EXPERIENCES OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN A TRANSNATIONAL CONTEXT: A CASE STUDY OF CONGOLESE MALE REFUGEES LIVING IN DURBAN, KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA.

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A thesis submitted to the school of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences, University of

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Supervisor: Dr Janet Muthoni Muthuki

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As the candidate's supervisor, I agree with submitting this material for examination.

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DECLARATION

I, **Ndabuli T. Mugisho (209526069)**, declare that:

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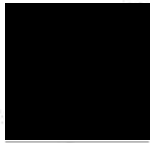
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DEDICATION

I humbly dedicate this research to my Beloved Family: my dear wife Bahati Valérie, our tender daughters and our lovely only son, Jemima Mugisho Shengamungu, Bethel Mugisho Kagasha and Samuel Mugisho. Equally, I devote this effort to my mother, Laurentine M'Nyabagugu and my late father, Laurent Ndabuli Nyakabembe, who gave me the very first courage and chance to attend school and so discover the scientific world.

Finally, this research is dedicated to all the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) men, particularly those based in Durban, South Africa, who are committed to addressing men's gender-based violence.

With gratitude, respect and love.

ABSTRACT

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a global issue that can occur in any setting, and the transnational environment is no exception. GBV among male refugees in their communities is a large field that needs more focus since most research explores opinions about female victims instead of perpetrators.

The unending armed conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) caused dreadful atrocities by entangling people's lives, a condition that caused many to flee their country. Women and men suffered the violence differently; women endured violence because of the cyclic wars and abusive social norms. While living in their home country, these Congolese male refugees were informed of GBV; either they committed, heard or saw it. They migrated to the transnational setting of South Africa, in Durban in particular but never left behind their home perceptions of gendered violence.

This research details fieldwork carried out in 2021 regarding the transnational experiences of GBV of Congolese male refugees living in the South African city of Durban. Specifically, the researcher used a qualitative method, with a sample of 30 Congolese male refugees living in Durban, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). In an in-depth telephonic interview, the participants, whose ages varied between 25 and 50 years old, willingly shared their experiences with the researcher.

The research findings confirm that Congolese male refugees' experiences of GBV, while living in DRC or Durban, built on their past cultural insights, values and practices, which they merged with their new context in their transnational setting. However, they also learned the local culture through their new connections, which they sometimes mixed with theirs. In this way, they created new techniques of abusing their women. This highlighted socialisation, the complexity of GBV, identities and masculinities as renegotiated in a transnational space. Indeed, the traditions and norms these refugees came with and those they learned during their socialising in the South African community of Durban played a great role in promoting the abuse of women.

By using a thematic analysis paradigm that is a qualitative approach, the researcher wanted to underline the context in which the shared manner of beliefs and observations of the Congolese male refugees and his multidimensional positionality overlapped to create understanding. The researcher equally emphasised masculinities and socialisation as critical and dynamic issues in the data collection process. The collected information shows that DRC male refugees admit that masculinities, socialisation and transnationalism were the main factors that influenced their violence toward women. As these men fled their country for safety, they willingly chose South Africa and the City of Durban, in particular, as host communities because they offered life opportunities. They mingled with local GBV tactics because the surrounding environment condones the violence. This has considered the socio-ecological context and opportunity in place since they build on masculinities and societal norms that encourage men to take advantage of abusing women in a relatively different context to that they experienced in their home country.

Moreover, the social conditions and the problems these male refugees face regarding social integration and gender-based norms in their transnational setting push them into perpetrating GBV. Lack of government assistance, discrimination over access to a job, and being separated from their home families and relatives cause them stress, making them fail to fulfil their role as respectable household managers and breadwinners. The situation has forced them to perpetrate violence against women to gain authority and respect. The onus of perpetrating gendered violence remains on the shoulders of society because masculinities and oppressive patriarchal norms keep these male refugees in their position as respectable men.

This research also provides critical insights into the dynamics faced by these Congolese male refugees because of immersing themselves in Durban, a city located in the province of KZN. The province has a high level of violence, particularly GBV, and accommodates many refugees from Africa and other continents. Research outcomes confirm that interviewees' constant socialisation and renegotiating identities opened a good opportunity to reinforce their perspectives of gendered violence. GBV overlaps with migration because local social norms, socialisation, masculinities and identities facilitate refugees in their

transnational milieu, mostly those from societies with hegemonic masculinities, to learn much from the local community regarding women abuse. Indeed, living in the Zulu community in the transnational context required these refugees to socialise for cultural and social integration. Consequently, these Congolese men had to learn local attitudes and beliefs about gendered violence in addition to the perceptions they brought with them when they relocated to South Africa. Overall, social integration required them to learn new approaches regarding GBV, and to renegotiate their masculinities and identity in Durban.

The themes raised in this research show that, in their transnational setting, Congolese male refugees perpetrate GBV to ensure that women remain submissive to them and that their power and social status remain valued. It was an interesting result as the interviewees were reinterpreting and redefining their masculinities and shared their experiences regarding GBV based on how they renegotiated their social identities and masculine influence to socialise and integrate into their new locale. Similarly, this research has explored how the interviewees' social integration empowered them by creating several versions of masculinity and various strategies for perpetrating GBV within their transnational milieu.

The exploration of these male refugees' engagement in sharing their personal experiences about GBV in a transnational setting clearly confirms there is a dilemma based on the dialectic of their experiences. GBV in DRC and the transnational environment remains the result of gender attitudes, masculinities, socio-cultural upbringing, and social beliefs the interviewees came with and those they met in Durban. Such context demonstrates how masculinities and identity renegotiation are hybridised for condoning GBV in a transnational locale.

Keywords: gender-based violence, gender identities, masculinities, socialisation, transnational setting

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AFDL: Alliances des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo (Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo).

AJPH: American Journal of Public Health

CEDAW: The Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discriminations Against Women.

COFAPRI: Congolese Females Action for Promoting Rights and Development.

Covid-19: Corona Virus-19

DBN: Durban

DRC: The Democratic Republic of Congo

DUT: Durban University of Technology

DV: Domestic violence

DVA: Domestic Violence Act

FAR: Forces Armées Rwandaises (Rwandan Defensive Forces)

FGM: Female Genital Mutilation

GBV: Gender-based violence.

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GW: Gendercide Watch

HIV/AIDS: Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome

HRW: The Human Rights Watch.

ICC: International Criminal Court

IDIs: In-Depth Interviews.

IOM: International Organisation of Migration

IPV: Intimate Partner Violence

IRC: The International Rescue Committee.

ISS: Institute of Security Studies

KZN: KwaZulu-Natal

LGBT: Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender

LGBTQ: Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer

LGBTQI: Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Intersex

MONUSCO: Mission des Nations Unies en RDC (The United Nations mission in DRC)

PSTD: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

RPC: Refugee Pastoral Care

RSA: Republic of South Africa

RSCP: Rape Statistics by Country Population

SA: South Africa

SADEC: South African Development and Economic Community

SAMP: South African Migration Project

SAMRC: South African Medical Research Council

SAPS: South African Police Services

SARS-CoV-2: Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2

SGBV: Sexual Gender-Based Violence

SSA: Statistics South Africa/ Sub-Saran Africa

STDs: Sexually Transmitted Diseases

SV: Sexual Violence

UK: The United Kingdom

UKZN: The University of KwaZulu-Natal.

UN: The United Nations.

UNDP: The United Nations Development Programme.

UNHCR: The United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

UNICEF: The United Nations Children's Fund.

USA: The United States of America

VAWG: Violence Against Women and Girls

WHO: The World Health Organisation.

WW2: Second World War

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Chapter one of this research discusses the research background and the outline of the research problem. In this section, the researcher has described the outbreak of war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and depicted how it overlaps with gender-based violence (GBV). The DRC's on-going armed conflicts had a significant role in the proliferation of GBV atrocities in large-scale public displays. They victimised men, women, and children via horrific rapes and other sexual assaults. Besides, rampant violence in communities was brought on by national disarray and an incompetent legal system that failed to hold offenders accountable. In addition, hegemonic masculinities and patriarchy had encouraged gendered norms and substantial social discrimination against women.

Additionally, the section explores the war and Congolese transnational emigration to South Africa. In other words, the DRC war has forced many Congolese to leave their country and look for transnational sanctuary in nearby nations, Africa, and the world. These men emigrated with their local norms, attitudes and beliefs about gender-based violence. Some of them arrived in South Africa (SA) during this time of war as transnational refugees. They had to immerse in the new environment by learning current social norms, including attitudes regarding GBV.

The context of GBV in SA has also been discussed in this chapter. Patriarchy and toxic masculinities, racial inequality and dehumanisation, gender inequality and the culture of rape make South African men more aggressive toward women.

The case of Congolese migrants in Durban is also covered in this section. In effect, the Congolese men seeking refuge in SA had expectations for identity and masculinity, which they learned in their new transnational environment. The section also includes the research problem and explains why Durban was an appropriate location for the research.

Finally, the section highlights the significance of the research. It also presents the research's motivation, scope and limitations, objectives, and key questions the research was built around, followed by a breakdown of the research's organisation and chapter descriptions.

1.2 Background and outline of the research problem

1.2.1 Outbreak of war in DRC

The Congolese wars originated back to the genocide in Burundi and Rwanda in 1994. The Rwandan genocide slayed more than 800 000 Rwandans in three months (Amisi & Ballard, 2005; Kankonde, 2010). The Hutu militia, known as the Forces for the Defence and the Liberation for Rwanda FDLR (in French, Forces pour la Défense et la Libération du Rwanda), together with Rwandan National Forces (Forces Armées Rwandaises-FAR) who perpetrated the killings, had fled to Zaire (today DRC) fearing the retaliation of the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) that was gaining ground. In 1996, Laurent Kabila launched a rebellion under the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL) from the Kivu Province of Zaire to oust Dictator Mobutu from power. Heavily backed by Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, which had claimed to be actively fighting for security causes, the Dictator was overthrown that same year after 32 years of despotism (Amisi, 2006; Kankonde, 2010). Laurent Kabila proclaimed himself the new president of Zaire and urged his former supporters to return to their countries. President Kabila's longing to become more independent from his Rwandan and Ugandan allies remains the real trigger of the unending wars the country has endured for several decades (Nest et al., 2006: 31). Kabila's decision angered Rwanda and Uganda such that a new rebellion was born turning against President Kabila. The battle was named the "Africa First World War" because it involved several African countries, militia and rebel groups (Amisi & Ballard, 2005; Kankonde, 2010; Lubunga, 2016; Mukwege & Mays, 2009). The war became so ruthless that it ranked the deadliest since World War Two (WW2), with its estimated death toll of around six million people, and vastly using rape as an inexpensive arm of war (Algotsson & van Garderen, 2001; IRC, 2017; Lubunga, 2016; UN, 2010). Meger (2010:126) describes that since 1998, Congolese women have suffered indescribable rape on a scale that has never existed. Similarly, Wall (2010)

argues that many women victims endured sexual violence in the Congolese armed conflicts as they were exposed to terrible mutilation that went far beyond simple rape. Even in supposed peaceful periods, many Congolese women never enjoyed that momentary peace and security in their location, either in their homes, workplaces or on the streets, because they still faced violence (Dhumma, 2009).

The effect of unending Congolese wars hugely devastated women's lives, causing them more GBV. Karbo and Mutisi (2012) argue that although the cyclic wars in the eastern Congo caused many girls and women to survive harsh rape, men also expelled them from their families. This situation forced many girls and women to be unwillingly involved in selling their bodies for survival despite the sexual violence they had suffered before, facing new forms of sexual assault (Dearing, 2009; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2004).

The next section explores how war contributed to Congolese transnational migration into South Africa.

1.2.2 War and Congolese transnational migration into South Africa

Upon the liberation of DRC in 1996, cyclic rebellions started, causing people to suffer the atrocities of wars and critical poverty, which pushed many Congolese to take the road to international migration. The concept of transnationalism, or transnational migration, is defined as a social phenomenon that stems from the intensified intersection between persons and the declining economic and social connotation of borders among different countries (Pamela, 1997; Peggy, 2001; Steven, 2001; Stephen, 2005). In other words, it is an open system that creates and maintains models of nation-states' identities, international and local institutions, and specific social and geographic settings (Kazadi, 2018).

Furthermore, transnationalism does not happen by itself since several approaches have attempted to explain it, such as technological development, which remains its most significant cause. Gonzalez (2020) and Peggy (2001) maintain that the growth of technology has facilitated transportation and communication transnationally by making it cheaper and easily reachable. In other words, technological expansion has transformed relationships among people in different locales by facilitating immigrants to stay connected to their home communities more than in previous years (Berg & Longhurst, 2003: 355). They do so without

disregarding the cultures and beliefs of their new community (Asale, 2006: 296; Peggy, 2001). Gonzalez (2020) summarises transnationalism as how refugees construct social spheres that connect their home country and host setting. These social rounds create a series of interconnected economic, political and socio-cultural circles.

We can also understand transnationalism in the context of economies. According to Barry (2007) and Kivisto (1992), the development of an international economy, along with unending modern armed conflicts, has subsidised both the conception of potential emigrants abroad and the formation of cultural, economic and conceptual connections between industrialised and developing countries that later serve as bridges for the international migration. To illustrate this, Netto (2017) and Strang and Ager (2010:597) admit that the same set of circumstances and processes that have promoted the location of factories and offices abroad have also contributed to the creation of an ample supply of low-wage jobs for which immigrant workers constitute a desirable labour supply. In this context, repeated armed conflicts, poverty and other violence triggers pushed Congolese men and women to flee to foreign countries where there is a need for the workforce. As a result, Congolese refugees were ready to be involved despite their poor salaries, which were still better than in their home country.

Transnationalism connects with the socio-cultural context as well. This is because both culture and migration help to understand the aspects of changes in refugees' social life, documenting transformations in their kinship and family structure. Besides, these socio-cultural factors tie the migrants' daily lives and the constructions of male and female perceptions about gender norms and violence (Cerwyn, 2015; Debbie, 2017; Terry, 2010). For instance, Asale (2006:296), Mosher and Sirkin (1984), and Mek et al. (2018:136) explain how transnational affinity enlightens family networks to symbolise cultural and gendered differences regarding power and status. From this perspective, Congolese refugees maintain ties with their home country to strengthen social contacts and support to return to their home country. In a transnational setting, these social networks are a strong tool that develops and propagates social moralities with a prime focus on family. Equally, Congolese male refugees have married women from good affiliation networks to fit well in the host community (Kostas, 2018; Wong et al., 2017). However, some limitations of family and

relationships also exist, but they vary depending on the life course in which the families live (Inge & Happy, 2016; Naomi, 2013; Randolph, 1916).

Transnationalism causes a cultural mixture of people through the combination of the homes' cultures and those found in their receiving land. Canclini (1995), Levit (2001), and Slater (2016) revealed that this context creates continuum hybridity as assimilation that adopts the canon and mimics hegemony. But, on the other hand, this forms a destabilising blend that shadows the canon, subverts the centres and stresses the spatial dimensions of these processes (Aparicio, 2004; Pieterse 2004: 73). Culturally speaking, and moving from DRC to South Africa, Congolese male refugees have mixed, compared and contrasted attitudes, beliefs and traditions regarding culture, which resulted in creating hybrid spaces and times for GBV in their locale.

On the other hand, transnationalism includes religious views because religion justifies patriarchal standards that promote violence against women. Jennifer (2014), Mountz (2011) and Watson (1997) argue that male refugees resort to religion to make women understand that submission and endurance are key elements that can open Heaven's doors. For instance, Lauterbach (2014) describes how religion among refugees in Uganda camps has been a tool that men use to subdue their wives. Similarly, Congolese men use biblical or koranic verses that encourage women to tolerate them to have harmonious households. Congolese refugees' communities engorge several religious beliefs, which confirms multiculturalism in their transnational setting. This explains how Congolese male refugees come from their home country with their individual religious beliefs. Still, once in South Africa, they join migrant churches that may also unite or merge into para churches involving a mixture of nations. Such merge builds socio-cultural structure, which unpacks how this happens in transnational frameworks by allowing refugees to integrate the new culture and their people without being detached from their countries of origin (Aparicio, 2004; Joel, 2013; Lara et al., 2020; Levitt, 2001; Ofra, 2016; Robert & Stephen, 2008; Watson, 1997).

The interviewees for this research are Congolese male refugees from DRC. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, a refugee is defined as someone who, due to a well-founded fear of persecution, war or violence, has been forced to flee their home country (UNHCR, 2019). Furthermore,

Amit et al. (2009), Kusakabe and Peterson (2013:962) and Musolff (2015:53) mention that the 1951 Refugee Convention is a legal document that 145 countries signed to clarify the term "refugee". The convention stipulates that a refugee is somebody who has fled their home country because they are afraid of persecution due to their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political beliefs in their country of nationality or habitual residence (Blinder & Tosi, 2005: 611; Martin-Rayo, 2011). Nevertheless, under contemporary law, the concept of "refugees" and "migrants" differ slightly in the sense that the way both leave their home countries are different. Kankonde (2010) confirms that migrants choose to leave their countries, though they may feel compelled to do so by circumstances like poverty. They also have legal protection and support from their home country, but refugees have not.

In South Africa, a refugee is defined as anyone who has received a formal written recognition of refugee status, known as form BI-1693, from the Department of Home Affairs, sometimes known as a 'Section 24' document (Smit, 2015: 50). According to the framework of this research, Congolese male refugees in Durban were interviewed to discuss their experiences with GBV in a transnational setting. These men left their fathers' land because of persecution and ongoing rebellions, compelling them to flee to other countries for safety.

Alternatively, a refugee can be a voluntary or involuntary migrant. Most refugees migrate because of multifaceted external constraints that are forcibly imposed on them and influence events, such as economic and political upheavals (Fry et al., 2020:650). These restrictions vary in their salience, influence and implication. Still, some elements of coercion and choice make the person become an involuntary or voluntary migrant (Muzumbukilwa, 2007:87). Accordingly, during data collection, the researcher discovered that few interviewees were able to flee life-threatening insecurity, persecution, and death threats. However, the vast majority admitted to being voluntary migrants, although they are legally known to have fled threats and persecution. In other words, economic considerations and better life conditions enticed and pushed them to migrate. Men fled the DRC, either voluntarily or involuntarily, due to the poverty and security conditions there and sought safety in South Africa despite its alarming rates of violence and GBV.

1.2.3 South Africa and gender-based violence

1.2.3.1 Forms of GBV in South Africa

In South Africa, GBV occurs in different forms due to gender inequalities. Woodward (2000) reveals that perpetrators of this pandemic include intimate partners, acquaintances, strangers and institutions, and they use physical, sexual, emotional, financial or structural gendered violence. Men commit most acts of interpersonal GBV against women, a partner or a family member, and the victim often knows her perpetrator (Barker, 1999), which in most cases leads to femicide. Mathews (2010) and Vetten (2005) think femicide is the extreme outcome of GBV since it involves an intimate male partner who willingly decides to murder his female partner.

South Africa's GBV is disproportionately directed against women and girls (Abrahams et al., 2018), but people of all genders endure it. For example, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or intersex (LGBTI) people often experience GBV because society sees them as not conforming to gender roles (Aaron, 2012).

Intimate partner violence (IPV) also exists in South Africa, and it is the most common form of GBV. It can occur in heterosexual or same-sex couples where the perpetrator, a current or former intimate partner or spouse, can inflict physical, sexual, and emotional abuse or assert controlling behaviours (Bollen, 2017:63).

The other form of GBV that is appalling in South Africa is domestic violence (DV). Some family members or partners commit this form of GBV to their victim, and it may include intimate partner violence (Niehaus, 2005). Domestic violence can also affect children or other family members, as well as animals and objects that belong to the victim.

South African perpetrators of violence also often resort to sexual violence (SV). This form of GBV infers any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work (Brown, 2012:90).

Furthermore, indirect or structural violence exists in the country as well. This form of violence is conveyed into structures that foster unequal power relations and create unequal opportunities. South Africa experiences structural violence since certain groups, classes, genders or nationalities have privileged access to goods, resources and opportunities over others. Draga, Stuurman and Petherbridge (2017) admit that this unequal advantage exists in the social, political and economic system of South Africa, and it governs people's lives.

1.2.3.2 Root causes of GBV in the South African setting

A single factor cannot explain GBV in South Africa as cultural and social factors cause it.

1.2.3.2.1 Patriarchy, racial and gender inequalities

The primary cause of GBV in South Africa is the gendered power inequality that patriarchy embeds. In South Africa, patriarchy gives men a dominant position in relation to women. Baume (2018) and Machisa (2020) argue that men's belief in their superiority over women strictly reinforces gender roles and hierarchy, leading men to manipulate women at their will, such as their right to sex with any woman. Besides, Herbert (1990) and Finlayson (2002) ascertain that men's power reduces women's social value and influence, and men's masculinity is associated with control over women in general.

During colonisation, the apartheid system encouraged racial and gender inequalities, and today gender imbalance is still widespread, although legislation has attempted to address it (Olin-Wright, 2009; Tibesigwa & Visser, 2016:37; Webster, 2006). Besides, Mona (2016:520) and Promundo and UN Women (2017:105) state that racial discrimination exacerbated gender imbalance, causing increased sexual violence and rape culture. The normalisation of gender inequality has significantly contributed to GBV in the country (Amoakohene, 2004: 2376; DiStefano, 2009:114; Tibesigwa & Visser, 2016:37). This regulation cemented because of various masculinities that existed in the country before colonisation. Cock (2011:37) establishes that hyper-masculinities harm women by consolidating men's abuse of them, which encourages men to rape and sexually assault women. Similarly, such masculinities strongly connect to gender discrimination and the country's rape and sexual assault culture.

Furthermore, gender inequality exacerbates GBV in South Africa because of ingrained social norms that support women's subjection (Baume, 2018; Gottert et al., 2016:1789; Machisa, 2010). Accordingly, Finlayson (2002) and Herbert (1990: 469) confirm that the Zulu tribe promotes the practice of the *hlonipha* (respect) custom, which makes men always represent women. This culture does not allow women to lead or dominate men (Hall, 1997; Bazilli, 1991); it silences women's viewpoints on decision-making because it pushes them to respect and support any decision men take (Koopman, 2008; Magwaza, 2001; Sadie, 2015: 451; Zulu, n.d). Besides, the Zulu tribe supports that when a man dies, his living brother is obligated to take over his deceased brother's household, which includes marrying his widowed sister-in-law (Zungu, 1985). Rudwick and Shange (2014) and Zulu (n.d) confirm the culture allows the widow's in-laws to utilise their influence to remove the deceased's goods and even chase the widow out. This reflects women being viewed as property, which justifies polygamy. The latter allows men to have as many women as they desire in rural areas, but traditions and current laws do not allow women to live a polyandrous life (Kuenyehia, 2003; Song, 2005: 480). This is because a woman with multiple husbands has committed a taboo in the culture, and is labelled with derogatory names (Koopman, 2008; Kuenyehia, 2003).

The *lobola* (dowry) tradition further complicates women's lives in South Africa by prohibiting them from seeking assistance from their parent's homes. Rudwick and Shange (2014) argue that when a South African woman has difficulties in her own home, she should not return to her family but rather respect (*hlonipha*) her husband because she is no longer a member of her biological family. Raum (1973) establishes that *lobola* increases gender inequality by giving the husband more power and supremacy in the household, encouraging men to control and view women as their property.

Moreover, rape is one of the most dangerous types of violence experienced by South African women, and a culture that is fostered by gender inequality. Through rape, GBV is linked to the prevalence of HIV/AIDS (Brown, 2012; Bruce, 2015; Dworkin et al., 2012) because gender imbalance infringes on women's right to choose their own sexual life while prioritising men's sexual desires and pleasures (Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Viitanen & Colvin, 2015). This exemplifies how masculinity creates gender imbalance,

resulting in risky sexual behaviours that can lead to the transmission of HIV/AIDS and other STDs (Ditlopo et al., 2007; Koopman, 2008; Kuenyehia, 2003).

South Africa has enacted several laws to promote gender equality since the country's democratic transition in 1994. For example, according to Diallo (2019), the South African Parliament passed the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act in 2007, attempting to modify and toughen all decrees addressing sexual violence, the tolls of reported rape, sexual abuse of children, and domestic violence. Still, it has never been effective because the plague continues to spread (Siyabonga, 2015). South Africa is also a signatory to numerous international treaties on GBV and has a robust legal framework in place, including the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) (1998), the Sexual Offences Act (2007), and the Prevention and Combating of Human Trafficking in Human Persons Act (2013) (SAPS, 2019). However, despite this legislation, GBV via gender inequality remains very harmful to South African women (Arbuckle, Olson, Howard et al., 1996:211).

1.2.3.2.2 Culture of rape

GBV is more prevalent in South Africa because of cultural normalisation (Diallo, 2019). After all, sexual violence behaviours are rooted in a rape culture that blames, sexually objectifies and trivialises the victim while denying the harm it causes (Barney et al., 2009:108; DiStefano, 2008:1432). According to Rape Statistics by Country Population (RSCP, 2020), the rate of rape in South Africa remains the highest on the planet. The research revealed that 1 324 cases of rape were reported per hundred thousand people in 2019. Moreover, the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC, 2019) confirmed the same pervasiveness when they discovered that roughly one in every four men interviewed admitted to having raped someone. Males are the most common perpetrators of GBV who, in some cases, can also target boys, LGBT people, other men, transgender, and intersex people are also targets in some cases (Meger, 2010:12).

Patriarchy remains the primary trigger of rape in South Africa (Gqola, 2015:6). Besides, Kopano Ratele's theory of black and hegemonic masculinities in South Africa confirms that the causes of rape are multifaceted (Writer, 2017). This is because patriarchy, hegemonic masculinities and financial

discrimination create a toxic environment in which socioeconomic burden leads to violence against women (Freedman, 2016; Hunter, 2016; Mona, 2016; Valerie, 2016). Many cases of GBV go unreported due to social stigma and misperceptions. This happens because victims know they live in a patriarchal society where social norms favour men over women.

Research confirms that the prevalence of rape in South Africa ranges between 12% and 28% of women ever reporting being raped in their lifetime. Similarly, between 28 and 37% of adult men report having raped a woman (Tibesigwa & Visser, 2016:52). Research has shown that the provinces of Gauteng, Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and Limpopo lead the statistics on GBV across the country (Abrahams et al., 2018; Bollen, 2017). According to SAPS, 3/4 of women in these provinces have experienced rape at least once in their lives, with Limpopo (77%) reporting the highest rates, Gauteng (51%), Western Cape (45%), and KwaZulu-Natal (36%). Men who admitted to raping accounted for 41% in KwaZulu-Natal and 35% in the Western Cape. Conversely, the levels reported by men in Limpopo were lower (48%) compared to Gauteng (78%). These statistics show how horrifying GBV against women in the form of rape is in South Africa's four provinces (Jewkes et al., 2015). Gender-based violence, on the other hand, has no choice and can affect both men and women. Male rape victims are another under-researched group in South Africa. In this vein, the findings of SAPS' research in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape revealed that 9.6 percent of men reported having been sexually abused by another man (Machisa, 2020).

1.2.3.3 Effects of GBV in South Africa

GBV is a serious human rights violation that has far-reaching social and developmental consequences for its victims and their families, communities, and society. According to Moffett (2006), violence against women in South Africa remains the worst in the world compared to a country in an armed conflict. GBV causes psychological trauma and can have psychological, behavioural, and physical consequences for survivors. Many survivors are unable to get the help they require because of a lack of access to formal psychosocial or even medical support in many parts of the country (Gqola, 2015:7).

