if injury occurs to me as a result of study-related procedures.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at (cell: 0828248579/ email: [nokubongangubi@gmail.com](mailto:nokubongangubi@gmail.com) ).

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES; SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

## Appendix 2: Schedule of Questions

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Do you have knowledge of “intimate partner violence”?
2. What are the common contributing factors that are associated with intimate partner violence?
3. If a woman is in a relationship with an abusive man, do you believe that she is at risk of femicide? (Probe: If “yes/no”, How? Please explain)
4. How does the mass media portray incidences of intimate partner violence? E.g. Reeva Steenkamp and Zolile Khumalo murders?
5. What is usually the focus of these stories in the media?
6. What are the various policies that you have heard off, which assist victims of intimate partner violence?
7. Do you think these are effective? If, not, what are some of the barriers do you think prevent their effectiveness?
8. What other policies or initiatives do you think will be effective to assist victims of IPV?

## Appendix 3: Letter of Ethical Clearance



26 April 2019

Nokubonga Ngubane  
School of Applied Human Sciences  
College of Humanities  
Howard College Campus  
UKZN  
Email: [nokubonganguba@gmail.com](mailto:nokubonganguba@gmail.com)

Dear Nokubonga

### RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), towards your postgraduate studies, provided Ethical clearance has been obtained. We note the title of your research project is:

*"The exploration of perceptions of black University students on intimate partner violence (femicide) in South Africa".*

It is noted that you will be constituting your sample by conducting interviews with Undergraduate and Postgraduate students on the Howard College campus.

Please ensure that the following appears on your notice/questionnaire:

- Ethical clearance number;
- Research title and details of the research, the researcher and the supervisor;
- Consent form is attached to the notice/questionnaire and to be signed by user before he/she fills in questionnaire;
- gatekeepers approval by the Registrar.

You are not authorized to contact staff and students using 'Microsoft Outlook' address book. Identity numbers and email addresses of individuals are not a matter of public record and are protected according to Section 14 of the South African Constitution, as well as the Protection of Public Information Act. For the release of such information over to yourself for research purposes, the University of KwaZulu-Natal will need express consent from the relevant data subjects. Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted Signature]

MR S S MOKOENA  
REGISTRAR

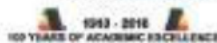
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#### Office of the Registrar

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 8035/2206 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 7824/2204 Email: [registrar@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:registrar@ukzn.ac.za)

Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)



Founding Campus: Durban Pietermaritzburg Westville  
Edgewood Howard College Medical School

## Appendix 4: Turnitin report

Turnitin Originality Report

Masters thesis by Nokubonga Ngubane

From Masters thesis (Nokubonga Ngubane )

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<http://dspace.knust.edu.gh/bitstream/123456789/14103/1/Francis%20Frimpong.pdf>
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- 31 < 1% match ()  
[Fish, Julie. "Lesbians and health care: a national survey of lesbians' health behaviour and experiences", © Julie Fish, 2002](#)
- 
- 32 < 1% match (publications)  
["Gender Equality", Springer Science and Business Media LLC, 2021](#)
- 
- 33 < 1% match (student papers from 05-Apr-2017)  
[Submitted to Cardiff University on 2017-04-05](#)
-

## Appendix 5: Ethics Approval



01 April 2020

Miss Nokubonga Ngubane (215007541)  
School of Applied Human Sciences  
Howard College Campus

Dear Miss Ngubane,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001204/2020

Project title: An exploration of University of KwaZulu-Natal student's perception of the media portrayal and policies pertaining to intimate partner violence (IPV) (femicide)  
Degree: Masters

### Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 26 March 2020 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 01 April 2021.

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,

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of Professor Dipane J Hlalele.

Professor Dipane J Hlalele (Chair)

/ms

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