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Indirect trauma can also affect survivors' families and loved ones, and many do not know how to provide effective support.

GBV and violence have shocking consequences for South Africa as a society. According to Ntuli (2019:234) and Ndunda and Nene (2014:21), an estimated 1.75 million people seek health care for injuries caused by violence each year. Furthermore, an estimated 16% of all HIV infections in women could be avoided if partners did not subject their women to domestic violence (Hamber, 2000:5; Olin-Wright, 2009; Webster, 2006). Most raped women risk an unwanted pregnancy, HIV, and other sexually transmitted infections (Amaral, 2011; Bograd, 1990: 135; UNODC, 2018). Suffering GBV in the form of rape and contracting contaminated diseases cannot improve a victim's mental health. Thus, Diallo (2019) and Nath (2011) found more than a third of raped South African women develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). If left untreated, this condition can lead to depression, addiction to substance abuse, and even suicide in the long run. Furthermore, Seedat et al. (2009:102) acknowledge that many South African men who have been raped are at risk of acute stress, which can easily lead to excessive alcohol consumption, depression, and, ultimately, suicide.

Gender-based violence has also had significant economic consequences at the national level. According to Cock and Nathan (1989) and Lerche (2006), the high rate of violence places a significant burden on the health and criminal justice systems, rendering many survivors unable to work or move freely in society. Peacock (2012:10) corroborates that GBV, particularly violence against women, cost the South African economy a minimum of R35.8 billion to R48.4 billion, or 0.13 percent to 1.7 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), in 2017-2018.

1.2.4 Congolese migrants in Durban, South Africa

1.2.4.1 Congolese's choice of South Africa as a host country

The then Zaire, today DRC, had been in chaos during the 32 years Dictator Mobutu Sese Seko took power. The general economy and politics had decayed, creating unbearable poverty and joblessness. In 1997, Kabila ousted Mobutu, proclaimed himself President, and asked his former allies to return to their

respective countries. This context created many more rebellions inside the country, supported by Rwanda and Uganda. As a result, Kabila was obliged to seek support elsewhere by involving the Southern African Development and Economic Community (SADEC). This condition intensified the war's atrocities of violence, which pushed many people to become internally displaced or leave the country.

On the other hand, South Africa's first democratic election organised in 1994 became an opportunity for many Africans to move to that country because they believed it was peaceful, had economic opportunities and had respect for human rights (Lisa, 2014; Sudarmo, 2007). This perception drove many Congolese to enter legally and illegally South Africa as DRC was experiencing elevated levels of joblessness (Muzumbukilwa, 2007). However, once in South Africa, refugees often face the burden of local political policies and economic factors that influence their identities and contribute to how they define themselves as men in this host country (Mollard, 2016). This entails how Congolese refugees must imbue the norms and the culture of their new community for integration.

1.2.4.2 Research problem and broad issues

By focusing on the experiences of Congolese male refugees living in Durban towards GBV in a transnational space, this research investigated this form of violence as a site for male refugees to reinforce their masculinities within their transnational space and the extent to which this space where they currently live may prompt the violence perpetration. Subsequently, this research considered the impact the predominantly black African Zulu culture in Durban had had on these male refugees regarding strategies for perpetrating violence against women. This new environment inspired Congolese male refugees to socialise by renegotiating their masculinities and identity to adapt to the new setting and acquire strategies for perpetrating gender-based violence.

1.2.4.3 Durban as a research area and Refugee Pastoral Care as research site

This research was conducted in the South African town of Durban. Describing the research area is significant because it presents the physical description of the setting and the circumstances in which the data collection occurs (Almeida et al., 2017). Situated on the southwest coast of the Indian Ocean, the town

of Durban is in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), on the eastern coast of South Africa (SA), which covers an area of 2 297 km^2. The city occupies only 1.4% of the land area of KZN, but it supports just over a third of the province's population, estimated at 3 720 953 people (https://all-populations.com/en/za/population-of-durban.html). Considering its geographical features, Durban remains one of the major cities in SA. Indeed, the proximity of the boundaries between South Africa's province of KZN and the countries of Mozambique and Swaziland favours many refugees to enter the city (Amisi, 2015).

Most Congolese refugees entered KZN by the same ports to move in its capital city, which is Durban. Durban remains one of the three major cities accommodating many DRC refugees. It also hosts other migrants from Africa and Asia (Muzumbukilwa, 2007).

With its several tourist destinations, Statistics South Africa (SSA) Forecast (2016) confirms that the town of Durban is classified as the third largest city in South Africa, and attracts many foreigners, as well as several nationals, because of its commercial and touristic activities, and its cool weather. Besides, its sub-tropical climate and coastal location give perfect scenic landscapes visitors enjoy more. The city has national parks and historic sites, such as Zululand and Drakensberg, which count among key factors attracting people.

All the attractions mentioned above entice migrants and refugees to flock to the city of Durban as their destination in South Africa. Durban continues to attract many other forced migrants, especially those forced to flee their countries because of armed conflicts and political, religious and socio-economic instabilities. Alternatively, most refugees who entered Durban by Mozambique and Botswana borders ultimately decided to settle and not move to other provinces for fear of not knowing what the situation there looked like.

The researcher chose to interview the Congolese male refugees living in Durban and not those beyond its boundaries because the city was particularly suitable for this research. Durban hosts around 3 800 DRC documented refugees, of which 56% are males, the biggest community of Congolese in South Africa

(Zihindula, 2010). The South African town of Durban is located in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, which is third in the country in terms of cases of violence against women (Gender Links, 2017). Accordingly, Mpani and Nsibandi (2015) confirm that 41% of men in this province have perpetrated gender-based violence once in their lives.

In particular, Durban has has a high rate of GBV, making it pervasive in homes, schools, universities and churches. Research by Ntuli (2019) about GBV in Durban confirmed that 49% of Zulu men mistreat and abuse women, children, the LGBTQ, and other men, which has prompted numerous protests resulting in arrests. Arresting those who oppose GBV is another form of such violence.

Other reasons that pushed the researcher to choose Durban as his research area included being member of the Congolese community living in that city, and having lived in this city for quite a long period. Being a member of this community exposed him to gain knowledge and trust of other community members. Besides, conducting research within a familiar community alleviates impediments to undertaking one within an unknown population. Research by Hayano (1979) and Razavi (1992) reveals that conducting fieldwork at home is a rite the passage by which the student becomes a proficient specialist in that domain. Therefore, belonging to the Congolese community under-study warranted the researcher to defeat language barriers compared to doing research in an outside community. The easy access to his community and trust permitted him to consider this as doing Anthropological research at home.

According to Jackson (1987), fieldwork at home is gainful because freedom and openness translate into an uncomplicated admission to one's community, which remains very important in data collection. Malinowski (1938: 12) underscored that "we must start by knowing ourselves first before we proceed to the more foreign or other societies". As earlier stated, the researcher is a member of the community under investigation, and his identity within it would influence the research's development. In other words, the researcher was also aware of the danger of bias by being close to the subject. Still, possible measures were taken to avoid the occurrence and nothing undocumented was included in the report.

The site of this research was the Refugee Pastoral Care Center (RPC). At this location, the researcher first contacted the Congolese male refugees who would become his interviewees before the Covid-19 pandemic in 2019. From there, he selected the male refugees who participated in the in-depth discussions via phone calls and shared their experiences with GBV. RPC is a Catholic pastoral organisation based in Durban at Saint Emmanuel Cathedral, and the Durban Catholic Archdiocese manages it. The organisation offers pastoral and social services to refugees to restore their lost dignity, faith and hope. Besides, it involves many refugees in healing workshops and social cohesion programmes and ensures justice prevails in all matters affecting them. The organisation offers many free social services, including counselling support and health care. Counselling and health care were helpful to this research because RPC would be consulted through their phone numbers for any case of trauma that might occur during the interview process.

1.3 Research significance

The literature revealed several factors that lead men worldwide, in Africa and South Africa, to perpetrate GBV. This research is significant because it investigated male refugees' perceptions of GBV in a transnational setting, a neglected area. For instance, the results of this research have confirmed how Congolese men living in SA as their host country learned about local socio-cultural norms and socialisation principles. Documenting male refugees' perceptions of violence against women, their tactics of renegotiating masculinities, and immigrant identity crises are all critical to this research. Although Congolese male refugees came with their culture and traditions, they still needed to learn about those they found locally. Social integration seems frustrating because these male refugees must "negotiate a transnational space for learning new cultural practices and identity" (Heindbrink, 2014). Likewise, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic further destabilised their lives, which were already precarious, resulting in even more disarray and problems with economic and financial situations, which might affect one's way of life (Armstrong, 2021; Singh et al., 2021).

GBV harms victims, even while perpetrators appear to make it a way of life. It affects victims of all ages, backgrounds, and social statuses, causing educational, psychological, and social implications (Cloete, Davids & Reddy, 2020). Into the bargain, in a transnational setting, some male refugees may endure loneliness, stress, and pressure, which can have an economic and psychological impact (Stieger & Bouchard, 2020:695).

In light of these negative consequences, the current research is important because it provides empirical evidence of the core causes of GBV and the experiences of male refugees in a transnational setting. As well, the results of this research show that these men renegotiate their identities to learn new masculinities in their new transnational environment. Finally, it recommends solutions to address the issue of GBV within the Congolese community in Durban so that they, and other refugee groups, can abide by peace instead of violence.

Male refugees gain new perceptions of gendered-violence methods they never had in their home countries because of their immersion in their new transnational locale. Although due to the rigorous migration regulations, such behaviours have been entrenched in their new lives, they are sometimes denied access to numerous social services and other supports (Levitt & Shiller, 2004; Smith, 2005). For instance, this research confirms that men apply GBV when the woman is working to earn bread, inferring that the man may stay home to care for the children and do some household duties. Many male refugees believe that participating in such activities makes them lose their masculinities and their true sense of what it means to be a respected man. This situation ultimately angers the man, which triggers abuse of his woman. With the outbreak of the Covid-19 scourge, the situation has exacerbated, as most male refugees lost their employment because of the mandatory national lockdown. Results of this research confirmed that male refugees' disempowerment enraged them, making them aggressive in their homes. A husband depending on the wife than the wife reflects divergent expectations and a man's misuse of power, which frequently culminates in violence to ensure compliance (Singh et al., 2021:561; Smith, 2005).

Furthermore, the current research contributed to filling knowledge gaps in the literature. It identified potential areas of collaboration between social institutions such as churches, families, and schools

to focus more on children, particularly boys, to learn the best transformational practices for becoming real men who oppose women's abuse while seeking gender harmony. Similarly, the research outcome shows that interviewees suggested relevant solutions for reducing gendered violence among refugees by appropriately addressing their situation, goals and needs. Overall, the findings of this research will add to and provide current information for researchers working in the fields of transnational migration and, in particular, men and GBV. This confirms how male refugees' suggestions could help many people avoid male-gendered abuse as they seek reliable measures to reduce violence against women.

This research equally demonstrates how examining male refugees' perspectives on GBV in a transnational setting can help refugee communities, particularly Congolese male refugees in Durban, respond to this scourge's concerns.

Finally, this research will be highly valuable to human rights and development, legal and public practitioners, and community leaders of Congolese refugees. This is because its outcomes confirm that transformational education for boys can create constructive masculinities. To that end, the meaning of this research lies in delving into the perspectives of Congolese male refugees in Durban, as well as the key motivations that drive them to perpetrate GBV. The research also seeks to understand more about the link between transnationalism and GBV and the techniques Congolese male refugees choose to achieve social harmony.

1.4 Motivation for research

Congolese male refugees in Durban are resorting to GBV, a growing community issue. Global literature on GBV confirms most men perpetrate it in different settings. Some factors trigger men to violence against women worldwide, and importantly in a transnational setting. In the latter case, for instance, migrating to a host country can lead men to identity crises, socialisation and learning new forms of masculinities. Indeed, to seek more secure places, most people leave their countries to become refugees because of armed conflicts, natural threats, poverty, political chaos, etc.

The current research exclusivity relies on its attempt to examine GBV experiences of male Congolese who fled their country because of war atrocities but today are living in a host country with another high prevalence of violence against women. Although this scourge is common and horrendous in both countries, different contextual factors foster it. In DRC, unending armed conflicts have forced thousands of people to flee to various countries, including South Africa. Similarly, the wars reinforced the existing abusive and discriminatory traditional norms, engendering acute and large-scale violence. Gender-based violence remains mostly appalling in the DRC due to the recurring armed conflicts in which the perpetrators have used rape as an easily accessible and cheap arm to destroy entire communities through their women.

The context is different in South Africa since the country is at peace, yet women endure horrible forms of rape and sexual and domestic violence. This situation depicts the uniqueness of this research as it attempts to explore the experiences of GBV of male Congolese who fled their country because of repeated war atrocities. Accordingly, these Congolese male refugees have experienced GBV in different contexts, at home and in their host community, each country with its fostering factors.

The research seeks to understand GBV broadly as a site for male refugees to reinforce their masculinities within their transnational space and the extent to which the predominantly black African Zulu culture in Durban may affect these refugees' strategies for perpetrating GBV. Moreover, there is restricted attention to men's experiences with GBV by male perpetrators in a transnational context since most research has focused on women as victims of men's violence. Focusing on men eventually builds on the evidence that African migrants are significantly composed of more males than females (Dodson, 1998; Hanson, 2010), which equally applies to DRC refugees. The gender-related migration pattern may be due to the dangers of travel, the cost involved, and the fact that numerous obstacles must be overcome on the long overland journey (Bastia, 2013:167; Berg & Longhurst, 2003: 351). In other words, attention to men's experiences with GBV does not mean focusing on the statistics of Congolese men who migrated to South Africa but mostly on understanding how they renegotiate their identity and masculinities to integrate into their new community and how socialisation and local culture contribute to their understanding of GBV. In

this perspective, gendered violence does not mean abusing women but the different factors that foster it among men refugees.

The transnational space between DRC and South Africa is marred by horrendous violence against women and the replication of atrocities common due to hegemony, patriarchy and discriminatory traditional norms. Escaping violence in a war-torn country to South Africa, another country devastated by GBV, explains why Congolese male refugees perpetrate more violence against women. These two settings of GBV remain very influential to these refugees regarding their personal experiences of the violence. When living in DRC, these men understood GBV and masculinities, so they merged with South African local masculinities and traditions to integrate into their new setting. The same applies to their identity, but they must renegotiate everything for their successful reintegration.

Similarly, transnational migration can boost the level of GBV, leading to a situation where the survivors endure acute financial instability and poverty. Transnationally speaking, numerous impacts of violence on women at family and community levels occur. When men resort to GBV, the psychological state of their children and the conflicting parties is affected (Mechanic & Hansell, 1989). In view of that, the researcher's main justification for this topic relies on the extent of GBV by Congolese male refugees based in Durban is prevalently escalating, as it is in the province and the country among South Africans themselves (Dissel & Ngubeni, 2003). Globally, GBV among Congolese migrants in South Africa may also be expected to be widespread, where typical family life pressures are exacerbated by economic uncertainty and separation from large family connections (Umubyeyi & Harris, 2012).

Most male Congolese living in Durban are refugees who arrived in South Africa while suffering from trauma related to armed conflicts. They had to relocate to a foreign country with little economic and social support, which added to their already traumatised life back home. In their transnational setting, most of them struggle with life because of their lack of formal employment, making them rely more on informal employment such as car guarding or hairdressing for survival (Baruti, 2006; Muthuki, 2010). The existence of several grounds for GBV may increase in Congolese communities, causing them to struggle to adapt to their transnational locale while retaining their country of origin's behaviours, beliefs and traditions.

Therefore, understanding Congolese refugees' experiences of gender-based violence in their transnational setting remains crucial and deserves particular consideration.

Although no documented research has been done on the key causes of GBV by male refugees in the Congolese communities in South Africa, and in Durban in particular, the prevalence of abuse to women among them is suggested by popular ideas. Therefore, this research aims to clarify these assumptions and suggests possibilities of addressing the issue harmoniously.

Above and beyond, the researcher is an asylum seeker, which makes him part of Durban's Congolese migrant culture. He is very interested in understanding the perspectives of Durban-based Congolese male refugees with regard to GBV in their transnational milieu; and whether any current approaches exist to mitigate such brutality. To better understand this context, this research has sought to broadly discuss the violence as a site for male refugees to reinforce their masculinities within their transnational space and the extent to which the predominantly black African Zulu culture in Durban may influence these refugees' strategies for perpetrating GBV. Research by Suh (2017) on refugees' new life in a transnational setting highlighted that when people relocate to a new community, they manage to socialise to renegotiate and integrate their masculinities and identities. It is obvious that they do so by learning local norms, culture and traditions, in addition to theirs they came with.

Hence, the merge of cultures created in a transnational setting by migration boosts great strain and stress in the lives of most refugees. Living in a host country as a refugee remains very frustrating, and this context forces many refugees to embrace the local cultural attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, refugees can start learning new ways of applying GBV to local culture and identity (Kristin & Markussen, 2020:1449). In a transnational milieu, the condition of uncertainty can also develop because of cultural, economic and social conditions as these can impact the people's way of living (Christin & Markussen, 2020: 1444).

While the male perpetrators of GBV seem to make it their normal way of life, it still has a shocking impact on the victims. It destroys the survivor's education, morals and psychology, regardless of age, gender, origin or status. Often, male refugees who are divorced or separated may become harsh to their

women once they remarry as they think of past relationships that never worked out (Hakizimana, 2001). In addition, the psychological and economic disturbances they have gone through may cause them to constantly fear the new partner to behave like the previous one, which might trigger ruthlessness.

Still, this research is motivating because it attempts to explore the experiences of male refugees about GBV in their transnational milieu, which has been an enormously undocumented field as most research deals with female survivors instead of male perpetrators. Research by Fry et al. (2020: 640) shows that the understanding of male refugees about GBV still needs exploration. The related argument is that GBV by male refugees' is embedded in how they integrate and socialise in their new international setting. This infers that the ways refugees conceive socialisation are fundamental in their new setting. These refugees migrated to their host country with their perceptions of gendered abuse. However, they still must learn about their host community's local attitudes, beliefs and traditions.

For that reason, this research covers an extended gap in knowledge about the restricted attention to men's experiences of GBV by male perpetrators in a transnational context since most research has dealt with women victims of men's violence. The research also highlights essential and particular areas of cooperation between the stakeholders interested in transnationalism and GBV to point out some best practices that could be accomplished. Considering the potential negative effect of violence by male refugees on women, planners, designers, and policymakers must involve themselves in mitigating efforts. To this end, research of this type is therefore important to analyse and address the experiences of Congolese male refugees based in the transnational setting of Durban to formulate suitable strategies that can be implemented to scale down GBV in the refugee communities in Durban in particular.

Nonetheless, the research motivation builds on examining the connection between masculinity, socialisation, migration and GBV. Although some researchers have studied migration and its effects on the masculinity and socialisation of refugees to find solutions to transnational problems, insufficient attempts have been made to understand and provide solutions to GBV within the transnational setting with male refugees. Muluken et al. (2020) reveal that understanding the above connection is an important move toward educating male refugees about GBV reduction in a transnational context. This research's conclusions will

help classify the extent and main causes of GBV in a transnational environment among Congolese refugees in the South African city of Durban.

Above and beyond, the research results would open windows for interventions by assisting male refugee perpetrators in discouraging violence against women in their transnational host community. The process would also help ensure that any measures to help male refugees resolve problems in their communities, such as violence against women, are acceptable and specific to their ambitions, conditions and needs. In effect, the outcomes of this research will contribute to and provide the latest knowledge for researchers in the field of GBV in connection with masculinities, migration and social integration.

Finally, this research would be very useful for human rights, legal, public and development practitioners and community leaders of Congolese refugees, besides contributing to awareness and policy-making.

1.5 Scope and limitations

The limitation of the research relates to the technique of sampling the researcher has used. Thus, the in-depth telephonic interviews involved 30 male refugees selected from the Congolese community of Durban. The interviewees were chosen because they originated from a country where GBV is appalling due to wars and traditions, and had experienced, heard or seen the abuse.

The present research is not intended to be comprehensive; and, thus, cannot be generalised, nor is the target interviewees selected inherently representative of the population of Durban-based Congolese refugees. However, within the background of Congolese refugees living in Durban, the selected participants in this research shared their experiences regarding GBV.

These refugees' host country, South Africa, had been in a long and renewed lockdown due to the outbreak of Covid-19 and its South African mutated new variant SARS-CoV-2. The strict national regulations and research ethics could not allow organising in-person, in-depth interviewees. Because the research was conducted over the phone and in the interviewees' preferred language of French, an accurate translation from French into English was required. Additionally, the researcher tried to explain his ideas in

accordance with English-speaking conventions while maintaining the meaning. The research's main goal was to clarify GBV reduction techniques based on concepts that the interviewees discussed.

1.6 Research objectives and questions

The overall objective of this research was to explore the experiences of Congolese male refugees living in Durban towards GBV in a transnational locale. Subsequently, the objectives below have guided this research as they wanted:

- To explore the general understanding of the experiences of socio-cultural norms, socialisation, and their impact on Congolese male refugees regarding gender-based violence;

- To examine how the context of war and renegotiation of masculinities can influence the understanding of gender-based violence of Congolese male refugees in a transnational context; and

- To propose interventions that can address gender-based violence in a transnational context.

    Founded on the objectives listed above, the research addressed the following questions:

    o   What is the general understanding of the experiences of socio-cultural norms, socialisation, and their impact on Congolese male refugees regarding gender-based violence?

    o   How does the context of war and renegotiation of masculinities influence the understanding of gender-based violence of Congolese male refugees in a transnational context?

    o   What interventions can be proposed to address gender-based violence in a transnational context?

1.7 Research structure and description of chapters

This research explores the experiences of Congolese male refugees living in Durban toward gender-based violence in a transnational setting. It is comprised of the following chapters:

Chapter One: Introduction

The chapter overviews the background and outline of a research problem. It discusses the research significance, the motivation for research, and the research scope and limitations. Besides, it expounds on the research objectives and questions and presents the research structure and description of chapters.

Chapter Two: **Review of the literature and theoretical framework**

This second chapter covers the literature review on gender and gender-based violence and discusses its different forms. Under this point, it expounds on the prevalence of GBV globally and in Africa and explains its causes and effects. It also discusses how men perpetrate violence, how they endure it, and how they can partner in de-escalating it. Next, it presents GBV in DRC, how Congolese women suffer it, and its consequences. The chapter also covers military violence and masculinities and the gaps in the literature. Eventually, it looks into the key theories that informed the research and connected them to the study's objectives.

Chapter Three: **Research methodology and population presentation**

The chapter discusses the research design, paradigm, methodology and data collection methods. In the latter point, in-depth telephonic interviewees with open-ended questions via telephonic calls with 30 interviewees and secondary data collection are discussed.

Then comes the sampling procedure and sample size. This section discusses the use of purposive sampling, the strengths and weaknesses of purposive sampling, and the recruitment strategy.

In this part, the recruitment of the research population is presented, as well as the demographic profile of the interviewees. The discussion focuses on the age and level of education of the interviewees.

The chapter also covers ethical considerations, sources of information, data analysis and credibility and trustworthiness of the information collected. It also expounds on self-reflectivity and field challenges as well.

Chapter Four: The impact of socio-cultural norms, socialisation and war on Congolese male refugees' understanding and experiences of GBV.

This chapter connects with the first aim of this research, which was to explore the general understanding of the experiences of socio-cultural norms and socialisation and their impact on Congolese male refugees' understanding of GBV. Therefore, the chapter provides an in-depth understanding of how sociocultural norms and socialisation impacted the interviewees' understanding of gender-based violence.

Chapter Five: The context of the war in DRC, construction of masculinities and experiences of GBV

This chapter links with the second objective of this research, which looks into how the context of war has contributed to the formation of masculinities and how renegotiating masculinities can influence the understanding of gender-based violence. Therefore, the chapter expounds on the impact of the DRC war on the creation of masculinities and gender-based violence experiences. The chapter's sections also analyse how war and military institutions helped soldiers develop their masculinities. Besides, other sections explore the prevalence of GBV and how Congolese men perpetrated or suffered gendered violence throughout the conflict. Finally, the chapter examines how men renegotiate their masculinities after military conflicts.

Chapter Six: Negotiation of masculinities in the transnational context and gender-based violence

This chapter presents the research outcomes regarding how Congolese male refugees negotiate their masculinities and identity in the transnational setting and GBV. This process is better understood by presenting the cultural and social transition from the interviewees' home country to the current transnational location. Thus, the chapter explains South African masculinities; South African masculinities and GBV; Congolese male refugees' experiences of GBV in South Africa; renegotiating masculine identities within a transnational cultural context; challenging gender roles; gendered and social hierarchies in a transnational setting; and finally, how male refugees accommodate a new life in their new transnational locale.

Chapter Seven: Proposed interventions to address gender-based violence in a transnational context

This chapter is related to the third objective of the research. It outlines potential strategies for reducing GBV in a transnational scenario that participants shared during their in-depth telephonic interviews.

Chapter Eight: Summary, conclusions and recommendations

The summary of this research is based on the results gathered on the ground and the contribution that the research findings have made to the realm of knowledge. Besides, the researcher wraps up the chapter with recommendations for dealing with GBV in a transnational milieu. Finally, he makes recommendations for further investigation.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the background and outline of the research problem. Discussion on this point included the outbreak of war in DRC, explaining how different rebellions occurred and the atrocities they caused to people. The point about war and Congolese transnational migration into South Africa was not omitted in the discussion. The chapter also discusses the issue of GBV in South Africa, focusing on forms of GBV that exist in that country, their root causes and effects.

Furthermore, the section also highlighted the context of Congolese migrants in South Africa. This point was followed by the Congolese choice of South Africa as a host country. Then came the research problem and broad issues, the research area, research site. The discussion continued with research significance, motivation for research, scope and limitations, and the objectives and questions that guided the research. Finally, the chapter closed with the research structure and description of the chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

A literature review allows the researcher to integrate the outcomes of previous research on a topic (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:79). Subsequently, this second chapter overviews the literature on GBV and the different theories that informed the research. Accordingly, the chapter expounds on GBV, its types, prevalence at global and African levels, causes and effects, men as perpetrators or victims and men as partners in addressing the violence.

Furthermore, the chapter covers GBV in DRC. This section explains the status of women in DRC, the violence they endured during armed conflicts, the types of rape inflicted on them and the consequences of rape to female victims. Again, points on military violence and masculinities in DRC are also discussed in this section. The part includes military violence and violence against men in DRC as an expression of masculinity.

Finally, the chapter highlights the existing gaps in the reviewed literature. The theoretical framework follows this point. This structure portrays the major theories that inform this research and their pertinence to the research problem. Therefore, this section elaborates on the socioecological theory, the transnational theory, and the theory of masculinities.

2.2. Types of gender-based violence

2.2.1. *Violence against women and girls*

In every society, GBV is disproportionately directed at women and girls. Violence against women and girls (VAWG) continues to be a serious human rights violation that affects one out of every three women and girls worldwide (HRW, 2002; Meloy & Miller, 2011). Women and girls face discrimination and violence due to their gender in every society. So, millions of women and girls have been subjected to various forms of violence throughout their lives, including rape, female genital mutilation (FGM), sexual

exploitation, and child marriage (Barker & Ricardo, 2005:29; Johnson & Das, 2009:42). In the long run, Jefferson (2004:123) and Campanaro (2001:2558) warn that violence and the threat of violence can affect victims, such as preventing girls from attending school, from being able to choose who they marry if they so desire, and from reaching their full potential.

2.2.2 Domestic violence

Domestic violence (DV) is violence perpetrated by partners or family members. As a result, DV includes intimate partner violence (IPV) and violence against children, pets, objects, and other family members (Nest, 2006). Domestic abuse, IPV, or family violence are all terms for GBV as it occurs in a domestic background, such as marriage or cohabitation. It does not discriminate; it can affect people of all ages, ethnic backgrounds, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Because there is a power gap between the perpetrator and the victim, DV can occur in heterosexual or same-sex relationships, between former partners or spouses, close family members, or other relatives (Nest, 2006; Reyntjens 1999). This type of violence can take the form of physical, sexual, or psychological abuse. The perpetrator uses it to gain and maintain total control over the victim, using fear, guilt, shame, and intimidation to wear them down and keep them under their thumb. DV frequently occurs when the abuser believes that abuse is a right, acceptable, justified, or unlikely to be reported (Stephen, 2005). As a result, it can create an intergenerational cycle of violence in children and other family members who may believe such violence is acceptable or condoned in society.

Men are the most likely perpetrators of DV, but some also suffer it at the hands of their wives or children in their homes. On the other hand, while women are more likely to be victims, they may also commit it as a form of self-defence (Mari et al., 2013:67). Regardless of the perpetrator, GBV is never acceptable because it frequently progresses from threats and verbal assault to violence. According to Yaya and Ghose (2019), while a physical injury is the most obvious danger, domestic abuse's emotional and psychological consequences are also severe. Emotionally abusive relationships can erode a person's self-esteem, cause anxiety and depression, and leave them helpless and alone.

2.2.3 Intimate partner violence

The most common type of violence against women is intimate partner violence (IPV). This type of GBV can be found in any setting and among any socioeconomic, religious, or cultural group, and women bear its global burden. Although women can be violent in relationships with men, often in self-defence, and violence can occur in same-sex partnerships, male intimate partners or former partners are the most common perpetrators of violence against women (Jumapili et al., 20191; Yaya & Ghose, 2019). Men, conversely, are far more likely to be victims of violent acts committed by strangers or acquaintances than by someone in their circle (Mugisho, 2014). IPV can occur in heterosexual or same-sex couples and manifests itself as physical, sexual, emotional abuse and controlling behaviours by a current or former intimate partner or spouse (Kron, 2011; Mari et al., 2013:67). Physical and sexual violence, emotional abuse, and isolating the victim from family and friends are a few examples of an abuser's controlling behaviours.

2.2.4 Physical violence

Gender-based violence, according to Galtung (1990: 291), can take the form of physical violence when the perpetrator uses illegal physical force to harm the victim, such as serious and minor assault, deprivation of liberty, and manslaughter. Because it is rooted in cultural and structural violence, this GBV endangers the victim's life (Goodrich & Brammer, 2019). In this manner, the perpetrator chooses to use physical violence, verbal abuse, or the threat of physical violence against the victim. Physical violence frequently occurs in households and includes physical violence that can lead to beatings, murder, rape, sexual assault, or torture (Tine, 2016). Thus, most men resort to direct violence during family disputes and verbally abuse their wives through humiliation (Nangolo & Peltzer, 2003:42).

2.2.5 Sexual violence

Sexual violence (SV) is a type of GBV in which the perpetrator forces the victim to engage in unwanted sexual activity without their consent (James, 2017:55). The violence encompasses sexually

violent acts that can occur in different situations and settings. It can happen to anyone, regardless of gender, age, race, religion, income level, abilities, professions, ethnicities, and sexual orientation (Muluneh, Stulz, Francis & Agho, 2020:37).

Perpetrators of sexual violence can be acquaintances, family members, trusted people, or strangers. Although boys and men are also targets of GBV and SV in armed conflict situations, women and girls continue to be disproportionately victims of such violence (Baldry, 2020: 733). This type of GBV distresses women, men, and children throughout their lives and has the potential to be devastating for individuals, families, and communities. SV has a significant impact on both physical and mental health. In addition to causing physical harm, Bawe (2016:16) discovers that violence is linked to an increased risk of various sexual and reproductive health issues, with both immediate and long-term consequences. Coerced sex may result in sexual gratification for the perpetrator, but its purpose is frequently to express dominance, maleness, and power over the victim. It may also be used to punish women who violate social or moral codes, such as those prohibiting public intoxication or adultery (Inna, 2019). Men who coerce their wives into sexual acts in the home believe their actions are legal because they are married to a woman.

In the context of armed conflicts, Jones (2019) corroborates that rape of both men and women becomes a common expression of terror and military masculinity, which humiliates the victims, their families and communities. Sexual violence is used as a weapon of war by perpetrators to attack the enemy, symbolising the conquest and degradation of its women or captured male fighters (Bawe, 2016:14; James, 2017:59). SV has historically been viewed as the spoils of war or an individual act of violence during times of conflict, rather than one that is politically or ideologically motivated. However, according to Baldry (2020: 729), rape in the form of forced vaginal, anal, or oral penetration of either a male or a female with either a person or an object has become a strategic and systematic tactic during many armed conflicts. This entails that rape is used as a cheap and effective weapon of war, even though it has severe health and psychosocial consequences, as are other forms of GBV (Muluneh, Stulz, Francis & Agho, 2020: 40). The attempt to rape a person is referred to as attempted rape and the rape of a person by two or more rapists is referred to as gang rape.

2.2.6 Indirect violence

Structured violence is another term for indirect violence built into social structures, manifesting as unequal power relations and, as a result, unequal opportunities. Galtung (1990) and Galtung (2000) argue that violence occurs when certain groups, classes, genders, or nationalities have preferential access to goods, resources, and opportunities over others and when this unequal advantage is embedded into the social, political, and economic systems that govern their lives. For example, Tarzia, Forsdike, Feder and Hegarty (2020: 129) illustrate how in many African countries, structural violence prevents women and girls from attending advanced formal education school while encouraging them to marry and have children. This concurs with Hester (2018:624), who explains structural violence as using political or economic power to commit violent acts or restrict an individual or a specific group of people from accessing some benefits. Galtung (1996) and Galtung (2004) distinguish between direct violence, in which the perpetrator can be clearly detected, and indirect violence, in which obvious harm is done to people, but it is difficult to identify who is behind it.

2.2.7 Economic gendered violence

Economic violence is another type of GBV in which the perpetrator uses any act or behaviour that causes economic harm to the victim. According to Kate (2019), the abuser may seize complete control of the victim's finances and other economic activities or incomes, which is morally wrong.

In a household, a husband may unilaterally manipulate the family's resources to bankrupt the wife, causing her to suffer financial violence. According to Vyas and Watts (2019: 593), even a child may take financial advantage of an elderly parent or family member. Brush (2014:35) describes how one partner may allow the other to look for work and work but then controls all the money they earn, such as paychecks and bank accounts. A man can abuse his wife by denying her access to shared accounts and resources and incurring debts for which she is liable (Fooled, 2018:175; Naomi, 2017; Postmus et al., 2017:412).

Economic violence can also exist in the workplace, as some female workers are paid less for a job than men are paid for the same job (Fawole, 2018:169). Randawar (2018) illustrated how women, in

Malaysia, with the same degrees as their male counterparts, were paid less, despite doing the same job and working extra hours. Besides, other directors may use women for unpaid work outside the prescribed contract, overwork them but pay them less, or subject them to fraud and theft from some men (CEDAW, 2019; Dank, Love, Esthappan & Zweig, 2017; WHO, 2017). Economic violence can cause and result in poverty, putting women in a worse financial situation than men worldwide (Sanders, Weaver & Schnabel, 2018: 247).

All in all, economic violence is dangerous because it can foster severe disagreements that fuel physical violence, sexual manipulation, and the risk of contaminating HIV infection, maternal morbidity and mortality, and even trafficking of women and girls (Brush, 2014: 29). Even if the victim decides to leave the abusive household, she may face economic violence because the man has denied her access to family funds. According to Naomi (2013) and Inge and Happy (2016) research on economic violence against women in rural Malawi, the court may order abusive men to pay children's monthly maintenance to the mother after divorce is granted, but men never obey the ruling

2.2.8 Violence against LGBTI people

Gender-based violence knows no boundaries, as people of all ages, genders, and socioeconomic statuses can commit or suffer it. Elebe (2019) explains that people who are perceived as not conforming to their assigned gender roles, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or intersex people, can experience GBV. This group of people is frequently subjected to violence because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The abuse they undergo can be either psychological or physical, and it is usually motivated by biphobia, gayphobia, homophobia, lesbophobia, or transphobia (Mari et al., 2013; Nateralma, 2021; Yaya & Ghose, 2019). In addition, cultural and political biases, traditions, or religious beliefs may influence this form of GBV, and the state may legislate laws that stipulate punishment for homosexual acts committed by individuals or groups (Doug, 2015:121). Such violence is frequently associated with church disapproval of homosexuality or traditionalist social mindsets that describe homosexuality as an illness or a defect in one's personality.

2.3. Prevalence of GBV globally and in Africa

Gender-based violence is a complex global pandemic that occurs in private and public settings regardless of the victim's status. Violence against women is rampant because cultural and traditional norms foster men's and women's socialisation of gender (Er Turk, 2017:18; UNICEF, 2016). The socialisation of men and women creates gender inequality and an imbalanced power relationship between females and males, ultimately generating GBV (Meloy & Miller, 2012; Terry & Hoare, 2007). Olson and DeFrain (2010) and Robyn (2011) exemplify that socialisation teaches men how to use their masculinities to assert control and power over female community members. Control and power describe attitudes of gender disproportion that are profoundly entrenched in cultural norms that condone violence against women, such as domestic violence, rape and sexual coercion (Goodrich & Brammer, 2019). These social factors cause most violence against women as they convey men's masculinities at the levels of families, men-led institutions and society (Imms, 2000; Ohambe et al., 2014).

Violence against women is common and often touches women of any age, class, origin, race, religion or sexuality. Similarly, Terry and Hoare (2007) and Uthman, Lawoko and Moradi (2009) confirm that mostly age, disability and poverty are some factors that render women's vulnerability high. In general, Greene, Furr-Holden and Tol (2017) reveal that women are at higher risk of violence than men they know.

GBV prevails at the transnational level because its occurrence is globally horrendous. In this vein, figures from research conducted by the World Health Organisation in 86 countries across the world showed that 68% of women worldwide had experienced either physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, or both from an intimate partner and 35% from a non-partner (WHO, 2013). Violence against women is the main source of disability or death for women whose age varies between 15 and 44 (Yaya & Ghose, 2019:65). The pervasiveness of gender-based violence worldwide infers that many women often experience it in its several forms in their settings.

In the USA, male partners abuse more than six million women annually (Olson & DeFrain, 2010:42), and a husband or a partner physically assaults a woman every nine seconds (Er Turk, 2017:23;

Mari et al., 2013: 67). In the UK, Meloy and Miller (2011) found that women (7.7%) and men (4.4%) suffer male GBV. These percentages represent 1.3 million female and 716,000 male victims (Armstrong, 1994). Indeed, women are more affected (3.2%) than men (0.7%) (Er Turk, 2017:30).

In the Western context, Kimmel (2006:2) connects masculinities with literature, science and military activities. Militarily, when soldiers are defending their country against oppression, they express their masculinities through courage, determination, independence and self-confidence (Imms, 2000). However, wars can reinforce the military's traditional and patriarchal conceptions of masculinities and embrace feminine qualities of communication, endurance, love and teamwork (Er Turk, 2017).

In Africa, GBV is rooted in traditional customs that empower more men than women, and either in times of peace or during war, women are victimised, which makes the plight rampant on the continent (Mukwege & Mays, 2009). Society supports patriarchy that condones men's violence against women through social factors that consider women second-class people; they are poor and depend financially on men, who are the only family financial providers. Yaya and Ghose (2019) admit that African women depend on men because of gender imbalance, which gives men more power over family members, including the wife. Moreover, during armed conflicts, patriarchy and discriminatory social norms still apply because combatants are natives of the area and outsiders learn from them how society considers rape and sexual violence (Mukwege & Mays, 2009).

In sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), research by Mari et al. (2013:64) demonstrates that an estimated 66% of ever-partnered women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner (Muluneh, Stulz, Francis & Agho, 2020: 35). Moreover, Kimmel (2006:2) found that men have abused 30% of women in Malawi, Rwanda and Zimbabwe. Equally, according to Baylis et al. (2017) and Young (2013), 50% in Cameroon, Kenya, and Zambia and 60% in Uganda and DRC have suffered GBV at the hands of men. Such abuse affects women and causes temporary and long-term mental, physical and sexual health issues (Barker & Ricardo, 2005).

2.4. Gender-based violence and masculinities in a transnational setting

Men immigrate in greater numbers to foreign countries for a variety of reasons. While living in patriarchal communities, men often socialise about gender, GBV, and masculinities. Once on their transnational move, they carry their traditions and culture. To put it another way, Haj-Yahia (2005) and Napikoski (2019) note that relocating overseas presents various opportunities and problems. A person's gender can have a nuanced and multifaceted impact on both. This describes how migration, masculinities, and gender is interconnected factors influencing one another to foster GBV. Depending on their unique traits and the environments in which they live, migrants' masculinities and gender can have either beneficial or negative consequences. For instance, Mudgway (2019) stated that the migrant's culture and traditions, as well as those of the host society, can greatly influence men's behaviours and how they view women in their new environment. Kounine (2013:316) also emphasises how a person's gender affects their migration experience, including the dangers and vulnerabilities associated with the journey.

Furthermore, migration can positively affect and help men apply their masculine dominance once they have locally socialised in their patriarchal setting. Akan and Alanade (2019:208) uphold how men's empowerment through learning skills and employment opportunities can inspire them to feel macho and how a lack of either will frustrate them and cause them to mistreat their wives. In a patriarchal society, according to Amani (2019:30), masculinity gives authority and privileges to men by making them remain above women. However, men can feel inferiorised when their women benefit from empowerment without their men, whether at home or in a transnational context. Such empowerment is opposed by patriarchy since it grants women complete autonomy by allowing them to own property, make greater wages, and have high levels of self-esteem (Allan, 2019; Coleman & Franiuk, 2021:313). Men frequently engage in GBV once frustrated, making them feel their power and decision-making are at risk. According to Brescoll and Uhlmann (2020), the intersection of gender, masculinities, and migration can lead to various forms of discrimination, exploitation, and victim stigmatisation.

Additionally, men use migration as a chance to flee conditions of GBV in their home countries while implementing it in the host country (Okoko, 2020:39). Accordingly, research by Bigombe and Khadiagala (2017) explored the effects of patriarchy and foreign culture on Congolese refugees in Uganda. It revealed that although men fled the traumas of war in their homeland, they were still eager to mistreat their wives in refugee camps. This causes the victims to experience GBV twice; in their home nation, host country, and possibly even on their way to exile. Similarly, most males' main mechanisms for committing GBV in their international area are gender norms, identities, and uneven power relationships. Men always look to take advantage of inequalities to exercise authority, impose coercion, and deceive their victims. To illustrate this, Lubunga (2016) acknowledges that national labour laws, employment policies, and programs can foster gender inequality and GBV. This strategy acknowledges women's weakness, lack of leadership, and reliance and aims to make them more vulnerable by restricting their access to the labour market (Marmaid et al., 2020).

GBV also serves as a catchall term for any harmful act committed against someone's will motivated by socially constructed distinctions, such as gender between men and women. This illustrates how migrants can inflict suffering on their victims through physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, financial, and/or psychological means. In a nutshell, Pikoli (2020) and Hannah et al. (2021) admit that migration can cause GBV in a transnational setting since men can commit violence against women and LGBTQI while residing in the host country if they are involved in gangs or use drugs.

In international settings, most women experience GBV from men because they are afraid to report it. According to the World Bank (2015), women who live in foreign countries and experience domestic violence are afraid to report it to the authorities for fear of having their spouses detained. Men perpetrate more GBV because they are aware of this. Besides, although migration does not contribute to GBV, certain male migrants encounter circumstances in their host country, making them more susceptible to violence. Along their migration trip, Sivaku (2022:262) confirms that men's views and behaviours about GBV are influenced by various circumstances, including gender and masculinities, which are important elements in how most refugees adjust their behaviours.

2.5. *Causes and effects of gender-based violence*

Gender-based violence has many causes, because it relies on unequal power interactions between men and women. Perpetrators are the primary cause of GBV, and the victim should not be blamed for the abusers' aggressive behaviour (Paula, 2017). In many societies, patriarchal cultural factors foster power imbalance between men and women, which legitimises violence by promoting men's dominance and superiority (Lisa, 2011:49). GBV is more common in countries with more culture of violence where male superiority is an accepted norm. For instance, Watt (2010:73) notes that men in households believe in their superiority and feel entitled to their wives' sex. Imposing sex to women tightens gender roles, reinforces hierarchy, and punishes cultural norm infringements (Jumapili et al., 2009). To Turner (2007), this claims patriarchy tolerates male dominance and links masculinity with female control by squeezing women into low social status and power as second-class citizens. Women's low levels of empowerment, lack of social support, socioeconomic disparity, and substance misuse are all exacerbated by the interaction of cultural or religious societal standards (Elebe, 2019:98).

Gender-based violence is horrendous in many societies because they condone it in specific settings or situations. Indeed, the social acceptance of GBV makes it extremely difficult to address a social problem properly. As a result, Kirschner (2007) confirms that GBV infiltrates society's economic, political and social structures because patriarchal norms and intersectional power disparities of gender, race, class, and sexuality remain predominant in the system.

Furthermore, Kheswa and Hoho (2014:2815) admit that the causes of GBV encompass gender stereotypes, prejudice, and normative expectations of femininity and masculinity. Gadinabokao (2016) clarifies that combining these factors with the socialisation of gender and understanding the family dominion as private and under male authority makes GBV awful and pervasive. Finally, GBV originates from the broad acceptance of violence as a social norm, as a means of resolving the dispute and asserting oneself in the public domain (Gregg, 2014).

Societal traditions are cultural or religious social standards that might encourage violence against women. Hence, Crijns (1959) agrees that traditional physical punishment of women based on entitlement and ownership aids in controlling women's sexuality and justifies patrilineal succession. Jumapili et al. (2009) illustrated that in Uganda and DRC, the concept of possession legitimises men using violence to settle family disputes. This implies that in many countries, men have control and authority over women to discipline those who do not follow social norms (Kate, 2019; Thobejane et al., 2018). Besides, the misuse of religious scriptures can justify male violence against women (Wall, 2010). Accordingly, preachers misinterpret religious texts and teachings to promote religious hegemonic masculinities and power imbalance. Rastum (2013:48) confirms that misinterpretations of the Bible and the Koran encourage women to remain submissive and obedient to their abusive husbands so that they can inherit eternal life. Furthermore, El Gawhary (1994:73) claims that discrimination abounds in Islam because women are never permitted to pray in the Mosque with their husbands.

To some extent, legal and economic factors may also contribute to gender-based violence. Surviving GBV shames and weakens the victim as they are blamed for attracting violence to themselves through their behaviours. According to Mari et al. (2013:69) and Yusuf (2005:13), most forms of gender-based violence are criminalised in some Western countries. Still, law enforcement practices often favour perpetrators, which explains the lack of trust in public authorities, and most of these crimes go unreported. The law also criminalises homosexuality which discriminates against people of other genders.

In contrast, economic factors can also fuel GBV by making women and LGBTI people vulnerable to it. Fischer, Moore and Pittenger (2017) observe unemployment makes men poor, which can threaten their masculinities and cause them to become violent. Some political factors can also contribute to GBV, as women and LGBTI people are underrepresented in political power. This gives them fewer chances to influence policy actions to combat gender-based violence and support equality (Carbo & Mutisi, 2012:81; Collier, 2006:27).

Finally, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has caused many men to abuse women in various settings. Its mandatory indoor stay was intended to slow the spread of the virus, but it increased GBV cases.

Thus, GBV is amplified via its forms of domestic and intimate violence, child abuse, and other forms of sexual and gendered violence. Research conducted in Kenya by Odhiambo (2021) illustrates that prolonged quarantine caused many schools to close, causing untimely girls' marriages and pregnancies. This situation exacerbated the pre-existing gender inequities and power hierarchies, victimising the lives of many women as some contaminated HIV/AIDS, and others endured FGM. Moreover, the results of the research by Clark (2020:7) corroborate that the lockdown disempowered many men in South Africa as they lost their jobs, jeopardising their sense of masculinity; as a result, they resorted to gendered abuse to maintain their maleness.

On the other hand, the effects of gendered violence occur in various forms. While women are the most common victims of gender violence, the effects of the violence transcend beyond the sufferer to the entire society. The costs of violence against women and girls, according to Baylis et al. (2017), include expenses to the survivor and her family in terms of mental and physical health, employment, and cash. Young (2013) elucidates how rape and domestic violence are high on the list of risk factors for disability and death among women aged 15 to 44. Children who witness GBV, on the other hand, are more likely to develop emotional and behavioural issues, perform poorly in school, and are at risk of becoming violent in the future (Joe, 2016:32).

Additionally, businesses and employers may suffer financial losses due to employee absences due to health issues. Violence against women lowers productivity and depletes government funds. Additionally, GBV has huge direct and indirect costs for survivors, employers, and the government. In India, Ann and Ushma (2018) found that each occurrence of domestic violence costs a woman an average of 5 paid workdays. Equally, Jumapili et al. (2009) discovered that roughly 9% of GBV incidences in Uganda forced women to miss time from a paid job. Sally and Sanger (2010) confirmed that the consequences of GBV can last generations because the boys and the girls who have witnessed or experienced GBV are more likely to become abusers later in life. Correspondingly, Robutsky et al. (2014:90) illustrate that children who witness DV may develop anxiety, despair and poor academic performance. In Nicaragua, research showed that 63 percent of the children of abused women had to retake a school year (Fisher, Moore & Pittenger, 2017).

Furthermore, sexual violence prevents girls from receiving an education. GBV at school hinders many girls' educational opportunities and achievements. In South Africa, for example, 33% of raped girls never completed their education due to the hostility they faced after reporting the attack (Kheswa & Hoho, 2014:2809).

GBV can also harm reproductive, maternal, and child health in some situations. This implies that GBV limits women's reproductive rights, resulting in sexual and reproductive health difficulties. According to research conducted in sub-Saharan African countries, one out of every four pregnant women is subjected to physical or sexual assault (Mari et al., 2013:51). In this condition, miscarriage, stillbirth, and abortion are all increased, as is the chance of early labour and low birth weight. Furthermore, according to the World Health Organization, 23 and 53 percent of pregnant women who have their intimate partners physically assaulted are kicked or struck in the abdomen (WHO, 2017). In addition, many husbands push their wives into unwanted sexual encounters, frequently resulting in unwanted pregnancies. This happens because customs dictate that husbands have the right to their wives' sex, and no woman should refuse sex to her man (Dank, Love, Esthappan & Zweig, 2017: 15). Apart from undesired pregnancies, this context has the potential to exacerbate the HIV and AIDS pandemic among survivors. According to Olson and DeFrain (2010), one out of every four pregnant women is subjected to physical or sexual violence. This implies that GBV limits women's ability to exercise their reproductive rights, leading to sexual and reproductive health issues (Robyn, 2011; Thobejane et al., 2018).

2.6. Men as perpetrators of GBV

Gender-based violence is a terrible problem worldwide; most perpetrators are men, though children and women are occasionally involved. Men are never born violent toward women, but society instils ideas about masculinity and femininity in them. Pozzio (2016;122) admits that the roles, behaviours, and characteristics associated with maleness and deemed appropriate for men create a divide between men and women. Discriminatory roles elevate men to higher social positions by leaving women powerless and deprived of their rights (Diallo, 2019; Oliviera et al., 2017:41). This implies that the patriarchal power that

society has invested in men is the one that drives them to abuse women physically, morally, economically, or sexually (Sadie, 2015:455).

This also applies during armed conflicts as males may be forcibly enrolled into a militia to fight with them. To Gear (2015), compelling inexperienced men into fighting victimises them because their lack of experience changes them into perpetrators of violence against other men. Clark (2017:298) describes how the young male child soldiers who had been forced into rebellions in Liberia and Sierra Leone committed more sexual scandals.

To Hamilton (2019), patriarchal masculinities in each society make violence appear natural and normal for men to have more political, economic, and social power than women and for some men to have higher social status than others. According to Abraham et al. (2016), even though more women are taking on leadership roles in government and businesses, men continue to lead with a masculine face. Machison, Jewkes, and Rama (2011) indicate that men will use their social power to stigmatise such women because they appear to have lost their femininity by becoming too manly. To Wintermute (2017:25), men act this way because they are afraid that women have gained space away from them; and to maintain power and control over those women, men resort to abuse and harassment to protect their masculinities. Besides, religious attitudes and beliefs foster patriarchal masculinities as the latter trigger men's perpetration of GBV. Imams, pastors, and priests are all men, implying that women have no place in society. Men appreciate submissive and praying women because they completely surrender to their husbands to protect their marriage (Westenberg, 2017: 71). Most male preachers' discourses condone violence by teaching women that perseverance, forgiveness, and tolerance are values that a good female believer should cultivate (Knickmeyer et al., 2016). Similarly, Ephesians 5: 22-23, for example, encourages women to submit entirely to their husbands as they do to Jesus Christ because the husband is the head of the wife, just as Jesus is the head of the Church and its Saviour.

2.7. Men as victims of GBV

Gender-based violence is a global phenomenon that can affect everyone without cultural, economic, geographic, political, or religious boundaries. Thobejane (2012) confirmed that boys and men could also be victims of GBV, but their cases are often overlooked. Indeed, male victims are hesitant to confess their ordeals because they are ashamed of their victimhood (Karen, Christin, & Henry, 2016:323; Megan et al., 2018:39), which arises from men's incompatibility with their masculinity in cultures where males are dismayed to express their feelings (Megan et al., 2018: 35). Discouragement is due to cultural norms, patriarchy, and beliefs that encourage men to bear their wounds in silence and not display cowardice if they want to be true men (Anyuor, 2012:142; Paula, 2017; Zalewski, 2017:2003).

Ngari (2016) corroborates that it is embarrassing for males who are breadwinners, family protectors, and heads of families whose household members rely on survival to experience GBV, whether at home or in the community. In addition, the Institute of Security Studies (ISS, 2018) acknowledges that males sometimes experience domestic abuse from their wives but it frequently happens due to women defending themselves (Laura, 2013:160; Megan et al., 2018:37; Santovea, 2013:17).

According to Collier (2006), preconceptions of men as strong and powerful leaders and women as obedient, submissive, and weak cause many male victims to remain silent about their trauma. Joe (2016) asserts that only about 20 men worldwide report being raped yearly, excluding those who never report their abuse or seek help, which confirms the pervasiveness of GBV among male victims. According to Abdulcadir, Margairaz, Boulvain, and Irion (2011), 37% of men have suffered the plague, although only 3% have admitted it. In terms of sexual coercion, Cools and Kotsadam (2017:222) estimate that 6% of men and 13% of women have been sexually assaulted at some point in their lives. Cases of the police dismissing male victims who seek them after witnessing their wives' violence exemplify how male survivors are disregarded and denied assistance, yet female victims receive it (Viitanen & Calvin, 2015:860). Nevertheless, men suffer from sexual violence at a lower rate than women during armed conflicts (Carbo

& Mutisi, 2012; Collier, 2008:205; Joe, 2016), and many die defending their families (Amanda & Tidy, 2017:101).

Male victims of GBV may experience physical disabilities and severe psychological illnesses, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (Tarzia, Forsdike, Feder & Hegarty, 2020: 130). This condition often results in horrific social stigma, which humiliates male victims in the eyes of their families and community (Ralph, 2019; Weishut, 2015:80). However, feminist academics agree that GBV committed by women against men in their households or society is a less serious individual or social threat than men's abuse of women (Clark, 2017; Keehn & Gear, 2015; Morgan & Wells, 2016:408; UNICEF, 2016). This elucidates why male victimisation is more harmful and horrifying and needs more help and attention (Goodrich & Brammer, 2019).

The community should treat equally female and male victims of GBV. Some families dismiss male victims of GBV as outcasts because they have lost their masculinity considering the disgrace they have brought into the family and community (Eugene & Elaine, 2017:3; Goodrich & Brammer, 2019). Megan et al. (2018: 39) exemplify how a raped man is stigmatised in his community because such coercion has robbed him of his masculinity, which emasculates him through homosexualisation.

On a different note, in armed conflicts, boys and men are particularly vulnerable to GBV. The Institute for Social Security indicates that, as in the DRC, Liberia, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone, combatants in armed conflicts targeted boys and men (ISS, 2018; Morgan & Wells, 2016; Ngari, 2016; Weishut, 2015). Society promotes masculinity as a male indication of power, meaning the military comprises heterosexual units. A heterosexual man is appreciated more than a homosexual one because homosexuality is more effeminate than heterosexuality (Ilika, Okonkwo, & Adogu, 2018:56). Any man who has been sexually abused as a result of homosexuality loses his social position and value as he becomes weak and stained (Goodrich & Brammer, 2019; Tarzia, Forsdike, Feder & Hegarty, 2020: 130). This depicts one of the main reasons why males who have experienced GBV in the form of sexual assault remain silent about it.

Finally, armed conflict encourages sex killing and the assassination of boys and men (Ferrales, Brehm & McElrath, 2016). As a result, GBV against boys and men strengthens existing gender

discrimination, which, according to Baume (2018) and Zalewski et al. (2018), causes substantial harm to male survivors by robbing them of their traditional masculine distinctiveness. Clark (2017), on the other hand, claims that, despite the fact that male civilians are not active in the conflict, mass killings and massacres do not spare them, causing communities to be shattered. An independent human rights organisation, Gendercide Watch (GW, 2005), has documented incidences of genocide against adult males and children. It cites the 1988 Iraqi Kurdistan genocide, the Armenian Genocide (1915-1917), and the Rwandan genocide (1994), all of which targeted boys and men to wipe out one gender of a tribe (GW, 2009; 2016).

2.8. Men as partners in combating GBV

Gender-based violence is a scourge that can affect anyone, regardless of gender; men and women can either suffer or endure it. While only a small percentage of men are violent, all men can impact the culture and setting that allow other men to commit GBV. Accordingly, men can accept and examine their potential for violence and prevent other men from committing GBV in our societies (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005:838; Kaja, 2017:155).

Men are positioned higher in the social hierarchy than women due to gender constructs, which institutionalise violence (Ondicho, 2019:42; Sharon & Smith, 2019). Men are raised with a sense of privilege and entitlement by the patriarchal system, but they can also use the same structure to prevent GBV by intervening when other men commit it and addressing its root causes (Baldry, 2020:729; Inna, 2019; Pemunta, 2016:346). Furthermore, by addressing masculinities, which prevent men from being able to express their fears or the growing anxiety in their hearts, men can end GBV (James, 2017; Jones, 2019; Volpe, 2018).

Involving men in the prevention of GBV infers addressing hegemony because the latter sustains masculinities, men's social position and power in families and communities. Effective prevention methods motivate men to deter GBV through prevention programs such as workshops where they can meet and discuss social norms that condone violence. Tchoukou (2014) and John and Wanda (2019:133) uphold the

idea that men may contribute significantly to the prevention of GBV if urged to work toward addressing the violence.

According to Karen, Christin, and Henry (2016:325), male-female collaboration is a process that can reduce GBV provided there are an increase in programs and activities focusing on men's role in preventing violence against women. Men's anti-violence programs build on the understanding that GBV harms women (Er Turk, 2017:122; Imms, 2000:53), and men can change their attitudes and behaviours to prevent other men's violent behaviours (Simister, 2010:257). Successful deterrence programs require men to implement comprehensive programs that send positive messages and promote constructive masculinities (Ekenze, Ezegwi & Adiri, 2017; Peterman & Johnson, 219:977). So, men can work with boys to instil empathy for victims, change toxic attitudes and behaviours, learn how to intervene against other men's abusive conduct and use social marketing strategies to promote positive masculinities and norms (Morrisson & Macfarlane, 2017:15).

Men can also partner with boys by engaging them in interactive program discussions to change male violence-prone attitudes and behaviours that condone GBV. To echo Sharon and Smith (2019), the process can equip both school boys and girls with strategies for socialising with constructive attitudes and behaviours related to masculinities and GBV. Kathleen and Basile (2018) agree that social norms and media interventions can help male youths join the fight against GBV because they are interested in social media and most movies and music characters are men who portray masculinity.

2.9 Gender-based violence in DRC

2.9.1 Status of women in DRC and GBV during armed conflicts

DRC is a strongly paternalistic society where traditions consider women as second-class citizens. Society, in general, and the household, is guided by an old set of guidelines named the Family Code (Zihindula, 2010:26), containing norms that compel women to remain dependent on their husbands. Furthermore, the reproductive context and the lower status of Congolese women make them hesitant to discuss sexual issues with their husbands. This has caused the women to have many unwanted pregnancies

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and contaminate HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). The main reason for this is that traditions in DRC do not allow women to discuss sex-related issues with their husbands, and they have no right to suggest condoms or use protection on their own.

Moreover, disparity negatively impacts girls' education because many think boys' education is more important than that of girls. Research by Mugisho (2014:55) explains how parents think educating a girl is a loss for the family because she will leave her parents for her husband's family, who will benefit from her school education. That said, the girls are discriminated against as they are denied opportunities such as education, yet the boys have access to it. Such inequality is constructed through masculinity principles and preserved in the rural DRC because of a strong, patriarchal system that dehumanises women in every aspect of life. It sounds very insightful to examine how violence against women is committed in DRC.

On the other hand, the DRC's unending armed conflicts worsened the country's global situation, which has become unlivable. Nest (2006) emphasises that the DRC has gone through the bloodiest violence the continent has ever seen because of the fight over control of natural resources. Snow (2013) explains that despite the DRC's various peace accords, the escalation of battles activated massive violence against women through rape. The United Nations and Human Rights Watch have labelled DRC rape as the "war within the war" and warfare in which "women's bodies are a battlefield", the worst place on earth to be a woman or as the world capital of rape (UN, 2010; HRW, 2002). Perpetrators have always resorted to different forms of rape atrocities.

2.9.2 Types of rape perpetrated against women

During armed conflicts, parties to the conflict use various forms of sexual violence to express their masculinities. Research by Mukwege and Mays (2009) and the UN (2016) revealed that the DRC's unending wars caused 12% of women to suffer rape at least once in their lives. The same researchers confirm that violence against women countrywide caused 1,152 women to be raped daily, making a rate of 48 women per hour.

The military resorted to their masculinities to victimise women using unimaginable sexual violence. Thus, rape was used as artillery to conquer women's bodies, though some men suffered (Johnson & Das, 2009; Meloy & Miller, 2011). Such situations persisted countrywide because of cultural and social norms that nurture violence against women by camouflaging it into the culture of silence despite its devastating effects (UNDP, 2017). Patriarchal masculinities replicate the brunt of abuse on women by silencing it, although this increases the consequences (Baaz & Stern, 2013; Hayes & Burges, 2003; Terry & Hoare, 2007). Similarly, perpetrators have their explanations regarding sexual violence and rape atrocities.

The rape and SV the victims suffered were a horrendous and inhumane way the perpetrators used to inflict suffering on their female victims, regardless of their age and status (with the youngest being under three years old and the oldest 74) (Baaz & Stern, 2013; UN, 2010). Demmers (2014) and Ritzenhoff (2010:134) indicate that many consider DRC the atrocity of the century, femicide and a systematic pattern of destruction toward the female species. In the same vein, the country has been labelled as incomprehensible and the worst place in the world (Eriksson & Stern, 2013; Gettleman, 2007; Verhoeve, 2004), where savage beasts and rape tourism as the rape scourge has been attracting journalists and researchers to see the victims and listen to them first hand (Baaz & Stern, 2013). Perhaps this attention has contributed to making rape tourism belong to what is named today "war zone tourism" (Weiss, 2008.).

Karbo and Mutisi (2012) disclose that rape was an opportunity for some young Mayi Mayi combatants who had never experienced sex with a woman; thus, their guns gave them power over their victims. Others perpetuated it because they knew society condones abuse of women, and they were sure nothing would happen to them. In some areas, soldiers committed sexual violence as a recreational activity that Baaz and Stern (2013) described as an exciting and funny type of anonymous sex they used to increase their power over their victims. Soldiers liked to use this form of rape because they wanted to seek balance, as they had often been busy with military activities (Shelley, 2012). Indeed, men's heterosexual and biological desires for sexual impulses trigger their justification for recreational rape. Historically, such rationale promotes prostitution around military camps in various settings worldwide (Daymond, 2008; Furneaux, 2016; Heise, 1998:264), comprising the UN peacekeeping missions worldwide.

However, mass rape during an armed conflict illustrates a methodical approach that rapists find successful for demeaning and feminising the enemy (Schreiner, 2006; Baylis et al., 2007). To demonstrate their tragically feminised nature, the perpetrators vandalise the community by bullying, harassing and distressing the enemies' women (Karbo & Mutisi, 2012; Enloe, 2015:5; Stachowitsch, 2015). Such barbarism toward women tears apart the social fabric of society because they are the symbolic transmitters of ethnic values and national identity through their responsibilities and roles as the biological, cultural, and social reproducers of the community (Enloe, 2015; Furneaux, 2016; Johnson & Das, 2009; Mazrui, 1995:32). Such sexual assaults had never occurred in the DRC's political or historical past, but the endless armed conflicts widespread them countrywide (Baaz & Stern, 2013; Dunn, 2003; Meloy & Miller, 2011).

2.9.3 Consequences of rape to female victims

Women victims of rape can get undesirable pregnancies, which exposes them to certain diseases. The war situation in DRC made rape rampant, with scary physical and mental effects. Research by Nsasa (2015) found that the costs include unwanted pregnancies, diseases or health issues, and certain disturbances in the normal functions of the woman's body. Pregnancy is the immediate physical consequence of rape that female victims suffer, regardless of their age. Research by Rebecca (2014:1619) revealed that adolescents and children were raped and impregnated. Not only forced and unexpected pregnancy disturbs the victim's morality, but it also humiliates her that she decides on an illegal and risky abortion despite the dangerous complications it might generate. (Eby et al., 1995: 568; Laura, 1997).

Similarly, Advocacy (2018) and Boyer and Fine (1992:8) admit that psychological effects range from self-pity to more striking suicidal tendencies. Furthermore, sexual violence causes many women to unknowingly contaminate sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, that could affect their health system in the short and long term. In most cases, death follows (Rebecca, 2014:1622; Steve, 2013:459).

Women's body organs or functions can also suffer damage or disruption. Rape is a form of forced and unexpected intercourse that may inflict injuries to the victim's body, particularly her vagina, uterus and other parts of her reproductive system (Michelle, 2011:240; Philippe, 2018:105). Moreover, Mulungeta,

Kassaye and Berhane (1998:169) disclose that sometimes the victim may be beaten up and tortured before, during and after the rape, which might even cause her death. Snow (2013) found that many women and girls also inserted harmful objects into their vaginas of anuses as forms of rape. The rapist uses such brutalities to humiliate, weaken, threaten, and silence the victim, so he easily rapes her to satisfaction. Raping a woman is also raping her family, community, and country.

Besides, trauma and fear affect also affect women survivors of rape. In fact, these women suffer emotional shock and paranoia as other main psychological troubles rape cause them. Rebecca (2014:1628) affirms that the victim may suffer mental or emotional trauma through loneliness and marginalisation. Victims of sexual violence may equally grow panic in socialising with male outsiders, visitors and other individuals (Steve, 2013:459), which can affect them throughout their entire life. Research conducted by Laura (1997) found that some women victims of sexual violence in DRC never engaged in talks with men because they always caused them to reminisce about the ordeal they endured, which caused them more moral anger.

Another consequence of rape is that it can cause the victim to blame or demean herself. A female victim of sexual violence can develop such a state of mind, making herself unfriendly and lonely (Philippe, 2018:102). According to Advocacy (2018), these feelings distress the victim because society enforces stigma or humiliation on rape victims. Carlsen (2009:477) illustrates that victims of sexual abuse in DRC and Nigeria were refused attention and support from relatives, partners and the community at large as they blamed them for callous and provocative conduct, which are enough factors to deteriorate the victim's mental state leaving her shattered emotionally.

Social humiliation and trauma are other types of consequences a victim of rape may experience. Mulungeta, Kassaye and Berhane (1998:168) admit that such mortification erodes the victim's mind and thoughts, which generates ideas and tendencies to commit suicide. Reaching the level of committing suicide illustrates how the victim had been extremely traumatised and suffered depression and seclusion, which developed in her the sentiment of desperation (Advocacy, 2018; Laura, 1997; Nsasa, 2015;). Losing hope

can easily make the victim think her life has stopped and there is no room for recovering courage, which may entice her to think that life is worthless.

2.9.4 Military violence and masculinities in DRC

2.9.4.1 Military violence

Violence and the military overlap because military ferocity is not biological but rather a willing choice they make. Military sexual violence differs from natural violence because it does not relate to the biological nature of the perpetrator (Brownmiller, 1976; Kalra & Bhugra, 2013). Compulsory sex cannot have a natural motivation, but it is an abuser's act of aggression and violence that builds upon sexist discourses that society usually uses (Morgan, 1994; Witworth, 2004). Sexist discourses support sexual violence when they change into toxic and persistent powers that foster masculine violence essential to militarisation and wars. For this reason, militarised and sexualised cruelty refers to militarised heterosexuality and masculinity (Connell, 1995; Ehrenreich, 1997; Enloe, 2007; Goldstein, 2001; Stern & Nystrand, 2006).

Although boys can achieve their natural potential as men through the military, there are ways in which female and male soldiers learn and reinforce masculine and violent attitudes (Goldstein, 2001; Higate & Hopton, 2005; Shepherd, 2007; Stern & Zalewski, 2009). This materialises because the military trains their male and female units to murder without hesitation when defending the nation (Connell, 1995; Ehrenreich, 1997; Enloe, 2007; Morgan, 1994; Pin-Fat & Stern, 2005). Indeed, militarisation builds diverse heterosexual brutal, ethnic and class hierarchies that are "woven into most military chains of command" (Enloe, 2000:152; Higate, 2004). Maleness in the military covers rigorously defined and fixed content because they help a lot in militarisation (Child Soldier Global Report, 2008; Stern & Nystrand, 2006). The military's masculinities belong to those traditions that convey the soldiers' feelings of self, lived experiences, or the current circumstances of the lives of militarised men (Collier, 2006; Ganguly, 2006).

Besides, the necessity for safeguarding, peacefulness, and giving life categorise women and feminity. Feminity makes women vulnerable when they are victims of sexual assault and used as an arm

for their moral and physical destruction (Hoschild, 1998; Lemarchand, 2009). Despite this, and during their military training, the women in the army also learn men's behaviours of killing, warring and protecting. However, people believe feminity cannot promote militarised masculinities to satisfaction, which implies that violence destroys the womanness in a female soldier by behaving like a man (Léonce & Emizet, 2003; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2004; Young, 2003). Accordingly, by becoming a soldier, a woman can become aggressive and brutal, even sexually, like men soldiers (Dearing, 2009; Turner, 2007). The brutality of male soldiers can also lead them to abuse other men sexually, mostly during an armed conflict.

2.9.4.2 Military masculinities and violence against men in DRC

Men can suffer from gender-based violence perpetrated by male combatants. The DRC's cyclic rebellions have resulted in rape, gang rape, sexual mutilation, and other forms of violence against men and boys. During attacks on communities, Anne Marie (2014) and Watt (2010) confirmed that male rebels displayed toxic masculinity by raping male enemies in front of their family members and neighbours. This described how boys and men of various ages and ethnicities were gathered from various villages to endure sexual assault at gunpoint in the presence of other hostages (Jelke, 2017:510; Karbo & Mutisi, 2012). After assaults, the captured men were taken to the bush, where they were gang-raped or forced to have open-air sex with kidnapped women, girls, and other men (Aaron, 2012; Nzongola-Ntanjala, 2004; UN, 2010). A captive was sometimes forced to rape ten to twenty kidnapped girls or women in a short period (Turner, 2007; Veiss, 2008), and any male victim who failed to perform the prescribed act was tortured to death (Verhoeve, 2004; Weiss, 2008).

Another form of sexual violence endured by male victims as an expression of military masculinity was genital mutilation. For example, rebels crushed the testicles of male abductees or cut off their penises (Mazrui, 1995:32). This demonstrated how determined the combatants were to humiliate the victims by destroying their manliness through castration. Heinous sexual violence was also applied to male captives, such as being forced to engage in inhumane and senseless sexual acts. Lemarchand (2009) confirmed that the rebels could dig holes in the ground and threaten men with death if they did not ejaculate into them until

they were full of sperm. Such acts resulted in the skinning of the foreskins of men's penises, causing pain and the risk of infection. Other men were coerced into incestuous relationships, which often led to committing taboos. Zalewski (2017:201) found that combatants forced men to rape their daughters and sons to rape their sisters or mothers. Such atrocities demonstrate how combatants felt they were more powerful and manlier than their victims were. In other words, by dehumanising their male victims, combatants left indelible marks of humiliation and shame on their humanity and identity (Baylis et al., 2017; Young, 2003). In most cases, not only does such intentional maltreatment infect the victims of HIV/AIDS and other STDs, but it also aims at the extinction of future generations of the current local populations (Watt, 2010; Young, 2003).

Furthermore, patriarchy and societal norms promote military masculinity by encouraging soldiers to behave as a true military everyone can fear. Indeed, when soldiers defend their country, Aaron (2012) and Anne Marie (2014) argue that they use their masculine strength to terrorise their adversaries. Defeating the enemy demonstrates that the winning side is more powerful, and its men are braver and manlier than the opposing team. This sends the message that patriarchal societies support cultural and religious beliefs and practices that encourage men to learn violent behaviour to be real men. Male combatants have an advantage over other men because they are armed, just as men in their families have an advantage. After all, they are the sole breadwinners. When combatants are removed from this position, they become more virulent and will defend their masculinity (Johnson & Das, 2009).

2.10. Gaps in the literature

Previous research on masculinities in the setting of transnational locales (Haj-Yahia, 2005; Kankonde, 2010; Mudgway, 2019; and Napikoski, 2019) demonstrates the importance of masculinity in the formation and dissolution of transnational communities. This indicates that men perform and negotiate respectable masculinity in cross-cultural contexts like the job, neighbourhood, and family. Moving away from conceptualising transnational masculinities as being in a constant state of crisis, there are numerous ways that ideas of masculinity and gender identities are being contested, upheld, and reconstructed. In

rebuilding their lives in their new environment, men in transnational environments lose their standing as primary wage earners and experience a rupture in their sense of masculinity.

Furthermore, because GBV is so pervasive globally, the literature (Amanda &Tidy, 2018; Langa &Soma, 2012; Meloy & Miller, 2012; Terry &Hoare, 2017) on it in a transnational setting reveals how it also exists in such a setting. Similarly, unequal power exchanges between men and women are the root cause of GBV. Primarily, GBV is caused by perpetrators; hence the victim should not be held accountable for their violent actions. A power imbalance between men and women is encouraged by patriarchal cultural influences in many communities, which legitimises violence by supporting men's masculinities of domination and superiority over women. GBV is more prevalent in nations with higher levels of violence, where male supremacy is regarded as the norm and gender stereotypes, bigotry, and conventional notions of femininity and masculinity are prevalent. GBV becomes terrible and prevalent when these variables are combined with the socialisation of gender and the perception of the home as a private domain governed by men. Finally, the widespread acceptance of violence as a societal norm, a method of settling the conflict, and a way to make oneself known in public is where gender-based violence first emerged. GBV has its roots in cultural practices that give men more authority than women.

Additionally, women are often victimised, whether in times of peace or war, which makes the situation common in many cultures. In other words, because women are poor and financially dependent on males, who are the only members of their families who earn a living, society promotes the patriarchy that justifies men's violence against women. When patriarchy and other discriminatory social norms are still in place, sometimes during armed conflicts, women are more likely to be the victims of rape and other forms of abuse.

However, in contrast to such earlier literature, this research exhibits a different point of view. To alter expressions of their masculine subjectivities in their transnational context, male refugees renegotiate their masculinities in their host country. A focus on migration illuminates how refugees adapt to a new community with its customs and values after leaving their home countries (Bastia, 2013: 160; Stanley, 2012: 218). This shows how male immigrants learn about the gendered domestic responsibilities in their

new transnational environment. This confirms that the most important model for actively renegotiating transnational lives through local identities and behaviours is still present. Men and women can express distinct identities, including attitudes toward violence against women, under the restrictions of this spatial dislocation. For male refugees, actively negotiating transnational lives through local behaviours and identities continues to be their primary reference. To achieve this, traditional and contemporary ideological components must be intricately woven into the development of male identity in a setting that advances the notion that the construction of masculinities remains a socio-spatial process that affects people on an individual, family, and communal level (Jongwilaiwan & Thompson, 2013: 374; Vaiou, 2012: 251; Ye, 2013). However, in situations of significant disruption or ongoing crises, the hegemonic masculine identity appears to be resisted.

This being said, there are gaps in the literature on GBV and masculinity because little attention is paid to the males from DRC. They are refugees in South Africa, a country with a high rate of violence against women. According to Zedenius (2014), who investigated "Sexual violence in DRC: Women's Bodies as Battleground," the majority of research on gender-based violence has focused on women as victims in various contexts, including armed conflicts, but little is known about the men who commit GBV against women in all settings, including the transnational one. Male refugees from the DRC may have witnessed, engaged in, or heard of GBV while living there. Still, because of inverted gender roles, difficult circumstances, and laws that protect women, they may experience gendered violence in their transnational setting of South Africa.

Again, there is a lack of research on how socialisation and sociocultural norms affect males, how refugees view violence against women, and how they renegotiate their masculinities in transnational locales. Because no one has focused on or interviewed these men, the revised literature lacks male refugees' perspectives on gender-based violence in a host country. For instance, after arriving in a host country, male refugees may struggle with issues of masculinity and identity. Additionally, the Covid-19 outbreak and cultural shock in a transnational environment may have worsened the issue by producing too much stress, especially in the lives of male refugees, which sparked an increase in GBV. To close these gaps, this

research examines the experiences of Congolese male refugees living in Durban regarding GBV in a transnational setting.

2.11. Theoretical framework

2.11.1 Understanding theoretical context

Each research requires a contextual framework on which it builds its development. Ong (1999) states that research theories explain, predict phenomena, and defy prevailing understanding of information within the boundaries of critical assumptions. The theoretical framework holds a theory of a research study by inserting concepts that bring forward the various ideas organised within research. It acts simultaneously as a source for the concepts and views within the discussion (Shikumo, 2008). Naturally, texts are formed within theoretical or conceptual frameworks that may or may not appear explicit (Hughes, 2002:6). Thus, the theoretical framework familiarises and pronounces the theories that elucidate why the research problem the researcher is studying exists.

However, the greatest advantage of a theoretical framework lies in placing the knowledge presented in a larger epistemological and logical context (Hughes, 2002:6). Bertrand and Hughes (2005:262) assert that a theory is a "set of concepts, derived from and contributing to a model, which together explains a phenomenon or practice". Accordingly, this section presents the different perceptions that support this research about the experiences of Congolese male refugees living in Durban about GBV in a transnational setting.

Furthermore, Shikumo (2008) explains how a theory is a mentally constructed idea that parallels some group of entities by incorporating the crucial features of the same group. In the context of this research, a theory clarifies and strengthens opinions on how an individual belongs to a wider community system and can interact with its structures at different levels. It also clarifies how transnational migration makes refugees live in spatial progressions positioned in cultural practices that generate new ways of creating masculinities and identities (Pessar & Mahler, 2003). Finally, the theory helps to understand social preset behaviours, identities and roles that are proper for men (Ratele, 2008). The transnational socio-

cultural environment shapes male refugees' behaviours and identities, which helps them familiarise themselves with the various traditional belief systems they embrace through the social adaptation within their new community.

From another perspective, this research discusses socioecological, transnational, and masculinities theories to empower the reader to better comprehend possible male refugee experiences as perpetrators or victims. In a nutshell, the socio-ecological theory describes how man belongs to a wider community system and interacts with people at various levels of its structure. The transnational theory depicts how transnational migration moves immigrants into spaces that have cultural practices that push them to develop new identities and masculinities. This does not condense the concept of transnational migration to solely the male attribute, but still frames GBV in the gendered power relations and its production in the gendered social norms and beliefs.

Finally, the theory of masculinities allows the readers to understand how social pre-set identities, manners and responsibilities that are proper for men can influence their lifestyles. The same masculinities that men use to harm their victims can still be used constructively to empower men and women in the community.

2.11.2 The socioecological theory

2.11.2.1 Origins of the theory

The socioecological theory arose from realising that man and society are inextricably linked. Urie Bronfenbrenner first proposed this theory as a conceptual model for explaining human development in the 1970s, but it was not until the 1980s that it was formalised as a theory (Guy-Evans, 2020; Paat, 2018:959). The theory at the time said that society is a picture of the driving forces that shape people's attitudes, behaviours, and actions in connection to their settings. This underlined the need to comprehend how man and his environment interact (Hayes et al., 2017; Kelley & Coughlan, 2019:161).

Since the establishment of this theory, the world has been under constant transition in terms of technological innovations. Wilson et al. (2002) demonstrate how the human environment continues to

develop due to social networking, video games, and other modern-day interactions within the socioecological setting. This could imply that ecological systems are still relevant but will evolve over time to incorporate new modern discoveries that influence human behaviour and ideas (Lippard et al., 2018:2; Richard et al., 2013). Alternatively, the socioecological setting significantly impacts our interactions with our peers, community, family, and school.

2.11.2.2 Proponents of the theory

The Russian-born American Urie Bronfenbrenner was the first to propose this theory in the 1970s. Its proponents believe that our environment significantly influences our actions, attitudes, and beliefs; hence, the interpersonal level concerns a person's interactions with others, such as family and friends (Chetty & Agee, 2009). For instance, Bronfenbrenner (1995) acknowledges that parents can socialise their children about social norms and beliefs from time to time at the family level. Besides, the organisational level can reach out to more people in various parts of the community. Kelly and Coughlan (2019:160) elucidate how groups or organisations such as churches, schools, and businesses frequently set up direct or indirect methods of influencing their members' behaviours. Promoters of this approach regard the notion of community as the culmination of the various organisations in an area, whose purpose is to socialise community members about how to live in and maintain their social environment. Paat (2018:955), for example, suggests that some community elders can teach the youth about the social standards they must acquire for their cultures and societies to thrive in the future.

2.11.2.3 Strengths and weaknesses of the theory

The strength of this theory is based on several closely related factors that influence an individual's behaviour and development. According to Mikki (1991:70), these factors include a person's views, experiences, and social context in which they live. They are rooted in race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, which manipulate them based on local culture. The socio-ecological approach helps program planners and providers identify successful strategies for modifying individual and social risky behaviours by giving a holistic perspective. In line with Nateralma (2021), such approaches could encompass

individual social education and counselling, family education, initiatives to reinforce educational and occupational privileges, social marketing to foster healthier peer and societal norms, and policies and programs to address socioeconomic, racial and ethnic disparities. The approach allows for integrating behavioural and environmental change, focusing on the interaction of personal and social elements (Michael, 1993). The model can also help those in need by educating them on how various factors might affect their social beliefs and life. It enables people to comprehend how to balance personal and social variables to promote a peaceful and nonviolent society. Hayes et al. (2017) propose that education can alleviate harmful behaviours and social imbalances in many societies because it is a less expensive tool to prevent social illnesses than trying to cure their effects. People are also encouraged to take responsibility and live healthy social connections and lifestyles. Thus, Paat (2018) looks at how Bronfenbrenner's theory can be used in the development of immigrants. He claims that cultural differences can affect immigrants' socio-ecological behaviours. Understanding the migrants' socio-ecological context might help them strengthen their social behaviours.

On the other hand, this theory has weaknesses because it has been criticised for lacking a desire for socio-cultural change. Indeed, changing one's way of life can be incredibly difficult because society's norms are deeply ingrained in people's minds due to socialisation. Guy-Evans (2020), for example, claims that people would fail to embrace harmony as long as the perpetrators and victims of violence believe their behaviours are normal and that this is how society was built. This frequently occurs because the theory is limited in examining the mesosystems or interactions between neighbourhoods and the victims' community (Hayes et al., 2017). Therefore, it is unknown to what extent these mechanisms can assist victims in escaping the abuse they have been caught in (Albert, 2007). Again, Halliday (2011) indicates that empirically testing the theory is challenging, implying that while the socioecological theory can establish an effect, it cannot conclude if society is the direct cause of such consequences.

Overall, the socioecological theory may conclude that those who do not have strong and positive socio-ecological structures are unable to develop. Although this may be true in some situations, according to Chetty and Agee (2009), many people can still develop into experienced individuals without the positive

benefits of their socioecological relationships. For example, Heise (1998: 275) recognises that it is wrong to assert that all persons who grow up in a violent environment will develop violent behaviours. As a result, Halliday (2011) suggests that people should be cautious about making broad judgments about people based on this theory.

2.11.2.4 Connecting the theory with masculinities and GBV

This theory stipulates that an individual is a part of a broader community system and can interact with its structures at multiple levels. Interaction can also go through gender sensitive language to lessen discrimination and stereotyping by promoting gender equality. Failing to do so may lead to women and men's categorization leading to discrimination (Richard et al., 2013). However, using the same language can engage people at societal structures, reducing the prevalence of gender discrimination in communities.

Because the person must renegotiate the integration of his identity and masculinities, interaction and assimilation are not automatic (Albert, 2007; Halliday, 2011). Joblessness, patriarchal masculinities, and male children's experiences of violence at home, for example, can have an impact on their adult behaviour (Chetty & Agee, 2009). Poverty, background, and the information males learn from practical behaviours can contribute to GBV by making it appear normal. Besides, Morell (1998) elucidates how the organisation and practice of schools are gendered. Children who encounter power and authority among teaching staff are exposed to discriminatory behaviour. Also, at the national level, the government's attitude toward GBV and the dissemination of information about it may negatively or positively impact perpetrators across the country (Heise, 1998: 275). This backs up the claim by Dirango (2016) that specifies that violence against women in the DRC has been rising due to the government's failure to hold perpetrators accountable.

At cultural and religious stages, perpetrators and victims embrace the cultural and religious concepts and values they are exposed to. For example, according to research by Richard et al. (2013), GBV is fostered when people are taught that God is a male and that women are lesser human beings. Similarly, the above researchers acknowledge that society gives men more freedom than women, which leads to abuse.

Overall, connecting this research project to socioecological theory enables a direct focus on the context in which it occurs. Therefore, the theory investigates how the Congolese male refugees' socio-cultural norms and socialisation influence their understanding and experiences of gender-based violence.

2.11.3 The transnationalism theory

2.11.3.1 Origins of transnationalism

Transnationalism did not begin in the way that we know it today. Currently, it is becoming increasingly rare to live and die on the land of our forefathers. According to Snider (2008), the term transnationalism was first used to describe non-traditional military encounters between nation-states and national groups and between nations and their peoples. In the nineteenth century, the term was used to describe relations between states that had met through diplomats or military forces (Sheehy, 2017). Since their work contributed to a better understanding of international history, Elizabeth (2019:21) interprets that economic historians never completely adopted the state-centric view of international relations and diplomatic history. The evolution of economic ideas and the role of geography, science, and technology influenced national policies and inter-state relations within and beyond Europe's borders (Levitt & De la Dehesa, 2003).

Writer Randolph Bourne popularised the term transnational in the early twentieth century as he described a new way of thinking about cultural relationships (Levitt & Shiller, 2004; Smith, 2005). On the other hand, Patel was the first to provide the etymology of the term transnationalism, which first appeared in a 1919 discussion of migration and identity in the USA (Yoo, 2018:427). Though still unfamiliar, the term was only connected with having benefits that crossed national borders during subsequent decades of Anglo-American economic relations in the interwar period and the study of law in the 1950s (Heindbrink, 2014). As a result, transnationalism was used mainly as a substitute term for inter-state relations or was approved by multinational companies seeking to rebrand themselves as transnational corporations during the 1980s because "multinational" had become a dirty word that reflected greed and inequality (Jina & Thomas, 2013:17).

In the 1970s, 'transnationalism' became a popular research topic in the social sciences, ushering in a significant shift (Bash et al., 1994:6; Fouron & Glick-Schiller, 2001: 60). This was the period when the concept was recognised, though it has been forgotten on occasion since then. In 1976, the term began to be associated with international history and international relations (Levitt & Shiller, 2004; Smith, 2005), which led to a possible definition in the context of nation-state relationships. Later, it was believed that a transnational relationship should include more than three states to account for historical occurrences of bilateral phenomena that allowed some claim to capitalism, socialism, universalism and world peace (Ong, 1999; Pessar & Mahler, 2003). However, it was only in the 1980s that historians promoted transnationalism, associating it with their world to break free from perplexing dominant national paradigms (Levitt & De la Dehesa, 2003). All at once, people were migrating transnationally for some reason; the concept of diaspora arose, and it became popular in social science literature (Basile et al., 2016). Over time, transnationalism became jeopardised because it had acquired several connotations that proved a renewed sensitivity to descriptions. International relations eventually universalised the concept's new definition by washing away its previous meanings, allowing it to surface consistently as it became properly and widely understood (Sheehy, 2017).

The flow of goods, human capital, money and technology across national borders is referred to as economic transnationalism (Jina & Thomas, 2013:17). As soon as migrants could send money home, receiving countries began to save, demonstrating how the movement benefited both sending and receiving countries, as well as the businesses involved. According to Evan and Anne (2017:25), the socio-cultural life of immigrants focuses on cultural and social interactions across national borders through the promotion of multiculturalism. Furthermore, transnationalism in politics refers to activities encouraging immigrants to stay involved in their home country's politics, such as voting and even running for office. Teitelbaum and Russel (2021:243) explain that many Americans migrate to Mexico for business, economic, or family reasons, but meet with American politicians, raise money for their country's political campaigns, continue to vote in their country's elections, and remain committed to their country's ideologies.

Transnationalism nowadays refers to the movement of economic, cultural and political processes across national borders. In the division of labour and the economic turmoil of global capital, transnationalism entails the concept of diaspora. Janice (2020) admits that because African diaspora studies focus on racism and white supremacy, the diaspora brings transnationalism to a diverse political perspective on transnational processes and globalisation. This highlights how increasing interconnection among people worldwide can provide a new image of transnationalism, although it will pose challenges to community political leaders and policymakers.

2.11.3.2 Proponents of transnationalism

Transnationalism connects the people who stay in the country and those who move out. Families of migrants who remain in their home countries are critical stakeholders to consider. This is because migrants' histories and experiences, such as the situation of their families or political beliefs, influence how and to what extent they engage in transnational activities and their sense of individual and collective identity (Ong, 1999; Pessar & Mahler, 2003). Workers and their families benefit the most regarding labour conditions, especially in poorer countries. Teitelbaum and Russel (2021:243) clarify that in most families, the migrant initially sends remittances directly to his family to empower them financially and psychologically.

This happens because proponents of capitalist transnationalism ease the movement of people, ideas, and goods across borders. Congruent with Evan and Anne (2017:35), this happened because those supporters opposed that linking specific nation-state boundaries with migratory workforces, globalised corporations, global money flow, global information flow, and global scientific cooperation was pointless. However, challengers of transnationalism argued that transnational capitalism arose because of increasing monopolisation and centralisation of capital by the world's dominant groups and power blocs (Bash et al., 1994:15; Fouron & Glick-Schiller, 2001: 52).

2.11.3.3 Strengths and weaknesses of the theory

Transnationalism offers both benefits and drawbacks. In terms of advantages, the phenomenon strengthens cross-border connections between individuals, groups, and society. In line with Yoo (2018:428), transnationalism positively influences the countries' social, cultural, economic and political landscapes because interconnection between countries reduces border access. Davis and Edna (1996) indicate that migrants can promote diversity in the receiving country by enhancing numerous social and cultural characteristics. Besides, transnationalism can readily boost the arts and entertainment, education, research, tourism, and alternative health sectors (Nadera, 2017:18). Policymakers will face significant challenges due to these changes, as they will need to assess the global impact of their policies more closely. The success or failure of those strategies can have beneficial or bad consequences for migrants and both nations' societies.

On the other hand, Goldman (2014) asserts that money sent home by migrants and investment and trade in specialised goods and services they seek can help the destination country financially. Similarly, migrants can campaign to end human rights violations or raise funds for communities in their home countries (Snider, 2008). Migrants can foster goodwill through mutual understanding and acceptance of both countries' cultures through such exchanges. Finally, migrants and their families educational, professional, and lifestyle options and language talents are frequently enhanced by their transnational experiences (Nadera, 2017:10).

Transnationalism also has weaknesses at both the individual and social levels. Basically, transnationalism reduces the host country's sovereignty over its borders and citizens by forcing countries to break their borders (Levitt & Shiller, 2004). Additionally, immigrants tend to keep social, cultural, and political ties to their home countries, indicating that they may not assimilate into their host societies. As a result, their commitment to the host country appears uncertain, given they cannot break with their home culture and traditions (Davis & Edna, 1996).

The relocating effect of transnationalism can pose substantial challenges to migrants and their families. For example, Smith (2005) conducted similar research in Libya and discovered that separating parents and children due to migration frequently results in mental disorders. Conversely, Goldman (2014) revealed that Mozambican children of migrants build links to the nation where they live but not to their parent's home country. This implies that transnationalism causes most refugees to lose their sense of identity and belonging by straining family ties. Indeed, migration separates parents and children and frequently increases the vulnerability of those left behind in their home nations. For example, research conducted in Mexico exposed how the elderly were burdened with additional caregiving tasks, although they also required independent care (Snider, 2008).

Transnationalism may have societal consequences since some migrants may contribute new ideas to their host countries while others maintain the lifestyles of their home cultures. Many migrants stick to their home country's traditions, yet they have changed, creating a clash with social or cultural norms such as gender roles (Yoo, 2018:427). Keeping strong ties to one's home community while living in a transnational context, in line with Haas, Mary and Leyslye (2000), reflects the refugees' inability or unwillingness to adjust to the transnational community. Nadera (2017:10) expounds that transnational ties between migrants are frequently regarded as divided loyalties, casting doubt on the migrants' motivations for their transnational activities. According to Goldman (2014), this setting may be viewed with suspicion in both the home and host countries, posing national security concerns in some cases.

2.11.3.4 Transnationalism and GBV

There exists a clear connection between transnationalism and gender-based violence. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005: 841) reveal that transnationalism is a phenomenon in which migrants link their home culture and traditions to the transnational locale. This fusion of two dissimilar cultures in the host country serves as a means of negotiating new identities across space and depicting previous identities (Heindbrink, 2014). Consequently, the migrant produces masculine vulnerabilities as an identity package with the potential to rearrange subordinate roles for their integration through this process. Indeed, migrants learn

new practices with a particular hegemonic shape and patriarchy that they adapt to their new setting, which frequently galvanises GBV (Snider, 2008). This elucidates how Congolese male refugees' dynamic identity formations trigger new aggressive hegemonic masculinities in their transnational setting.

Similarly, Ming (2017) specifies that a man's lack of empowerment in his community equates to failure, which shapes the relationship between men and maleness by exposing them to hegemonic masculinities. For instance, when Congolese male refugees are jobless, they feel they are not complete breadwinners, jeopardising their masculinity. Such persistent fear of losing their masculinity forces them to rethink their identities in their new global setting, often culminating in GBV. As a result, transnationalism informs this research because it looks at how Congolese male refugees consider gender-based violence in their transnational setting.

2.11.4 The theory of masculinities

2.11.4.1 Origins of the theory

Understanding the origins of this theory requires looking at ancient writings on masculinities that date back to around 3000 BC, with explicit expectations for men in the form of laws and implied masculine ideals in myths about gods and heroes. Before Israel's King David died, he told his son Solomon to be a strong man (David & Jeff, 2016:94). Furthermore, Tacitus wrote the book Germania (98 AD), in which he described how the men of the ancient Germanic tribes fought aggressively in the battle to protect their women from enemy capture (Caroll, 1975:24). A European medieval masculinity in the Medieval and Victorian eras was primarily Christian and chivalric (Konstantin, 2002:150). The portrayal of men in literary history is marked by bravery, respect for women of all classes, and generosity (Chisholm & Tidy, 2017:104). According to the medieval tale of Beowulf, masculinity separates men from women, other men, passion, and the household (Boonzaier, 2008:186). Furthermore, boxing was professionalised in America and Europe in the nineteenth century, emphasizing masculinity's physical and confrontational aspects (Connell, 1993).

A traditional family, from the twentieth century to the present, consists of the father as the breadwinner and the mother as a housewife (Enloe, 2015:8). Despite women's increasing labour-force participation and contributions to family income, men's identities have remained centred on their working lives, specifically their economic contributions (Chisholm & Tidy, 2017:100). In America, for example, a real man was a shameless young male, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual Protestant father with a college education, who was fully employed, had a good complexion, weight, and height, and had a recent athletic record (Connell, 1993; Konstantin, 2002:150).

Gould asserted in 1974 that the provider role was central to adult men's identities because masculinity is frequently measured by the size of a man's economic contribution to the family (Boonzaier, 2008:186). Furthermore, masculinity opposes any appearance of softness, emotion, femininity, or any other trait associated with women (Caroll, 1975:28). Connell conducted a sex differences analysis among Sydney's adolescent population and discovered gender issues, which made him write about sex and gender (Kessler et al., 1982). Cornell's discoveries influenced new sociology of masculinity as he had been inspired by feminist-socialist debates on how to theorise power and oppression. Later, he concentrated on gender and power, leading to the theory of masculinities. He concluded that discussing masculinities is akin to discussing gender relations and that masculinities can be defined as the patterns of practice that people engage in when they take on that position (Conroy et al., 2017). This approves that masculinity connects with gender because it exists due to societal norms that construct, foster and preserve it. The concept of masculinity has evolved over time and across cultures (David & Jeff, 2016:80), and Connell (1993) confirms that the constituents of masculinity vary depending on time and place, meaning the term masculinity is a pluralised concept (masculinities) rather than a single overarching one.

2.11.4.2 Categories of masculinities

There are many different types of masculinities, and each society has its categories that culturally dominate women and other masculinities.

2.11.4.2.1 Hegemonic masculinity

Hegemonic masculinity denotes the idealised concept of masculinity, the dominant view of what constitutes a real man in a given context (Connell, 2005; Kupers & Terry, 2010:113; Morell, 2001). This masculinity regards other masculinities as subordinate and inadequate, pressuring men under these to achieve hegemonic status (Jacey, 2019; Mek et al., 2018:136; Terry, 2010). Modern hegemonic masculinity is based on male authority over females and inter-male dominance, and the stigmatisation of homosexuality (Connell, 2005; Heber, 2010:69; Ming, 2017; Morell, Jewkes & Lindegger, 2016: 27). This, according to Moretti (2016), depicts how hegemonic masculinity encapsulates people's perception of gender relations as a societal functioning framework. Such masculinity portrays powerlessness to express feelings other than anger, reluctance to acknowledge softness or reliance, devaluation of women and other womanly characteristics in males, homophobia, and many other things (Constance, 2018; Michael, 2019; Thomas, 2019; Yanvi & Sitawa, 2015).

Hegemonic masculinity is never static because cultural changes affect its dynamism by exemplifying specific behavioural patterns that underwent a major revolution (Ming, 2016:711). In other words, the constant change we see in our globalised world, in local and global cultures, hugely impacts hegemonic masculinities (Ming, 2017). This masculine dynamism may provide an opportunity to challenge and change inappropriate and dangerous masculinities within societies (Morell, 2001:7). Consequently, machismo or fearlessness refers to masculinity that emphasises power while ignoring consequences and responsibility (Constance, 2018:3; Mosher & Sirkin, 1984; Ratele, 2008).

Hegemonic masculinities are fluid, but their various components vary depending on the context. They incite violence in countries and communities where cultures and traditions tolerate brutality or where local justice is dysfunctional (Constance, 2018; Peacock, 2013). Hegemonic masculinities favour men in positions of social leadership and women in subordinate roles within the same society (Hodgson, 2011; Yanvi & Sitawa, 2015). Furthermore, men are expected to be tough and physically strong, which includes the use of violence to control others (Cockburn, 2013; Dolan, 2011:54; Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007;

Wallacher, 2012:33). Men with violent attitudes are more likely to use force when dealing with problems, which explains why most men abuse women and other men (Peacock, 2013; Ratele, 2012).

Men develop hyper-masculinity when they exhibit exaggerated male stereotyped behaviour, such as focusing on physical power, anger, and sexuality (Constance, 2018; Ratele, 2008). Hyper-masculinity severely violates women's rights because it views threats as sensational and dominant, resulting in cruel sexual attitudes that harm women (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984).

2.11.4.2.2 Patriarchal masculinities

Patriarchy refers to a social system in which men are the primary authority figures in social organisation, political leadership, moral authority, and property control (Elliot, 2016; Gibbs, 2016:327; Morell, 2001). Connell and Messerschmitt (2005:830) state that today's globalisation has introduced the world to a universally dominant and patriarchal version of masculinity. In other words, the system permits men to keep women in a state of passivity, hinders their development into actual feminists, and prevents them from inheriting property and titles in society (Ratele, 2006:55). Patriarchy is a global power structure that infiltrates the economy, politics, and society to allow the powerful to exclude the weak through dominance (Elliot, 2016; Greig & Edström, 2012; Oxfam, 2013; Women Peacemakers Progress, 2013). Accordingly, society develops a view of weakness as an undesirable trait, frequently leading to violence against and marginalising women. Therefore, Richards (2006) states that patriarchy supporters use fear, violence, and prejudice to maintain the status quo when a threat occurs. Since Patriarchy has been around for a long time, and its adherents have worked tirelessly to exploit toxic masculinity, most people associate it with general masculinity (Colombini et al., 2016; Cornell, 2005; Mek et al., 2018: 129). Patriarchy promotes masculinity and violence, which are a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to men's dominance over and discrimination against women, and to the prevention of women's full advancement (Barnett, 2019; Conroy et al., 2017; Ditch, 2017; Groes, 2012:100; Mackiel, 2019; Shereen, Heilman & Baker, 2017).

2.11.4.2.3 Toxic masculinities

Toxic masculinities are cultural patterns that harm society via boys and men while also fostering violence, abuse of women, assault, and maintaining men's authority over other men (Debbie, 2017:645; Pasura & Christou 2018:233; Thomas, 2017). For instance, boys and men are expected to be assertive, authoritarian, brave, active, and harsh due to these masculinities (Michael, 2019; Wilbert, 2018). Indeed, society normalises violence through intimidation, victimisation, and normalised aggressive behaviours among boys (Jacey, 2019; Maya, 2019; Thomas, 2017:4).

Patriarchal maleness typically fosters traditional toxic masculinity attitudes to reinforce male gender identity, which can lead to violence. In other words, the masculine positions that nurture men's domination and power, control, self-reliance, and emotional restraint are encouraged during childhood. In this line, Michael (2019) and Peter (2016) acknowledge that masculinity norms are frequently disseminated via parents, other male relatives, and community members. All traditional masculine beliefs are harmful since they inevitably encourage brutality and female oppression in society (Brian, Baker & Harrison, 2017:456; Carlson, 2012:1927). Nonetheless, other traditional masculine attributes, such as work dedication to work, enjoyment of competing in sports, and providing for a family, are not harmful (Debbie, 2017; Terry, 2010).

2.11.4.2.4 Military masculinities

Military violence escalates in a male-dominated society that already reflects men's self-image and maleness, demonstrating male domination in most institutional resources by contributing to the marginalisation of women (Cornell & Messerschmidt, 2001:842; Joe, 2017). In an armed conflict, military units are harsh as they utilise their masculinity to perpetrate violence. Violence against women in armed conflicts has been ubiquitous throughout human history because it is woven into the fabric of institutional violence that preserves patriarchal culture (Paula, 2017). Indeed, combatants enjoy communities that tolerate violence because it makes it easier to assault girls and women sexually. Gender-based violence thrives in an armed conflict setting, as military masculinities inflict harm on men, women, and persons of

special genders within conquered land (Anne Marie, 2014; IRC, 2014; Joe, 2017; Salter & Blodgett, 2012; Wallacher, 2012).

In armed conflicts, sexual assault against men is usually overlooked in favour of rape against children and women, and law enforcement is stereotyped (Baaz & Stern, 2013; Jelke, 2017:512; Sara & True, 2015:499). This means that violence against men is less reported than gender-based violence against women. This situation frequently occurs because there is no legal basis for initiating a complaint against a woman who has abused a man (James, 2014). Violence against males in a war maintains men's authority and masculinities by enforcing self-image through control and retaliation (Jelke, 2014; Paula, 2015; Zalewski, 2017:203). Men's sexual violence in armed situations differs from that experienced by women, and international law may not recognise it (Aaron, 2012; Anne Marie, 2014; Claire, 2014; Joe, 2017).

In addition, soldiers deploy psychological warfare against their opponents in armed conflicts to destabilise and terrorise them so they might abandon the battlefield. For example, Karbo and Mutisi (2012) admit that male soldiers use sexual violence against their opponents to torture or castrate them. Emasculation makes the victim lose his ability to reproduce, reducing him to an incomplete and useless man (Amanda & Tidy, 2017: 100; Watt, 2010). Besides, international law does not regard sexual violence against men as a separate type of crime but rather as just war torture or misconduct (Jelke, 2014; Jelke, 2017:511; Sarah &True, 2015:500). This condition has frequently driven male fighters to hide their ordeal on the battlefield, resulting in a lack of support (Paula, 2015; Zalewski, 2017:203). There is also an absence of terminology and terms that accurately typify male sexual violence (Baaz & Stern, 2013; Claire, 2014). All of these factors contribute to a lack of reliable information about male victimisation, which expands the abuse and has far-reaching unrevealed consequences.

Similarly, warfare can result in the assassination of many men. Armed conflicts have erupted in almost every corner of the globe, with men being most of the victims. Boys and men are seen as a potential stumbling block in the path of combatants since they are constantly ready to defend their communities (Young, 2003). Wars are institutional forms of violence that target and murder young males. Verhoeve (2004), for example, substantiates that during the Kosovo war, male residents who were massively

murdered accounted for more than 90% of all civilian casualties. To put it another way, genocide and mass killings of non-combatant boys and men are war exterminations that leave communities in mourning. Males, including mature boys, have always been slaughtered worldwide if they refused to join armed conflicts. Aaron (2012) and Weiss (2008) exemplify how males were exterminated during the Anfal Campaign, which took place in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1988, and the Armenian Genocide, which took place between 1915 and 1917. Similarly, Karbo and Mutisi (2012) and Watt (2010) specify during the Rwandan liberation war, all Tutsi households were forced to send their male children to the front lines to stop the 1994 Genocide. All these examples demonstrate that men can be victims of gender-based violence, though not in the same way as women.

2.11.4.2.5 Hybrid masculinity

Hybrid masculinity is using features of marginalised gender expressions in the gender performance or identity of privileged men (Ann & Ushma, 2018:379; Tristan & Pascoe, 2014:248). Hybrid masculinities distance themselves from traditional masculine norms while sustaining and reinforcing hegemonic masculinity (Michael, 1993:730). Men can negotiate masculinity with more inclusive behaviour and attitudes in this category of masculinities without upsetting the institutional gender imbalance (Debbie, 2017:649; La Monica, 2016). Although some softer and weaker styles of masculinity are evolving among some groups of men, this does not contribute to women's emancipation, and in fact, the opposite may be true (Tristan & Pascoe, 2014:252). The term hybrid masculinity was coined to reflect the contemporary trend of men taking on politics and opinions viewed as emasculating in the past (La Monica, 2016).

2.11.4.2.6 Transformative masculinities

Masculinities are specific patterns of attitudes and behaviours associated with beliefs about how boys and men should act and their place in gender relations. Men and women worldwide are working to shift away from abusive and dominant masculinities toward masculinities that promote mutual esteem and sympathy. In light of this, (Dworkin et al., 2012:51) concur that transformative masculinities can benefit individuals, families, and communities.

Connell and James (2005), Connell (2000), Hodgson (2011:89), and Yanvi and Sitawa (2015:34) argue that destructive masculinity stereotypes can have a detrimental emotional impact on boys and men, which has the potential to perpetuate GBV generational cycles. That said, transformative masculinities are necessary because they counter-hegemonic traditional masculinities that promote GBV, oppression of girls and women, and unhealthy reproductive and sexual behaviours. Positive attitudes can help people internalize new mental habits through personal and societal reflection. Accordingly, Morell (2001:11) maintains that increased self-esteem can contribute to developing hope and optimism. Re-processing accepted cultural norms can help people build a deeper feeling of happiness by releasing unconscious tensions (Constance, 2018:3; Ming, 2016:711; Ming, 2017:100).

Connell (2005) and Peacock (2013) argue that for transformative masculinities to be effective, religious organisations and societal institutions must work together to combat negative masculinities. Morell (2001:7) believes that, in this setting, male leaders of those institutions must begin socialising boys and other men for positive change since their involvement in attaining gender justice is critical.

2.11.4.3 Proponents of masculinities

Masculinity is a notion that many people support. Its proponents maintain that hegemonic masculinity is conceptually useful for understanding the social relation between genders (Joan, 2010:262; Mek et al., 2018:129). Similarly, Timothy (2014: 66) contends that masculinity builds gender relations because it applies to life-span development, education, and criminology. In contrast, masculinity remains crucial because of its different social representations in the mass communications media, the health of men and women, and the functional structure of organisations (Aggleton & Bell, 2014: 264; Er Turk, 2017). Positive masculinity helps generations of men learn healthy behaviours that can develop more robust communities and convert their physical and emotional strength into championing healthy behaviours and communities (Peter, 2016; Terry, 2010). Such masculinities are constructive, which is the antithesis of toxic masculinity.

However, Maya (2019) reveals that some critics of masculinity say that it is heteronormative, is not self-reproducing, ignores positive aspects of masculinity, relies on a flawed underlying concept of masculinity, or is too ambiguous to have practical application. Barnett (2019) and Boon (2005) also indicate that masculinities hinder the social relations between men and women, meaning that women's social existence is affected by the place of men and masculinities in society. For example, Messerschmidt (2000) agrees that empirical investigation shows how masculinities are defined in relation to femininity and subordinated masculinities by causing anxiety and leading young men to socialise with discriminatory norms and violence.

2.11.4.4 Masculinity in the transnational setting

The transnational context of migration overlaps with masculinities. Male migrants' negotiation of masculinities argues that the migration process is a way of reworking expressions of male subjectivities through masculinities (McIlwaine, 2010; Stanley, 2012:222). In a transnational setting, there is the paradox that traditional familial gender norms have become a central cultural resource in forging new masculine identities (Lin, 2013; Mountz, 2011:389; Porter, 2011). Once in the transnational new setting, male migrants learn about the deteriorated local sense of gendered familial duties, which implies how male refugees adapt to the transnational culture and norms in which they are plunged. Adaptation means that refugees revise the gendered rapport between domestic duties, roles and responsibilities and the generations to enable a strong family unit to re-establish itself within the new transnational locale (Berg & Longhurst, 2003: 347; Kandiyoti, 1998: 275). For male refugees, the biggest reference remains to negotiate transnational lives through local behaviours and identities actively. This requires the intricate intertwining of traditional and new ideological elements in creating male identity. It also innovates the belief that the forging of masculinities as a socio-spatial process cuts across individual, family and community scales (Jongwilaiwan & Thompson, 2013: 374; Vaiou, 2012: 251; Ye, 2013). However, the hegemonic male identity in a transnational context seems to be resisted in circumstances of great disturbance or persistent crisis. Hanson (2010); Kusakabe and Pearson (2013:968) illustrate that the construction of masculinities among

immigrants may cause traumatic masculinities to depict the social spaces of crises and trauma that initiate and sustain the redefinition of gendered power relations of female and male migrants. Migrating from one area to another disrupts some attitudes and beliefs, such as changing women's breadwinning responsibilities (Kandiyoti, 1988: 288; Piper, 1997:335). Moreover, discourses of hegemonic masculinities maintain coexistence with notions of traumatic masculinities as they are repeatedly replicated through symbolised and constantly nostalgic performances conveying the loss of elements of their identity (Lin, 2013; Nagar, 2002: 176). In their transnational environment, most Congolese male refugees found themselves already immersed in their host community's culture, which caused them to lose part of their home identity. When people are disconnected from their original identity, they need to renegotiate a new one through social integration. According to Truong (1996:30) and Vaiou (2012:257), such immersion has pushed many refugees to embrace the attitudes, beliefs, culture and traditions regarding gender-based violence and the different ways they apply in their host community.

Furthermore, the intersection between migration, masculinity and GBV brings together culture, gender and the locale. An emphasis on migration sheds light on how refugees change from their homes to new communities with their norms and beliefs (Bastia, 2013: 160; Stanley, 2012: 218). This spatial dislocation provides opportunities for, and constraints on, both men and women to play out different identities, including attitudes toward violence against women (Hyndman, &Giles, 2011: 373; Porter, 2011: 77; Ye, 2013).

2.11.4.5 Strengths and weaknesses of the theory

Hegemonic masculinity is a societal pattern in which stereotypically male attributes are valued as the masculine cultural ideal, explaining how and why men maintain dominant social roles over women and other feminine groups (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The strong point of this theory lies in its ability to help men unlearn the abusive attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs they have developed. To put it another way, Tibesigwa and Visser (2016:34) claim that men can shift their focus away from pre-setting norms that culturally define a real man as being dominant and move toward constructive masculinity. Gottert et al.

(2016:1789) confirm the existence of some social roles, behaviours, and qualities that are proper for males and relate to maleness. Still, they promote equality and respect between males and females and treat femininities as different, although equally appreciated. According to Inge and Happy (2016), transformative masculinities emphasise gender equality by challenging the legitimacy of patriarchal notions and practices. Transformative masculinities emphasise the values of equality, respect, and dignity for persons of all gender identities (Writer 2017:235). This implies that positive masculinity can teach men how to use physical and emotional strength to promote healthy lifestyles and communities. This form of masculinity builds positivity in boys' and men's minds, which opposes toxic masculinity (Herbert, 1990:467). In a nutshell, positive masculinity instils healthy behaviours in future generations of males that will promote equality in communities. According to Hamilton (2019), positive masculinity welcomes femininity rather than being ashamed of it, promotes open-mindedness, and refuses to be bound by gender norms. Removing those precise boundaries can hugely influence the lives of both men and women and their communities (Cools & Kotsadam, 2017:231).

The theory of masculinities has flaws, including the promotion of gender inequality by valuing masculine superiority over femininity and men's power over women through patriarchal masculinities' ideas and behaviours (Fox et al., 2017:137). However, research on feminism and masculinities connects such discrimination to the dangers hegemonic masculinity causes to both females and males. For example, Bograd (1990) avers that these costs for men include violence towards oneself and other humans, high-risk behaviour, a lack of self-care, bad health, and anxious relationships with others.

Thus, men who purposefully avoid vulnerability, act on homophobic ideas, overlook personal traumas, or show prejudice toward women contribute to a variety of bigger societal issues, including gender-based violence, sexual assault, and gun violence (Valerie, 2016:182). In other words, society frequently pressures males to be genuine men in the traditional sense rather than just humans. Congruent with Wintermute (2017:21), men's vulnerability is frequently ignored, ridiculed, or combated, and their mental health suffers because of pushing down emotions, ignoring sentiments, or dismissing feminine traits.

2.11.4.6 Connecting the theory with GBV

The theory of masculinities has direct links with gender-based violence. Gottert et al. (2016:1793) acknowledge that ideas about and practices of patriarchal masculinities perpetuate violence against girls and women. Such gender discrimination also applies in the labour sector as females are considered with low status. For example, domestic chores pertain to women because they are seen as feminine. Both gender and masculinities link and contribute to GBV through societal norms that are deeply embedded in culture. Men turn to the influence of culture, patriarchy, and male gender roles and identities to create and maintain gendered violence, which contributes to injustice, oppression, and discrimination in societies (Tibesigwa & Visser, 2016). However, both the men and women can work together to contain gender inequality and GBV in society by promoting equal gender relations. In some cases, men and women perpetrate violence against women to keep girls and women in lower economic, political, and social power positions than men (Machisa, 2010).

In contrast, high-status public leadership is seen as masculine (Baume, 2018), depicting how men discriminate against women using their masculinity. This describes why the theory of masculinities builds on socially pre-set behaviours, identities and roles that are proper for men (Ratele, 2008). Accordingly, hegemonic masculinities legitimise men's dominant position in society and justify the subordination of women, the common male population and other marginalised ways of being a man (Connell, 2005). In this way, hegemonic masculinities symbolise the culturally idealised form of manhood and why men preserve leading social roles over women and other gender identities (Wedgewood, 2009).

Men assault physically or verbally women who claim to have equal power with them. This is common because men consider being female, a sign of weakness and that women are inferior to them. Thus, Inge and Happy (2016:80) endorse the belief that girls and women are inherently vulnerable to male violence and thus require male protection. Men are confident their ideas about feminine vulnerability and masculine protection expose girls and women to more of their violence (Saddie, 2015; Tibesigwa & Visser, 2016), reinforcing the patriarchal belief in masculine superiority that is central to patriarchal masculinities.

Masculinity supports males' superiority over women, which sustains gender based-violence, gender inequality, or patriarchy. Herbert (1990:469) argues that since patriarchal masculinities emphasise the dominance of maleness over femininity and the authority of men over women, it becomes easier for males to resort to GBV. Certainly, men's thoughts and practices of patriarchal masculinities maintain gender inequalities at family and community levels. Hence, Connell (2005) maintains that authority over women and a hierarchy of intermale dominance, including the stigmatisation of homosexuality, are the main foundations of contemporary hegemonic masculinities.

The theory of masculinities connects with this research, because it allows the researcher to explore hegemonic masculinities, and to renegotiate maleness for social integration in a transnational environment can enable male refugees to bargain for power within a new space.

To this effect, the research also uses transformative masculinities because it seeks to challenge the perceptions of what it means to be a man. The process renegotiates men's empowerment and liberation from social and cultural oppressive notions that maintain men superior to women (Diana & Anita, 2005). In this way, transformative masculinities can inspire boys and men to embrace more harmonious and tolerant ways of being men, and this requires the collaboration of all social structures. For instance, Snider (2008) argues that religion can motivate boys and men to change their understanding of who they are and how they relate to other men and women. Indeed, considering religion's influence over its believers, we cannot doubt how it can trigger a change in behaviours, including how people view masculinities.

The theory of masculinities enlightens this research in examining how Congolese male refugees renegotiate their understanding of masculinities and gender-based violence in a transnational context and in proposing some suitable interventions.

2.12 Conclusion

This chapter on literature review has allowed the researcher to integrate the outcomes of previous research regarding GBV and masculinities. Subsequently, this section discussed GBV, the prevalence of

violence in the world and Africa, its types, prevalence globally and in Africa, and the causes and effects of GBV. It also presented men as perpetrators, men as victims, and men as partners in addressing it.

The section did not neglect covering GBV in DRC. In this point, it addressed the status of women in DRC and GBV during armed conflicts, types of rape perpetrated against women and the consequences of rape to female victims. It also expounded GBV in the transnational context.

The chapter also expounded on military violence and masculinities in DRC. Besides, the point regarding gaps in literature was also discussed. Finally came the theoretical framework where three main theories were covered, including the socioecological theory, the transnationalism theory and the masculinities theory. Each of these theories was connected to GBV.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.1. Introduction

The methodology that guides this research has involved the researcher in gathering information and led him to achieve the research objectives as planned. This research aims to investigate and understand the experiences of Congolese male refugees living in Durban with GBV in their transnational context. In fact, Congolese male refugees migrated to Durban, a city in South Africa because they feared for their security in their country.

These men hold incredible stories about forms of gender-based violence that they have lived, endured, perpetrated, or even witnessed. To better understand their experiences, an appropriate methodology and research design are used in this research. This chapter elaborates on the design used in this qualitative research. It then describes the research design and the paradigm the researcher determined to be appropriate for the research. It also goes over the research methodology and information collection methods. The latter includes in-depth telephone interviews as well as secondary information collection. These points are followed by the sampling procedure and sample size, a point that particularises purposive sampling and why the researcher chose it, as well as the strategy he used to recruit interviewees.

The section does not skip over presenting the research site, interviewee recruitment, and interviewees' demographic profiles. Because the topic appeared to be sensitive, ethical considerations were clarified, followed by a section on the various sources from which the researcher gathered information. This point is also followed by a section on information analysis, as well as the credibility and trustworthiness of the data.

Considering that the researcher is a member of the Congolese refugee community, he is therefore motivated to highlight issues of self-reflexivity. Correspondingly, he explains the various challenges he faced while gathering information, including how Covid-19 impacted the whole process. Ultimately, the chapter closes with a conclusion that summarises the major points discussed throughout the chapter.

3.2 Research design

The philosophical overview that directs the researcher in carrying out his research is known as research design. Similarly, Babbie (2012), Creswell (2007), and Newman (1996) believe that design replicates the overall mode of thinking that guides all of the different actions that the researcher takes to carry out his research. Given the nature of this research, the researcher needed to employ a flexible and relative worldview, which necessitated the use of an interpretive paradigm to construe and comprehend the uniqueness of Congolese male refugees in terms of gender-based violence. However, the interpretivist approach has the drawback of being subjective in its nature, which causes the researcher to be biased. Fowler (2017) confirms that one's values and points of view can influence the basic data produced by interpretivist investigations, preventing generalisation. Thus, data representativeness and reliability become somewhat compromised.

This implied that the paradigm allowed the researcher to develop a relative interpretation of collected information to make meaning and draw themes, in contrast to the positivist approach that applies a rigid approach. Considering the interpretivist paradigm, Congolese male refugees based in Durban are not only research subjects but also complex beings with diverse understandings and experiences of gender-based violence, which this research seeks to uncover. The following part discusses the methodology the researcher used in this research.

3.3 Research paradigm

A qualitative methodology was used to collect in-depth telephonic information from interviewees to richly document their experiences regarding male gender-based violence. Qualitative methods are invaluable tools for researchers who want to delve deeply into the complexities of gender-based violence in any setting. However, various qualitative methods are available that incorporate various ontological and epistemological perspectives.

In line with Babbie (2012) and Creswell (2007), research methodology remains the logical and systematic application of all steps, strategies, and procedures for gathering and analysing data in a research

investigation. This method aligns with the purposes of this research because the researcher chose it based on the research design he adopted, which was likely the most important decision he had to make. Furthermore, the qualitative methodology was used in this research because it is the only methodology that deals with subjective data generated by the minds of the interviewees, allowing the researcher to understand the importance that interviewees placed on their environment (Fowler, 2017: 1368; Sobo et al., 2016:395).

The term qualitative, on the other hand, implies an emphasis on examining processes and meanings that are not measured in terms of amount, frequency, or quantity (Greene, 2014). This infers that a qualitative research method was used to permit the researcher to understand how Congolese male refugees perceive their situation and their role in the context of gender-based violence. Qualitative research is praised for attempting to depict the full breadth of experiences in a meaningful and comprehensive manner (Creswell, 2007). Because the primary goal of this research was to comprehend how Congolese male refugees living in Durban perceive gender-based violence, a qualitative research approach was the best way to do so. This research provided these Congolese male refugees with a unique opportunity to express their views on gender-based violence, which negatively impacted their lives and the lives of the victims, as well as what they thought should be done to address the issue and restore harmony in communities and families.

To provide a detailed profile of the situation of Congolese male refugees, a specific type of qualitative research, a qualitative descriptive approach, was used in this research. This implies that research is not viewed as theoretical but rather as the provision of thick description that reinforces the interpretative meaning of experiences that are depicted in a simpler language (Babbie, 2012). As a result, this qualitative method responds to the objectives of the topic under research. In other words, the qualitative descriptive approach allowed the researcher to collect rich information about gender-based violence as a description of the interviewees' personal experiences in their home country or the transnational host community.

The researcher focused heavily on direct telephonic discussions with his research interviewees, eliciting detailed descriptions of their experiences with gendered violence and providing a valuable opportunity to gain 'inside' knowledge about how they see their world (Losciuto, 2010). This was made possible by conducting telephonic interviews with these male refugees in their natural environment and

other more convenient and private locations to allow them to feel more at ease. On the other hand, the researcher's experience and skills in scientific research on gender-based violence enabled him to conduct satisfactory telephonic interviews. Furthermore, because the researcher is also a refugee, this strategy enabled him to "interact with his interviewees in an empathetic and understanding manner that depicted a naturalistic and everyday setting" (Terre Blanche et al., 2006: 206).

3.4 Research methodology

Research methodology means the procedures and techniques the researcher uses to reach his research goals (Denzin & Yvonna, 2005). The research design clarifies how the research process is planned; the phases to follow while conducting it and how its aims will be attained (Reay, 1996). The main emphasis of the qualitative approach resides in its use for information collection and analysis. In nature, this is qualitative research that applies a thematic approach. Research design helps to plan, structure and complete the research to maximise the validity of the outcomes (Denzin & Yvonna, 2005; Mouton, 1996).

This research adopted a qualitative research method. Information was gathered through in-depth telephonic interviews with Congolese male refugees who shared their experiences regarding gender-based violence in their transnational locale. This is academic and formal research whose interviews were verbal communication between the researcher and the participants. Interviews through verbal communication are unstandardised because they are naturally less structured (Mouton, 1996). Indeed, oral communication offers more room for the participants to express themselves liberally and the researcher to explore needed and appropriate areas of interest on the theme under research. To Creswell (2014), unstandardised interviews provide a platform for the participant and researcher to interact deeply and discuss the topic and other themes that may develop around it throughout the discussion. Therefore, the interview relied on the interviewees' experiences and their explanations regarding gender-based violence in their transnational environment.

The above context depicts how using qualitative methods often allows researchers to discover critical information from the interviewees' experiences and understanding of the phenomena under

research. A qualitative approach is relevant and appropriate to the nature of this research because of its naturalistic approach that permits the researcher to understand the reality on the ground in a given setting (Reay, 1996; Denzin & Yvonna, 2005). The approach permits the researcher to explore opinions and views that come from contextual experiences (Mouton, 1996), which depicts ways of comprehending more deeply the experiences of selected interviewees on GBV, their interpretations of it and the approaches to address it. The research has explored and analysed the objectives in the context of interviewees' personal experiences and opinions in their social settings as refugees.

Thus, a qualitative thematic method is required to explore themes throughout gathered information and to get clear meanings of subjective experiences within the same information (Slade, 1997), which describes life and society via informants' experiences (Terre Blanche, Durkheim & Painter, 2006). The data in this research was collected in 2021, a year after the outbreak of the COVID19 pandemic in China's city of Wuhan, pushing world governments to shut down all activities and compel people to stay indoors to curb the propagation of the virus.

The unit of this research is Congolese male refugees living in Durban. To collect information about their personal experiences regarding gender-based violence in a transnational setting, the researcher interviewed them through phone calls. These interviewees provided rich data on how they negotiate their socialisation and masculinities in a transnational setting and how these factors influence their understanding of violence against women. This realistic approach aimed to grasp these refugees' "thick descriptions" of actions in their personal lives and settings (Merriam, 2009:43; Silverman, 2013). The researcher is conducting research in his own community; thus, the interviewer becomes an insider researcher, gaining reliability during analysis (Denzin & Yvonna, 2000; Greene, 2014). The generation of meanings will connect the researcher to his informants' personal opinions with his role through self-reflexivity (Denzin & Yvonna, 2005). Self-reflexivity confirms research credibility by addressing how the writer's biases can influence the research process as he is a member of his interviewees' community (Sullivian, 2011). Reflexivity is constant attention to how the researcher's social identity and values affect the information gathered, and a portrait of the social world generated (Reay, 1996). The researcher's self-reflexivity infers

that he has considered his positionality (Merriam, 2009; Sullivian, 2011). Being a Congolese refugee living in South Africa has influenced the researcher's interest in exploring the experiences of gender-based violence of Congolese male refugees living in the transnational setting of Durban.

3.5 Method for collecting information

This section discusses the methods used for collecting the information used in this research, namely the telephonic in-depth individual interviews.

3.5.1 Telephonic in-depth interviews

An interview is a collaborative process that is applied to conduct research. It is an interactive method between the interviewees and the researcher. In-depth interviews are essential in qualitative research since they allow the researcher to understand how interviewees interpret their worlds. Therefore, the informants construct meaning in the sense that the method implicates not only listening and recording participants' opinions but also how the interview progresses plays a crucial role in interpreting the information collected on the field (Block & Erkshine, 2012; Rossman & Rallis, 1998).

Looking at the current context during data collection, this research applied its most ideal method: an in-depth telephonic interview. The researcher collected data using in-depth interviews with open-ended questions through telephonic calls. According to Brewer and Hunter (1989) and Sarah and Burkard (2009), data collected from in-depth interviews provide rich opportunities for validating and fertilising research procedures and findings. In-depth questions were connected to the objectives of exploring the interviewees' experiences and descriptions of their worlds regarding GBV. Telephone calls are often used to collect a variety of data, and qualitative research has used them to collect more open-ended data (Cannell, 2005: 148; Fowler, 2017: 1371; Losciuto, 2010; Sobo et al., 2016:399). The method was chosen due to the outbreak of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic that compelled all services to shut down and people forced to stay indoors to avoid spreading the virus. Social distancing was implemented, a situation that could not enable the researcher to meet his interviewees at the site; thus, the choice of conducting telephonic interviews.

The motivation behind this choice was that telephonic interviews allowed the participants to reflect on each question and engage in a natural telephonic conversation with the researcher. This medium was helpful as it allowed access to informants who might have been difficult to reach in person or by other means (Gibson, 2014; Maritan, 2001; Sturges & Hanrahan, 2014). Accordingly, the researcher used open-ended questions to engage in a normal dialogue with his interviewees and to make his interviewees remain focused on the theme. The procedure did not strictly stick to the interview agenda but encouraged a more telephonic in-depth interview approach. This research interviewed telephonically 30 Congolese male refugees who had been selected purposively. In-depth telephonic interviews enriched the research and the researcher with helpful information during the analysis. Similarly, it helped the researcher review other supplementary information where needed. Telephonic in-depth discussions with interviewees in this category allowed the researcher to gather rich information that contributed greatly to understanding interviewees' opinions and experiences regarding gender-based violence. They provided the information as members of the Durban migrant community from DRC and refugees who had suffered or committed abuse to women, either at home or in their transnational locale.

The questions of the in-depth telephonic interview had been cautiously framed and sequenced based on the aim of the research to encourage more responses from a specific interviewee who had committed gender-based violence. The process helped the researcher to approve the dependability of the information from the questions. In-depth telephonic interview timetables were used to benefit from the exhaustive depiction of interviewees' accounts regarding their beliefs and experiences regarding gender-based violence. In addition, open questions gave the interviewees the opportunity to discuss any matters they had regarding the research topic (Block & Erkshine, 2012; Boyce & Neale, 2006; Sherraden, 2001).

The researcher conducted in-depth interviews by telephone at times appropriate for the interviewees. The researcher read the informed consent over the telephone a few minutes before the interviews began, and all informants agreed to sign it later. They suggested that the researcher drop the consent forms at RPC, and they would go there at their leisure, one by one and per the Covid-19 regulations, to sign them within three days.

In-depth interviews lasted approximately thirty to forty minutes for each interviewee. The researcher used pen, paper, and telephone to record interviewees' information during telephonic calls. This depicts a qualitative method in which the researcher asks open-ended questions telephonically and writes down the interviewees' responses (Sarah & Burkard, 2009; Sherraden, 2001). The researcher recorded the interviewees' answers using a notepad, pen, and telephone as he had obtained their consent. In this qualitative research, a notepad and a pen helped note key points, follow-up questions, and points for clarification.

On the other hand, a digital recorder was useful for information gathering. Before recording any information, the researcher presented the informed consent forms to the interviewees. He explained that recording their answers was important for transcription, and only when they signed their consent could the researcher record their answers.

The section below details the ways secondary information was gathered.

3.5.2 Secondary data collection

The information the researcher presented in this research came not only from the research field but also from some readings. The researcher considered sources of information from both primary and secondary data. Regarding secondary information, the researcher perused several published or unpublished documents at the library. Most of the readings encompassed books, journals and newspapers obtainable in the library or online; he also checked related pieces of research that other researchers had conducted in the same domain. It was from the secondary documentation that the researcher assembled qualitative information, along with the theoretical perspective for the research (Slade, 1997).

3.6 Sampling procedure and sample size

3.6.1 Use of purposive sampling

This research has used the purposive sampling method, also known as subjective or selective sampling. According to Ames, Glenton and Lewin (2019), the main aim of purposive sampling is to focus

on particular characteristics of a population that is of interest, which best enables the researcher to answer his research questions. This means that the method permits the researcher to choose interviewees whose experiences and qualities trigger an understanding of the phenomena that are under research and, accordingly, are valuable (De Vos et al., 2015; Roberts & Boyle, 2018: 47). Indeed, this research has interviewed Congolese male refugees from different provinces of DRC. The process provided the researcher with a richer understanding of the diversity of gender-based violence experiences in each culture and ethnicity since there are wide varieties of cultural traditions and ethnicities in the country. Furthermore, interviewing Congolese male refugees from dissimilar provinces of DRC opposes respondents drawn from one province. The former case proved very substantial to this research because it allowed the researcher to highlight experiences of GBV from diverse ethnic backgrounds. To this end, Robertson and Boyle (2018: 45) approve that research conducted in a diversity produces richer data and is not limited, as it would be with researching on a single ethnicity.

All in all, a window size of 30 participants fitted this research because, according to Creswell and Clark (2001) and Marshal et al. (2013), it is a good saturation figure that can consume little time and budget and enable the collection of richer information. Using the same figure, Dirango (2016) researched Kivu's women refugee victims of domestic violence and social integration in Durban and generated critical perceptions.

Although the above illustrates selective sampling, meaning a sample not representative of the population, qualitative research still admits that it is not a weakness (Silverman, 2013). Relatively, this depicts a selection counting on the category of purposing sampling technique the researcher has used. Indeed, selective sampling is a non-probability sample that is chosen for having a shared feature or set of features (Ames, Glenton & Lewin, 2019). This infers that homogeneous purposive sampling is a technique that permits the researcher to interview a particular group of persons who have similar attributes (Crossman, 2020; Saini & Shlonsky, 2012). Therefore, some subjects of the Congolese migrants' community were selected considering their background and their comparable qualities of being male refugees and living in Durban, which characteristics are of special concern to the researcher. In other words, the researcher chose

Congolese male refugees living in Durban because his research question was specifically addressed to thoroughly understand their experiences regarding gender-based violence in a transnational context in connection with their background. That said, purposive sampling is not all perfect, for it has advantages and disadvantages.

The sample frame of this research was formed of Congolese male refugees established in Durban. The researcher preferred them because he assumed they were endowed with a level of maturity that was a significant factor for them in sharing current and past experiences about gender-based violence, both in DRC and their transnational milieu. This allowed the researcher to draw from his respondents' multicultural experiences to reflect on how they renegotiated a space for their identities and masculinities in a Zulu environment with the different encounters they met until they confirmed themselves in the transnational experience. Their ages ranged between eighteen and sixty-five, and they were drawn from the Durban community of Congolese, mostly those who frequent Refugee Pastoral Care (RPC).

RPC's manager assisted in identifying the names of informants from the organisation's register, which connected the researcher with his interviewees. As a result, informants in the current research were knowledgeable about their experiences of gender-based violence and socialisation in their transnational community. Furthermore, some of them had perpetrated GBV, suffered it at the hands of perpetrators, or were aware of the violence but never directly perpetrated or suffered.

3.6.2 Strengths and weaknesses of purposive sampling

Purposive sampling is a qualitative research technique that is very much used in social sciences. Like any other method for data collection, selective sampling also has advantages and disadvantages depending on the researcher's main goals.

Regarding advantages, Saini and Shlonsky (2012) ascertain that one of the key strengths of purposive sampling is the inclusive range of sampling techniques that can be used across qualitative research designs, such as purposive sampling techniques that range from homogeneous sampling to critical case sampling, expert sampling, and many others. Besides, Benoot, Hannes and Bilsen (2016) confirm that

each of the numerous purposive sampling procedures has its own objectives. In other words, this dissimilarity of goals implies that the procedures can give researchers the explanation for taking a broad view from the sample being studied, whether such generalisations build on theories or analysis. Nevertheless, these sorts of purposive sampling vary considering their nature and power to prompt broad views. Finally, Sarah and Burkard (2009) also mention that qualitative research designs can implicate several stages, with each phase developing on the former. This context reflects how diverse forms of sampling techniques can be crucial at each phase. Purposive sampling is advantageous in these illustrations because it offers the researcher an extensive range of non-probability sampling approaches (Saini & Shlonsky, 2012). As an illustration, Benoot, Hannes and Bilsen (2016) admit that a researcher can apply critical case sampling to explore whether a phenomenon deserves supplementary examination before implementing a proficient sampling technique to examine definite supplementary questions.

On the other hand, no case is ever perfect. Purposive sampling also has weaknesses. Regardless of the purposive sampling, a researcher may use, purposive sampling can be vastly susceptible to his prejudice. Ames, Glenton and Lewin (2019) acknowledge that the belief of shaping a purposive sample is based on the decision of the researcher to lack a good defence when alleviating his biases, particularly when evaluating probability sampling approaches intended to lessen such biases. The subjective factor of purposive sampling remains the main drawback when conclusions become poorly compared (Reay, 1996). This often occurs in the case of findings without strong norms, theoretical basis, proficient elicitation, or any other criteria acknowledged as having been applied. Accordingly, the nature of bias and non-probability during interviewees and research site selection in purposive sampling illustrates the trouble researchers can face in clarifying the sample's representativeness. Indeed, Fowler (2017:1375) expounds that it is not easy for researchers to persuade their readers that the judgement they used to select individuals to study was suitable. Accordingly, it becomes hard to convince the readers to understand how the researcher who used purposive sampling has reached analytical, logical or theoretical generalisation. To this end, Groves and Kahn (2016) and Martins (2015) questioned whether choosing different research units can make the results and other generalisations the same.

3.6.3 Recruitment strategy

To select the sample of the research, the researcher used purposive sampling. The research population covers all the subjects the researcher wishes to study, but the target participants for this research are 30 Congolese male refugees based in Durban. That population comprised all Congolese male refugees living in the South African city of Durban with refugee official status. Thus, among this population, the researcher selected 30 male refugees who were above 18 years old and might have experienced GBV as perpetrators or as victims. Through opening visits at the RPC, the researcher had reached them via the RPC manager before coronavirus (Covid-19) broke out, causing the declaration of national shutdown.

During the lockdown due to the pandemic of Covid-19, research ethics made it hard for the researcher to meet his interviewees in person at the research site. This is because the South African government had imposed measures that shun social gatherings and respect social distancing. This corroborates the aim of academic research integrity by deterring any research procedure that can endanger the interviewees' lives. Connectivity was established when the researcher approached and liaised with the RPC manager at the heart of Durban City, who is also a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, to obtain the contacts of his respondents to seek their participation in the in-depth telephonic interviews.

This connectivity opened as the researcher arranged to meet them with the manager of RPC. Selected informants were then advised about the research aims so that they could provide him with their telephone contact numbers. Since the researcher had already conducted a preliminary meeting with his informants before the Covid-19 epidemic, they easily offered their consent to participate telephonically. Still, they insisted that they needed air time, which we agreed on. Upon reaching the agreement, the researcher first informed them of the research objectives.

By meeting the manager, the researcher explained his research objectives and sought assistance to help him select his prospective interviewees and meeting them later. At the end of the meeting with the RPC manager, the researcher sought his permission and assistance to liaise with his prospective interviewees. The researcher was requested to participate in one of the sessions organised by the manager

with male refugees so that he could present his research objectives and invite those interested in participating in the research procedure. As the researcher presented his research objectives to the participants, they agreed to contribute to the discussions. The researcher's meeting with the RPC manager gave him a good path to direct contact with the participants. Negotiating access to interviewees was not easy, like in any research, because the process required the researcher's personal engagement with individuals and consciousness of group changing aspects. Some interviewees had offered to contribute to the research during the first meeting but were reluctant to participate afterwards. Those who declined participation argued they lacked time; others thought the researcher was a spy collecting their personal stories regarding gender-based violence, yet he never paid them. Others had initially offered to contribute but never picked up their phones as they were ringing.

To facilitate the process, the researcher set up telephonic consultations with all his participants. Some could honour their obligation, whereas others declined at the last minute. Those loyal to their promise to the interviews seemed to expect some form of monetary reward for their contribution to the research process. On this issue, the researcher agreed to provide them with airtime bundles since in-depth telephonic interviews were used. The bundles would help them contact the RPC trauma counsellors or call the researcher in case of any change that might occur at the last minute. The researcher assured them that the interviews were not about their private and personal experiences with gender-based violence, either in DRC or their transnational locale. He explained that his main concern was collecting information regarding their experiences, perceptions and understanding to complete his academic research. At the end of the in-depth telephonic interviews, it was pleasurable to hear that all those who contributed were glad to have shared their observations and understandings regarding gender-based violence. In three cases, interviewees mentioned they felt comforted by some issues about violence against women they had never shared before. Their stories were distressing their minds and making their hearts bleed. In one case, another man regretted having abused women in a tremendously awful way but apologised. He revealed he did so under his hierarchy's orders, forced to do so as he was a child combatant at that time.

On the other hand, telephonically sampling facilitates the researcher to connect with his informants who are reachable by telephone and willing to respond to questions over the phone (Fowler, 2017; Groves & Kahn, 2016). Using the telephone in an academic research interview that values the relationship between age and willingness to respond to requests for interviews over the telephone (Dinham, 2014), which has pushed the researcher to consult with mature people above 18. This is because Sobo et al. (2016) and Aquilino and Losciuto (2010) found that it is not always easy to reach out to younger people through phone calls.

3.7 Demographic profile of interviewees

3.7.1 Age groups and marital status

In terms of age, all of the interviewees who willingly participated in the telephonic interviews were Congolese male adults over the age of 18, ranging in age from 25 to 50. Most of the interviewees in the research were grownup and active, as indicated by their age bracket. Based on previous empirical surveys, this particular characteristic appears to be the general demographic trend of most Congolese refugee communities in South Africa. Similarly, the University of the Witwatersrand conducted longitudinal research on different migrant groups living in Johannesburg. Congolese participants aged 26 to 55 made up 61% of the participants, followed by those aged 18 to 25 (about 21%) (Dirango, 2016:57).

Regarding marital status, the majority of Congolese male refugees who willingly shared their experiences of gender-based violence were officially married couples with children (68%), while others were in a relationship (21%). The average number of family members ranged from three to eight. Only 11% of those interviewed were single at the time of the interview (either had been married but dislocated or had never married at all).

3.7.2 Levels of education

The Congolese male refugees who participated in the in-depth telephonic interviews were all educated to varying degrees. The majority (86%) had a secondary school education; those with a primary

education accounted for 12 %, and only a small number had attended tertiary school (2%). On the other hand, these figures are incredibly significant because they confirm that most Congolese men who fled the DRC for South Africa are educated. Interviewees in this research never stated they had no formal education. This demographic feature strongly confirms the premise that when armed conflicts and wars erupt in a country, most of its educated people and people who are important to the country are the first to flee (Kleist, 2007:120).

Although some respondents (16%) improved their skills through short-term training at some local institutions in Durban, this did not statistically change the education premigration levels described above. Most of this training was short vocational courses at low-cost institutes or colleges that offered certificates and/or diplomas. Most of these courses ranged from biblical studies to security, catering, marketing, computing, and information technology.

3.8 Ethical considerations

The researcher must respect his interviewees' desires, needs, rights and values (Wallace & Shelton, 2015). Connecting with this research, ethical considerations implied that the researcher obtained a gatekeeper's letter from Refugee Pastoral Care (RPC) management and sought the ethical clearance letter (Protocol Ref No: HSSREC/00002662/2021) from the University's Research Office after Higher Degrees Ethics Committee approved the research proposal. Then, he planned to organise telephonic calls for in-depth interviews with his interviewees. He explained the research objectives, negotiated their consent to participate and to be recorded, and ensured them of the right to participate or withdraw, should they wish so. Newman (2011) understands research as intrusive because it can disturb the informants' behaviours and feelings.

Consequently, before conducting the in-depth telephonic interviews, the researcher had to explain the research's rationale to his interviewees delicately. The participants were assured of confidentiality and their right to withdraw from the research at any time. The consent of the participants was sought at every level of this research through telephone calls and recording their responses during interviews, of course,

with the permission of the individuals participating in the talks. Then, he offered them room for discretion for any experience they would not like to share. This highlighted that the researcher had ensured his informants that none of them would be affected or would experience undesirable outcomes from research participation and that they were free to respond or not. Confidentiality was applied to those who had agreed to participate in the research. During the whole research process, the researcher conducted in-depth telephonic interviews concerning ethical values, moral expectations, and rules governing the conduct of research, particularly in data collection. Thus, preserving the confidentiality of information collected from research participants meant that only the researcher and the project supervisor could identify the answers of individual interviewees. The participants were assured of confidentiality and their right to withdraw from the research at any time they wished freely. They had not provided any explanation for why they were withdrawing. The researcher recorded the in-depth telephonic interviews and then transcribed them. He then translated and locked them in his personal computer using a password.

However, he had to ensure every effort was made to prevent outsiders to the research project from connecting individual subjects with their responses. The interviewees' names and identities were held anonymous to respect their desires, rights and values during the entire research process (Marshall & Gretchen, 1995). Moreover, providing anonymity of information collected from research informants signified that either the project did not collect identifying information of individual subjects, such as their address, email address, names, etc., or the project could not link individual responses with participants' identities. The researcher never collected any other identifying information of research participants except their phone numbers since they were extremely vital to this research procedure.

Finally, the researcher had to clarify that there would be no financial gain and that he was a UKZN student who was exclusively concerned with his research.

Because of the current research topic's sensitivity, the researcher planned to refer participants to psychological support by counsellors at RPC should trauma cases erupt. Accordingly, he advised the informants about counselling services available through RPC should they encounter trauma during the in-depth interviews. He supplied them with airtime for calling the trauma counsellors if needed. As agreed

with RPC management, the researcher provided the informants with the phone numbers of the RPC trauma counsellors, and the counselling service availed them providing counselling support through phone calls.

After the analysis process, all data had to be kept on computers with passwords and interviews locked in a cabinet in the UKZN research office for safety. The same data would be destroyed by burning and shredding after five years. The researcher complied with the university's ethical considerations. He conducted his research only after the University board had approved the proposal. He equally abided by the university's required regulations.

3.9 Sources of data

This research gathered primary data from a sample of Congolese male refugees living in Durban. The researcher had communicated with them prior to the outbreak of the Covid-19 scourge, thanks to the RPC manager. However, the researcher felt compelled to conduct his interviews over the phone because the government forbade people from gathering and moving. Accordingly, he provided internet packages to all of his interviewees for them to communicate effectively during the in-depth discussions. Despite this, some interviewees could not be reached on the day agreed upon for the interviews due to a faulty internet network.

In this regard, the researcher never gave up until some of them were reached. The data they provided about their experiences with gender-based violence contributed to the improvement of response quality and, more importantly, to hearing reality from all scheduled interviewees' perspectives.

Conclusively, secondary information on gender-based violence was collected from academic journal articles, books, student theses, academic conference papers, and academic online links.

3.10 Data analysis

Data analysis understands how the researcher focuses on procedures that explain the information he gathered in the research field and how to introduce the conclusions in a language applicable to his professional domain (Babbie & Mouton, 1998; Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 1999).

Analysis consumes time, but time does not endanger it because the researcher targets an efficient, chronological, provable and constant analysis (Denzin & Yvonna, 2005; Sullivian, 2011) that should entertain alternative explanations that feedback improves. Such analysis meticulously explored all the documents the researcher had recorded during the telephonic in-depth interviews and memory. Finally, the researcher codified the data and thematically analysed it to conclude data analysis. Thus, the words, the context in which information was gathered, the internal consistency, the regularity of interviewees' observations, the comprehensiveness of remarks, and what was not said but expressed through emotions and voice intonation were considered in the final drafting of the current research.

The researcher used thematic analysis to evaluate the data collected in the field. He explored themes throughout the data gathered and discovered clear meanings of subjective experiences within the same information (Babbie & Mouton, 1998; Slade, 1997), which explained life and society via informants' experiences (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). Using thematic analysis in this research allowed the researcher to explore and understand patterns of shared attitudes, perceptions and understanding among Congolese male refugees who participated in the in-depth telephonic interview and any inconsistency in those patterns. However, by using a thematic approach, this research assumes that meanings, attitudes and perceptions in the research were derived from the interviewees' personal life experiences and that reality was particular to their own circumstances and conditions rather than unbiased. In other words, the way interviewees perceived their experiences in some situations varied from those of the interviewer-researcher.

The above description confirms that this research's approach significantly influenced the data analysis process. To this end, the researcher applied thematic content analysis because of its relevance to this research. The connection among the phases of information analysis remains very central throughout the whole process in qualitative research (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). In reality, during the analysis of the in-depth interview records, the researcher never neglected the social context in which the interviewees lived. Analysis requires researchers' familiarity with the data contents to identify themes (Babbie & Mouton, 1998). This motivated the researcher to penetrate deeply into the interview copies to emerge patterns of shared perceptions of experiences and themes.

The researcher considered that "reality is subjective rather than objective, and that meanings and perceptions of participants are derived from experiences" (Greene, 2014; Ulin et al., 2002: 60). To analyse data collected in the field, Terre Blanche et al. (2006) advise researchers to go through three main steps, which this research observed.

The first step of data analysis requires the researcher to peruse through each transcribed interview copy, which implies careful reading and a better understanding of developing a deep relationship with the information. This entails the researcher's familiarity with the collected data and the content to be analysed. It becomes obvious that the analysis started when the in-depth telephonic interviews were planned and interviewees detected. Before data analysis commenced, the researcher had already got an opening interpretation regarding the phenomena he was exploring and made preliminary conclusions about the research problem (Greene, 2014; Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The stage was then followed by concentrating on meticulous reading, going through recorded interviewees' answers, and examining developing themes and emerging provisional justifications. Thus, Ulin et al. (2002) remark that this level "involved noting the quality of the transcripts, including the portrayed neutrality in asking questions and responding to participants' answers, and the richness of detail in the field notes".

The second level was the identification of themes. Themes were generated through the researchers' meticulous examination of how the interviewees used their words. The researchers then became acquainted with the responses to determine the recurrence of the interviewees' words, prompting them to jot down repeated words or their synonyms used. During this process, the researcher did not change the interviewees' verbatims; he used exactly their style, terms and words. By doing so, the researcher aimed to establish relationships, which facilitated him to deduce common guidelines from particular circumstances (Denzin & Yvonna, 2005). The researcher never started seeking preset themes to fit them into the text, but he rather looked for the themes that emerged from that text. He reviewed the content and identified key themes from there (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). As a result, the researcher thoroughly presented the identified data based on its pertinence to a certain topic, and later, it was reduced to its vital emphasis. The following phase was to look at any other topic present in the text to learn about the interviewees' essential connotations,

perceptions and attitudes. Ultimately, the researcher made a general assessment, which led to the interpretation and evaluation of the emergent topics and how they interconnect (Denzin & Yvonna, 2000; Ulin et al., 2002).

At stage three, the researcher began elaborating: data was split into themes, meaning that "events and discussions no longer appeared in linear sequence" (Silverman, 2013:39) Common themes and subthemes voiced in different examples were pulled together under a bigger single theme. This led to the elaboration of how each theme was studied and judged in more aspects, which facilitated the researcher to find the subtler distinctions (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

Overall, during data analysis, the researcher pulled out the interpretation of the information to verify it (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Common themes and subthemes were grouped under the same theme, which finally groped the information for clarification and authentication (Denzin & Yvonna, 2005). Then the researcher revised this interpretation to discover weaknesses it included and readjusted the text. Moreover, his personal role during the whole process was equally considered after its revision.

3.11 Credibility and trustworthiness of information

The researcher confirmed the credibility and trustworthiness of the collected information through saturation. Saturation indicates that the questions the researcher repeatedly asked over time to the same interviewees had begun consistently producing similar answers (Brink, 2006; Sullivian, 2011). To confirm the credibility and trustworthiness of the data in this research, the researcher followed some steps:

After the researcher had sought his interviewees' opinions, he anticipated the applicability of the methodological instruments to his research objectives; then followed judgement and evaluation, which culminated in adjustments. Accordingly, to establish information trustworthiness, the researcher scrutinised the instruments he used to gather information and revised the observations he had made. In other words, the information was credible because questions began yielding similar responses, indicating saturation had been reached. In the same vein, Denzin and Yvonna (2000) and Sullivian (2011) admit that permanency, uniformity and repeatability mirror credibility, which equally focuses on the researcher's aptitude to gather

and record information correctly. The credibility of research instruments relies on the replies to the questions as they can generate similar continuous outcomes once used repeatedly over time on the same respondents. Besides, trustworthiness arises in the context where research instruments measure precisely what they are meant to measure depending on the situation in which they are convenient (Brink, 2006). That said, this research builds on the replies the interviewees produced in connection with its objectives and questions. Lastly, Sullivian (2011) postulates that credibility remains another factor confirming trustworthiness as it specifies that a reliable measure must work effectively. Regarding this research, trustworthiness and credibility were ensured as the researcher sidestepped forms of partiality that could appear during in-depth telephonic interviews, describing and interpreting circumstances.

Credibility matters for any category of research (Silverman, 2013; Ulin et al., 2002). In order to ensure the trustworthiness of this research, the researcher permitted his understanding to be confirmed and modified by his informants, who were the people whose experiences, interpretations and thoughts he considered for the research. To the researcher, the "participants remained part of the process, that is, from the fieldwork to the analysis of data" (Silverman, 2013; Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

To this end, the first step to implicate respondents in this research process was the researcher's preliminary visits to the RPC research site, from where he selected them before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2019. This was the most significant stage as it prompted the researcher's bond in creating and preserving confidence and relationship with the informants.

On the other hand, the researcher was personally a victim of losing his job because of being a foreigner, which caused him to face the challenge of lack of funds for his research. At the time of data collection, he was unemployed and never got any scholarship, but he fully relied on generous friends' sporadic support for his research expenditures, including paying for telephone calls and transport. Despite all these plights, information collection and in-depth interviews were conducted as preset.

3.12 Self-reflexivity

This research is significant to the researcher since he structured it based on his subjectivity, which mirrors his decisive positionality. He is an active member of the refugee community in Durban and shares the same background with his interviewees, who are also members of the above-mentioned community. This depicts how the process of this research involved the researcher's self-reflexivity. Henceforth, the research arranged the researcher with more attention to developing certainty as he echoed his attitude, thinking and viewpoints during the thematic interpretation of the research outcomes. In the same line, reflexivity depicts a "continual consideration of how the researcher's social identity and values affect the data gathered and how the social world is produced" (Reay, 1996: 60). The researcher's identity as a Congolese male refugee based in Durban provided him with an occasion to analyse information from an insider perception. His insider position supported the production of reality from the same perspective as the interviewees, making the researcher jointly participate in creating meaning. The subjectivity of the researcher fundamentally structures research. In other words, researchers have the power to shape their research through their interests as they embody their attitudes and perspectives. In this vein, Reay (1996:62) and Sarah and Burkard (2009) conclude that critical structure may consider deeply what the researcher is looking for by tackling the community's main current matters.

3.13 Field challenges

Face-to-face interviews have been regarded as the gold standard for qualitative research in the social sciences. However, the researcher for this study faced some obstacles throughout the data collecting phase because of the emergence of the Covid-19 epidemic, compelling him to use in-depth telephonic interviews. In reality, he had requested ethical approval in November 2019, but it was not granted until August 2021. The ethics commission requested that the researcher adjusts his research methodology to the Covid-19 scourge research protocols. Unfortunately, the epidemic had caused all academic services to shift online, which slowed the entire process of obtaining ethical clearance, despite the researcher's acceptance of the suggestion by the ethical committee. As a result, the ethical approval took more than a year to process,

severely influencing the research calendar and the overall research project. Furthermore, the researcher had been affected by the Covid-19 effects since he had lost part-time employment, causing him to struggle to find money to pay his interviewees for airtime for the interviews. These reasons alone demonstrate how the Covid-19 pandemic has negatively affected the alternate qualitative methodologies in social sciences research, such as the telephonic interviews used in this research. Due to this and other challenges posed by the pandemic, the researcher was forced to rely on in-depth telephone interviews with Congolese male refugees who had agreed to participate in the research. All of the aforementioned details clearly show how the researcher's research method was hampered by adopting new tools for conducting in-depth interviews over the phone.

The researcher found it hard to conduct telephonic interviews to acclimate to the Covid-19 contact and movement restrictions since he could not see his respondents' facial expressions, body language, and other nonverbal signs. Consequently, he took into account information acquired from his interviewees' intonation and voices (Polit & Beck, 2020). In addition to the above challenge, another concern was that several interviewees appeared hesitant to disclose information about any personal inquiry. One of the participants had hearing impairments, which made things difficult for the researcher at first, but he persevered, and the issue was sorted out successfully. If the researcher and his interviewees had been face-to-face, the researcher could have written the question on a piece of paper, and the interviewee might have deduced the meaning by looking at the interviewer's lips. When it came to confidentiality, even though the researcher was conversing with his interviewees over the telephone, they were not certain they were talking to the right person. This occurred because neither of them could see the other, which generated a sense of uncertainty. This is why, despite having introduced himself before beginning to read the consent form for the interview, one interviewee asked the researcher his name. This reflected a similar danger of confidentiality in an in-depth telephonic interview. For that reason, Bulck et al. (2020:467) claimed that there might be a risk of the interview being done with someone pretending to be the actual participant for various reasons and depending on the content of the interview, which could be difficult to verify.

3.14. Conclusion

This chapter elaborated on the process used by the researcher to collect and process the information included in this research without endangering the lives of his interviewees. It has investigated the research design that serves as the foundation for the qualitative approach. Similarly, the research paradigm was also discussed to explain the researcher's choice for the qualitative approach. The methodology used to gather the necessary information was also discussed, as were data collection strategies. The latter included collecting primary information through in-depth individual interviews conducted over the phone, as well as secondary information gleaned from the researcher's various readings.

The sampling procedure and sample size were critical to this exercise because they explained why purposive sampling was used in the research. This prompted the researcher to discuss the benefits and drawbacks of purposive sampling and the recruitment strategy. In the same context, the sample size was examined

The chapter described the research site, the research interviewees' recruitment strategy, and the demographic profiles of the interviewees. The researcher did not overlook ethical considerations, which are always important in qualitative research because they guide and protect interviewees and the information they reveal.

The section also looked into the various sources the researcher consulted to obtain the data he needed for his research. It described how the collected data was analysed using thematic analysis. Therefore, it was also critical to value the data in terms of credibility and trustworthiness. Because the researcher was a member of the community of his interviewees, he had to address the issue of self-reflexivity. He also discussed the difficulties he encountered in the field, such as the Covid-19 connected effects. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief summary of the main points raised throughout the various paragraphs of the chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

IMPACT OF SOCIO-CULTURAL NORMS AND SOCIALISATION ON CONGOLESE MALE REFUGEES' UNDERSTANDING AND EXPERIENCES OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

4.1 Introduction

The first aim of this research was to explore the general understanding of the experiences of socio-cultural norms and socialisation and their impact on Congolese male refugees regarding gender-based violence (GBV) in DRC before they were forced to flee the country and seek asylum in South Africa. To accomplish this objective, the researcher asked respondents to share their thoughts on how socio-cultural norms and socialisation affected their views and understandings of GBV in their home country.

Socio-cultural norms and socialisation are key elements that impact how Congolese men interpret the understanding and experiences of GBV. Consequently, this chapter explores how interviewees perceive gender-based violence reflecting on the abovementioned factors. The interviewees' experiences and understandings of GBV have been classified into various main themes, further broken into sub-themes.

The chapter describes how Congolese male refugees depict cultural norms and socialisation in connection with GBV. GBV is entrenched in a patriarchal background with several other interconnected factors. Thus, culture and hegemonic masculinities have inspired Congolese men's experiences and understanding of violence against women. This endorses the masculinity theory, which has occurred in a wider socio-cultural framework to which both the perpetrator and the victim belong.

Finally, socialisation refers to how Congolese men internalise cultural ideologies and norms that perpetuate gendered violence. Interviewees have revealed that men learn how to preserve social and cultural continuity due to interactions with various socialisation agents, including families, institutions, and contemporaries. These agents prompt GBV through hegemonic masculinities, discriminatory gender roles, social task distribution and power imbalance. This strategy reinforces the socioecological theory that informs this research.

4.2 Socio-cultural norms, socialisation and gender-based violence in DRC

4.2.1 Social norms, socialisation and GBV

Social norms are collective expectations of appropriate behaviour that sustain GBV as a men's expression of masculinities and power to discipline women and children (Gonzalez, 2020). In the context of DRC, men abuse women because of socially ascribed gender differences between genders. This depicts the interconnectedness of sociocultural norms, socialisation, and gender-based violence in DRC society. This is because Congolese boys begin learning about maleness and gendered education when they are very young in their families. According to Algore and Casino (2020:22), men use GBV because they witnessed violence against their mothers as children. Congolese male perpetrators of GBV are not born violent, but they grow up in a culture that fosters hegemony, patriarchy, and dangerous masculinities (Albert, 2007; Lundula, 2018). Socio-ecology promotes socialisation in that Congolese boys and men learn from what they see around them because they are part of a larger community where patriarchy is the norm. They leave the family and enter the community, where they interact with people from all social levels, such as schools, churches, and other social layers, where they learn more about the social norms that promote gender imbalance, which eventually leads to GBV (Baruti & Bwenge, 2016; Halliday, 2011). Similarly, they have become acquainted with the atrocities of armed conflicts, making GBV complex because it combines local social norms with armed conflict strategies of abusing women.

On the other hand, the construction of GBV in DRC is influenced by several sociocultural norms. According to Jaime (2016), when people construct femininity and masculinity, they require multiple identities that fit various social contexts and expectations without providing space or learning for a shared value and moral system. The Congolese do not require a shared moral and value system to generate multiple identities that can contribute to the definition of a real man. According to Lawlor (2015:330), this condition causes physiological confusion and frustration, leading to an inherent identity crisis, eventually leading to aggression, isolation, and negative behavioural patterns. As a result, Congolese men developed cultural

practices that promoted their dominance over women because their women were socialised to be passionate and understanding of male dominance and physically disciplined by men.

In this context, traditions encourage men to pay the dowry for their wives to have their full ownership. Not only does paying the dowry give the man power over his wife, but it also gives him the right to her sex. Furthermore, Nzigire and Mate (2017:69) argue that paying the dowry causes women to develop an attitude of behaving like a baby-producing machine, a social norm that many Congolese men value if the woman has produced a male child who will inherit their property. In other words, a Congolese woman who does not bear a son is stigmatised because male children give hope to their mothers to die old in that family (Buyana & Samia, 2015).

Both parents are dissatisfied because they lack a male child; the man believes he is not a real man. To make amends for his shame, he can expel the woman who failed to have a male child and bring in another woman at any time in the hopes of having a male child with her. This situation has frequently dismantled many households and has occasionally reached larger families. According to Bingwa and Nyorha (2015:19), male children represent an extraordinary power in Congolese families because they make their family shine around, and the father believes he is a superman in his area, feared by many.

Furthermore, Congolese men are traditionally conceived as breadwinners, and they feel threatened when their wives earn more money or enter positions previously associated with men, such as politics and business. According to Nancy (2017:862), this contradicts the traditional hegemonic norm of confining women in the compound, reducing them to caregivers who are limited professionally and in the education sector. This implies that Congolese women must care for their children during the day and cannot seek employment outside their families, which encourages men to enslave women in families.

The other point is that Congolese men's cultural property ownership gives man value in his family or community. According to Connor (2016), owning property allows men to maintain their dominance over finances within the home, family, and community, forcing women to remain perpetual financial beggars to their husbands. As a result, Congolese men will regard any woman who has achieved financial or employment independence by assuming men's social position as dangerous. Finally, cultural norms

discourage men from marrying such women because they cannot handle the home well since they will always rebel in the household as they think a man will not add anything to their lives.

4.2.2 Sociocultural construction of masculinity in DRC

Masculinity, in general, is not associated with biological sex but rather with a set of social qualities, behaviours, and roles associated with boys and men (Olma, 2019:148). Masculinity is presented in various forms in the DRC context, including social norms that foster it through gender roles and male traits that are typically appropriate to and expected from boys and men.

Views on the role of socialisation and genetics in the construction of masculinities have been diametrically opposed. Similarly, psychologists and psychoanalysts, such as Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, asserted that feminine and masculine characteristics are innate in all human males, but local cultures enhance them in various ways (Gottert et al., 2016:1793). Masculine behaviours appear intuitive because they are a cultural construct that boys and men must achieve. As a result, Lubunga (2016) states that when a man loses his masculine traits, he also loses his masculine identity, which causes him to lose social value. This is the case of a mature man without a family, who will be regarded as an incomplete man and thus unable to attend some social gatherings because, socially speaking, he is not a real man. Besides, Herbert (1990:469) admits that having a family is a masculine trait that influences a man's honour by determining his ability to provide for it and how he exercises authority in his family or community. As a result, Connell (1987) contends that hegemonic masculinity can reflect the evolution of gender practice, which embodies the legitimacy of patriarchy by tolerating men's dominant position and women's subordination, thus promoting the impact of heterosexuality on the construction of gender. For Congolese men, this means that their social system has a hegemonic or dominant and idealised form of masculinity and an apotheosised form of femininity that is suitable for both men and women. As a result, Congolese society condones dominant masculinity by legitimising and normalising men's violent attitudes and beliefs toward girls and women.

In a nutshell, masculinities and gender-based violence are linked in the same way that Connell (1987) and Thorne (1993) discuss marginalised and subordinate masculinities. The DRC's ideals assume that men are providers and household heads. Furthermore, Dirango (2016) relates that because the country has been involved in armed conflicts for longer, war-related trauma reduces male productivity. This exemplifies how men involved in farming weakened their masculinity because they were discouraged, exhausted, and even emasculated, a situation that rendered them comparable to women.

4.2.3 Male gender identity, masculinity, heterosexuality and violence

Using violence to assert and defend one's gender identity as a real man is still normal and socially acceptable for men (Sydnee & Boars, 2016:122). The violence used by men to defend their masculine identity must be understood in terms of the power and privilege associated with that identity in all of the communities and societies around (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005:836). Male violence has always been an important part of maintaining power and control. Indeed, changing employment patterns challenge traditional male breadwinner roles in most Congolese families, causing significant strains in relationships and potentially leading to increased domestic violence. This also demonstrates that Congolese men's interpersonal violence is linked to a growing sense of a masculinity crisis, as political, social, and economic changes challenge men's traditional power and privilege.

Furthermore, masculinity and heterosexuality are inextricably linked in most societies worldwide due to violence and aggression. In otherwise very different cultures, it is widely asserted that men have uncontrollable sexual urges and that women are naturally more sexually passive. According to the context of DRC society, male sexual experience conveys his power, virility, and the number of women he conquers. Men constantly look for a sexually pure, inexperienced, and virgin woman. For example, Monga and Hatari (2018:100) demonstrate that some men believe they are real men by breaking several hymen of virgin girls. Conquering virgins express Congolese men's sexual power over women. In other words, male sexuality is also constructed as aggressive, framing men as hunters and women as prey, frequently creating several

cultural justifications for GBV and rape. Masculinity forbids the expression of weakness, including emotions perceived as weak, such as insecurity, hurt, fear, love, vulnerability, and loneliness.

These beliefs emphasise dating rituals and marriage customs in the DRC, particularly the stigma associated with women having sex before marriage. Sibeza (2017) argues that traditional, religious, and cultural constructions of female sexuality perpetuate women's vulnerability by implying that men must pursue and carry out sexual encounters. Lwambo (2016) raises that the Congolese culture forbids women to negotiate safer sex practices in all aspects of life, such as in normal relationships or high-risk sexual activities, such as transactional sex. This context has frequently led to the woman victim of rape being blamed during armed conflicts that have targeted women and girls. This echoes the notion that blaming the victim of rape accepts men's violence as normal because masculine sexual urges are uncontrollable. According to Olson and DeFrain (2019:88), men rarely report rape perpetration as abuse rather than as sexual entitlement, believing that sex is their right regardless of consent. It is known that GBV is rooted in masculine superiority and natural dominance in the DRC. This is a manifestation and practice of patriarchal masculinities based on historically unequal power relations between men and women.

Below are the main themes that stemmed from the in-depth telephonic interviews.

4.3 Sociocultural norms

4.3.1 Social bond and masculinity

Informants of the in-depth telephonic interviews confirmed that social bonds and maleness are sociocultural norms that impact their experiences and understanding of gender-based violence. Muluneh et al. (2020: 899) confirm that the men who maintain social networks can better learn more about social norms and strategies of familiarising themselves with masculinities, which spread men's attitudes toward being real men and boost gender-based violence. This occurs because social norms are embedded in culture, and society supports them. Bede DBN 2021 adds, "*...and I am not a man if taken out of my circle. I live in society, and I must connect with my men to learn about man's power and how to behave like a good man.*"

This impact is that social cohesion will connect men from different areas to learn from one another about their masculinities. Unfortunately, such exchange remains a Congolese tool men use to develop stronger maleness.

To Langa (2020), men often create solid social bonds to promote their masculinities, which greatly impacts their social lives in their respective circles. This highlights how social norms can metamorphose into wider dimensions of connections with different social strata to instil gender-based violence in men's minds. Congolese men live in a society with sociocultural norms that encourage social bonds and masculinities, which trigger violence. Indeed, most Congolese men always learn from others how their society recognises them as real men. For this reason, Chisholm and Tidy (2017) corroborate that when a man learns abusive social norms from his circle, he loses attachment to the culture of good values, peace and harmony but embraces the way of imposing himself as a real man. This confirms the socioecological theory because, at the family level, patriarchal masculinities and male children's experience of violence at home can affect their behaviour in their adulthood (Chetty & Agee, 2009). The same theory confirms that at the societal level, background and the information men learn from practical behaviour can induce GBV, making it look normal. For instance, Morell (1998) confirms that children with eye-witness power and authority between parents are exposed to discriminatory behaviours because the organisation and practice of families are gendered. Respondents' information to the in-depth telephonic interview indicates that such factors propel gender-based violence and continue to increase in society until a drastic decision is sought to reduce the flow of the violence. This situation has increased the prevalence of gender-based violence in DRC by creating enmity between the perpetrators and the victims.

Another opinion that emerged from this research was that the social norm of patriarchy often amplifies the effects of social violence against the female population. Interviewees claimed that DRC society gives more power to men, meaning that men control everything in disproportionate power distribution between women and children. Interviewee Lula DBN 2021 confided that such a cultural attitude condones GBV because:

It is widespread as the air we breathe. It is everywhere you go. You see its traces or feel it or hear about it. Men rule everywhere and are proud to brag about their prowess in abusing women.

This opinion joins that of Langa (2020), who stipulated that patriarchy perpetuates men's abuse of women because social norms disregard the men who misuse their power to abuse women in society, ranging from the family, the community and the country. Disregarding the abusers exempts them from sanction and proliferates violence against women in societies. In reality, the above norms have escalated the level of GBV in the DRC, making the situation worse with the advent of repeated armed conflicts. All combined factors have transformed the country into a hotspot for gender-based violence, influencing men's attitudes, beliefs and understanding of the violence.

Furthermore, most interviewees also shared how social connections and masculinity encompass marriage, another factor of social norms that creates broader dimensions that spread gender-based violence. In line with Book and Morgan (2020:33), sociocultural norms encourage men to create connections through marriage, which allows them to confirm themselves as real men with certain masculinities. Interviewee Dezi DBN 2021 adds:

> I connect with my wife's family through the dowry I pay. Paying the dowry and getting married mean I am a man. This opens the door to joining circles of complete men, and it gives me power over my wife and my children as a real man.

This clearly shows that creating new connections makes a man a real man and helps him learn social norms that foster gender-based violence in society. Also, being married seems to be another dimension that increases a man's bond as a father, a parent and a husband. This title gives Congolese men power and authority over their families. In most cases, such hard power generates gender-based violence and has wider consequences for the children, the wife, the family and the community. Muluneh et al. (2020: 903) reveal that social cohesion through marriage expands the dimensions of gender-based violence and helps men to affirm their masculinities. Similarly, Olson and DeFrain (2019) admit that marriage confers

authority and power on a man over his kin by strengthening his bond through the conferment of the social title of a father, parent, and spouse, making him his inevitable family's commander-in-chief who imposes his hard power to restore order. This matches with Lusha DBN 2021, who stated: "…*and married men feel empowered as they are complete and true men; they are more abusive compared to us single guys, you see!*"

Mulungela (2011:48) supports this opinion by stating that "within marriages, social norms prompt gender-based violence as society views it as a family and individual issue that does not need third parties interventions", which fosters animosity between perpetrators and victims as the result of social bonds and masculinities. In the same vein, Siniyo DBN 2021 seconded:

> Our culture stipulates that a man must live manly, and domestic violence is a family problem between a husband and his wife, or father and children. It is an issue where no outsider should intervene…and no woman should talk about it outside the household. The woman must protect her husband's maleness.

The above statements reiterate how making gender-based violence secretive in the name of family harmony, and the husband's protection can generate more harm to the woman as she will have contributed to her abuse (Berdahl et al., 2018:431; Book & Morgan, 2020:28). Many rural tribes in the DRC brainwash women to consider the violence they experience in their homes as a normal need. Accordingly, one informant revealed that in his tribe (Luba in Kasai), in villages, women often remind their husbands that they have not "shown them love" for a long period. The informant detailed that in this tribe, beating a woman conveys that the husband still loves her, which is a good sign that the man is genuinely masculine.

The above context illustrates how the findings of this research establish a background that nests into the theory of masculinity. This aligns with Amanda and Tidy (2018: 99-102). They explored the impact of hegemonic masculinities and traditions in sub-Saharan Africa and how masculinities embedded in sociocultural norms legitimise men's dominant position in society justify the subordination of women. This resonates correctly with Connell (2005), Ratele (2008) and Wedgewood (2009) as they acknowledge that

such masculinities symbolise the culturally idealised form of manhood and reasons why men preserve leading social roles over women and other gender identities. In a similar context, interviewee Nyoka DBN 2021confided:

> As a man, I must make sure I play my role as a man and that my family is under my leadership. We were created to dominate powerfully over women and those under us on hierarchy in our society. Real men must do everything possible to be beyond women, and I know some women who push other women to be submissive to us.

Socio-cultural norms are mechanisms for spreading men's power and domination over women. Perhaps the female population would understand that men must normally dictate their lives. This has confirmed the findings of Banwell (2012), who noted that in some African societies, women encourage other women to understand their inability to undermine men's masculinities and that all men behave the same and no woman can change such attitudes. This paints how hegemonic masculinities and patriarchy enforce women's subjugation. Women have no power to reverse the ladder, which most men will celebrate to consolidate their rule over the female population (Chisholm & Tidy, 2017: 99-102).

On the other hand, women's subjugation was also considered the result of contemporary teams' influence. This is true because socialisation can influence men's understanding of gendered violence. Congolese contemporaries are of the same age brackets, have similar social status, and are interested in getting together for discussions. Such gatherings do not occur over a short period because, in most cases, the peers first met in childhood while playing in teams as children from the same community. According to informant Bede DBN 2021:

> It began when we were children, not now. We had distinct teams of boys and girls, and each team had its own game, songs to sing, and lyrics to memorise. We had the opportunity to learn from each other. I have new peers, but those from my youth remain, and they have aided each of us in their team.

This interviewee confirms that peer pressure is a powerful tool for people to socialise about gender issues. People become more similar as they spend more time with their peers. In connection with gendered socialisation, Lusha DBN 2021 pointed out:

> When we were in the DRC, we used to learn a lot about behaviours of boys and girls when we were mingling in our groups. We started to share some similarities with the boys we hang out with.

Gendered socialisation is, in fact, a long process that begins in childhood and can last into adulthood if the members stay in the same environment. This assertion supports Hanish and Fabes' (2014) findings, which claim that friends who choose to stay with peers grow significantly more similar over time than chance alone would suggest. Accordingly, when Congolese children are young, they can choose their companions depending on their sexual identity because they are in the same age range and share comparable activities and interests. This is in line with Igo DBN 2021 opinion, which claimed:

> During our team meetings as young boys, we used to inspire one another about gender and girls. You are of a certain age! We mixed in groups, we set our own interests and manners. We mostly talked about girls and how to catch them. Those who had tried before shared with us how they had done it. Our ties became stronger and more widespread.

Children in the DRC frequently choose team members to encourage one another; however, this requires them to identify who to socialise with and how their interactions can inspire their behaviour and gender development. According to Mwambusa and Balola (2017:239), children who are socialising about gender are interested in and attentive to their peers to create meaningful interactions. Indeed, children socialise with their peers and are given opportunities to interact with one another, which encourages or discourages specific behaviours by modelling or creating rules about conduct in teams.

Children's identities and opinions of other boys are shaped by gendered socialisation with peers, allowing them to socialise with each other's gendered behaviours. This is comparable to interviewee Giri DBN 2021's mindset, who admitted that

We socialised, for example, in order to observe the behaviours of other children on our team. Depending on our gender, we could advise another teammate whether or not a particular game was appropriate for us. ....and I overheard a girls' team complaining that football is just for boys and that no boys were allowed to join them. We gradually found harmony in our teams by discussing our similarities and learning about each other's preferences, behaviours, and interaction styles.

According to the above account, Congolese children form groups based on their gender and their imagined roles. This interviewee verbatim demonstrates how socialisation is a process in which people can socialise in their groups to learn from one another directly or indirectly. Research conducted in the United States discovered that the more time people spend engaging in their circles, regardless of gender, the more team-like they become (Halpern et al., 2011:1707; Marmaid et al., 2021). In the context of DRC, men socialise to become more dominant and violent in terms of gender behaviour, and the women network with other women in more distinctively female behaviours. Sera DBN 2021 stated:

My wife had been joining her friends' team, but when I rebuked her, she responded violently with a long mouth. There was a big fight that day, which caused havoc. I reminded her of her bad manners, which I had never seen in her before joining that team; she had been mouthier and more offensive than ever.

Sera's account is the microcosm of those Congolese who socialise in peer groups to learn new behaviours that they can implement immediately or a few months later. In other words, most men who gender-socialise intentionally change their manners or become more gender-typed in their activities, attitudes, and conduct. This attitude establishes that the more people meet in their circles, the more they learn about gender (Bigler & Signorella, 2019; Collins & Rebecca, 2011). Such context points at those of the same gender Congolese who spend more time interacting with their contemporaries than their opposite-gender peers, regardless of their age, sectors, and social statuses. Accordingly, interviewee Birisi DBN 2021 described:

...in our villages, you could see groups of women here and groups of men there, each talking about their issues; the same with boys and girls. Since we were children, we have been joining groups of friends.

Gender discrimination in the DRC implies that men and women socialise in groups based on gender to exchange gender perspectives and learn skills, competencies, and preferences through interactions with same-gender peers. This explains why men who meet other men's teams get along and successfully share ideas. On the other hand, women learn how to inspire other women more cooperatively. According to Mugoli and Bahati (2016:19), the biases of these same-gender contemporaries increase over time by strengthening gender inequality and promoting gender-based behaviours and interests. Bigler and Signorella (2019: 662) discovered that the cycle of gender inequality prevents men and women from collaborating to learn from one another. Discrepancy endorses gendered stereotypic behaviours, values and assumptions about and against the opposite gender, culminating in gender-based abuse. In some situations, when people stop conforming to gender-specific roles, they find themselves being disapproved of or marginalised by their team contemporaries. This cannot happen if these individuals do not oppose the team's predetermined guidelines. Such sanctions may appear to be information within the group, but they can be serious, as Bezos DBN 2021 stated:

My sister preferred boxing practice over singing. So, she was given nicknames on both teams. The boys thought she was unfit for boxing and forced her to stop. Before excluding her from their team, the girls had nicknamed her a female bull.

In reality, this demonstrates how teams impose strict gendered socialisation norms on all participants for them to stay together and learn more from one another. In summary, Lugones (2021:171) agrees that gendered socialisation discriminates against male and female peer groups for individuals who want to belong to both genders.

Learning from one another in a team is related to socioecological theory. Through economic and social inequities between males and females, the DRC's cultural and social norms foster a climate of gender imbalances and support violence to resolve conflicts. Close ties within peer circles continue to foster Congolese male socialisation by sharing their experiences as perpetrators of gendered violence and GBV to gain information.

4.3.2 Rights to property

Property rights are another socio-cultural norm that defines a man in DRC, impacting Congolese men's experiences and understanding of gender-based violence. In line with Boudreaux (2021), society encourages men to own property because it makes them powerful, real and respected; they acquire it on their own or inherit it from their parents. In the DRC, traditional norms hinder girls and women from inheriting a man's property, which explains why every man feels secure and complete only if he has a boy child. Informants indicated that property right symbolises masculinity because most men use them to boost gender-based violence toward women in DRC. Society tolerates men who refuse women to have access to some property, and this is central to the expansion and subsistence of gendered violence in society. Most respondents believed that property ownership contributed to gender-based violence because women attempted to reform society by enacting the Congolese Constitution, which men rejected. This point is supported by Uzodike (2021), as he indicates that whenever women attempt to own property, especially land, men frequently subject them to violence and remind them that since the man has paid the dowry, women have become another property of men. This opinion matches with Desi DBN 2021 as he confirms:

> …and in our culture, no woman has land or cattle, that is for men only, because women belong to men. Normally, our role as family heads entitles us to family land. Consider what kind of man you are if you do not have any land or a compound. You are not a true man. When you die, your son must inherit your land, not your daughter or wife, because our custom forbids them from doing so.

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Property ownership infers that masculinity is a sociocultural norm that challenges women's social development because they are not family heads. Similarly, Congolese women are always discriminated against over land possession, yet they are supposed to feed communities and families through cultivation. Dirango (2016) agrees that not allowing women to secure land while they rely on agriculture can cause them to remain economically dependent on men, reducing their bargaining power and increasing their vulnerability to GBV. This implies that hindering the rights of women to possess and manage land is directly connected to gender-based violence. This connects with Bobo DBN 2021, a respondent who divulged:

I realise that it can be considered abuse, but when my wife has her fields and livestock, she can become rude. She would never honour or ask me anything. We guys, you know, do not like that kind of attitude. Women must ask us in order for us to feel that they rely on us, that we have control, and that our masculinities are full.

In reality, refusing women access to property subjects them to economic and moral violence. Similarly, Banwell (2012) agrees that such rejection reduces their power and control within the marital partnership and increases their vulnerability to violence. Boudreaux (2021), on the other hand, finds an increased incidence of GBV against the females who own land due to strong traditional norms against women's land ownership in Tanzania and Uganda. This demonstrates that when men's authority in the home is questioned, they resort to physical violence against their partners. In the DRC, when women attempt to exercise their land and property rights, especially when they object to violating their rights, they are vulnerable to GBV within their families, likely because their land rights are not seen as valid issues in Congolese communities. This research indicates that most Congolese men dominate housing and property, which they often use to control women physically. The consequences are that poorer land and property rights for Congolese women provide a lower source of income, economic dependency, and less bargaining power, contributing to women's reliance on their husbands and, as a result, an increased risk of gendered abuse. While this may not be the case in all the cultures in the DRC, there are some reservations that this research suggests need to be taken seriously into consideration. This resonates correctly with Caron (2020)

as he found that the effects of denying women access to property ownership on gender-based violence greatly depend on the community and cultural context. Such Congolese traditional norms increase the risk of domestic violence because they dominate and prohibit women's ownership from keeping them in men's bondage. According to Aliber et al. (2018), once a man has acquired his property, he remains its main owner though his wife or wives can use it for food production. The full charge of the family property lies in men's hands because society estimates its ownership bestows masculine authority to men in the family. Society believes that men are competent enough to manage the family property, and no one can challenge them in any way they may use it because of society's power.

Hindering women not to possess the land and other property denote how Congolese men resort to hegemonic masculinity as a social norm to denigrate women. This attitude undermines women's rights by making them feel socially unimportant to their families and communities. When society encourages gender-based violence through pre-established norms, its victims can never get support. This is the case of the DRC constitution that recognises women's rights in its famous "family code", but the traditions still hinder their rights and voices (Langa, 2020; Lubunga, 2016:50; Mulungela, 2011). Explanations from respondents specify that male perpetrators of violence against women feel their behaviours are normal because society condones it through patriarchy. In the DRC, men's right to property is a social norm that consolidates their behaviours of gender-based violence, as Hogo DBN 2021 acknowledged, "…*it increases our influence and power in the family and in the community".*

This attitude denotes that men perpetrators of gender-based violence might always be proud to see women begging for land or any other property for use. Sometimes the woman can be partially allowed to use property, but the owner may violently recover it or interrupt her from using it to satisfaction. This Congolese men's violence against women builds around the property because they consider them second-class people. This can only reopen the gaping wounds in Congolese women's hearts that have already been developed by interminable armed conflicts and other social burdens they bear daily. It was for the same reason that Bulu DBN 2021 stated:

It sounds unjust, and it hurts women as it hinders their rights and freedom. Although that is how the society is made, this is morally harmful. It affects women by harming them increasingly in every family and community.

In the mind of this respondent, men infringing on women's right to have access to land and other forms of property contribute to escalating gendered violence, which can sometimes push women to become indifferent toward them. Besides, Boudreaux (2021) concludes that refusing women property ownership relinquishes their dreams of becoming financially independent and many other development opportunities, damaging their trust in men. Certainly, this has kept Congolese women in eternal oppression of desperate begging, which seems susceptible to intensifying violence against them. Moreover, women's reactions against their obstructions to having access to the property may frustrate men. Mulungela (2011) annotates that such a reaction can scare men. However, it may ultimately induce some of them to impose their masculinities to regain authority and respect, creating more gendered violence.

This research also revealed that grabbing property from women is a social norm that fuels violence against women. According to Izumi (2020), taking property from women is violently evicting them, regardless of the physical and mental abuse they may face. The situation is worse with the widows who never got a son with the deceased man. Respondent Igo DBN 2021 submitted, "*If a woman never bore a son to a deceased man, her in-laws insult and batter her, and some die as a result of their injuries while attempting to protect their property.*"

This clearly illustrates how property grabbing in the DRC remains an abuse that causes widows to lose their houses and sources of income, leaving them destitute. Congolese widows are often subjected to domestic abuse, degrading rites, and solitude from in-laws as part of the grieving process to show their sorrow and innocence for their husband's death. Such humiliation often surrounds property grabbing by eroding women's self-esteem, restricting their ability to defend their rights. Men believe owning land makes them prouder in their families and communities, which illuminates how certain masculinities cause

Congolese men to be heartless and abusive against widows, considered weak people who need protection. This supports Aliber et al. (2018), who confirmed that property grabbing among poor women in Southern and East Africa depicts maleness and occurs due to cultural practices and social safety nets failing to protect women and widows in general.

DRC women are already vulnerable because of cyclic armed conflicts and poverty that have eroded them for decades. Caron (2020) and Sand (2021:19) support this position by admitting that customary law and practices governing women's inheritance and property weaken their property rights, increasing their socio-economic, political status, and gendered power relations vulnerabilities. This was opined by Lusha DBN 2021 as he revealed:

> We have lived in an environment where rebellions have left women with psychological and physical scars. Politics is biased, and women's social status makes them more fragile. Again, you can see a woman with land but never exploits it. This causes men to assume that women do not need land because they depend on men.

Most victims of this social norm are divorced or married women and widows who have experienced domestic violence. Close relatives, such as brothers and in-laws, uncles and aunts, and grandparents, sometimes take women's land. During the eviction, men use abuse, leaving the victims without property. Despite their determination to battle for their survival with dignity and offer help to other women and children in similar conditions, the victims of this form of men's gendered violence are left destitute. All this often happens because there is no boy child in the family. The words of Ndibi DBN 2021put it more succinctly:

> You have full responsibility for the management of that property. You can rent or sell it without seeking your wife's opinion, because she has no share to it, and it is part of your maleness and power in society.

This interviewee underscores how DRC men make their wives endure gender-based violence due to the norm of entitlement to property, which undermines the rights and freedom of women in communities. Another social practice infringing on women's property rights is property grabbing. In this case, a woman is forcefully evicted from her property or home by members of her husband's family, traditional leaders, or neighbours. She is often unable to take her belongings with her. Interviewee Giza DBN 2021 argued that

> It is an issue when you are a man but have no land, not property at all. I think land must be taken from women if they have it. A real man must have a house and land. How can a widow, a divorced woman or a girl who spends days with men own a big field and her in-laws or brothers do not have? They will never have time to cultivate because they are selling their bodies, their land must be confiscated. Yes, society allows that, and no one will point at you.

The above respondent confirms that the relatives and in-laws of the woman often grab the land of widows and unmarried women in their families. This strategy depicts man's masculinities, and it affects women disproportionately. The strategy also forces many women from their homes after the death of their husbands. This form of gender-based violence overlaps with other acts of extreme violence, including physical abuse, harassment, and intimidation, in violation of women's human rights. Furthermore, customary laws and practices governing women's inheritance and property rights, women's vulnerable socio-economic and political status, gendered power relations, and the new dimension further weaken the property rights of women who are already vulnerable (Langa, 2020).

Most of the women victims of this social norm are married or divorced women who had escaped domestic violence and girls and women engaging in sex work to raise school fees for their younger siblings. Their properties are often taken by their close relatives, brothers and parents-in-law, uncles and aunts, and grandparents. The process is done with men's brutal experiences as they come to evict the women, leaving them without property. Congruent with Sand (2021:19), leaving these women destitute despite their determination to struggle for their survival with dignity, providing support to other women and children in

similar situations is another form of gender-based violence characterised by man's toughness and insensitivity.

4.3.3 Every man needs an heir

Men's preference for heirs is another socio-cultural norm that influences men's understanding of gender-based violence. DRC is a stiff patriarchal society that values boys compared to girl-children in families. Boy children are unique to their parents, families, and communities because they are an added value to them. Rafferty (2018:17) mentions that male children bring pride and respect to their families and communities and make their parents feel complete in their communities. To complete this idea, interviewee Radi DBN 2021 shared:

> In our culture, we men prefer having sons to perpetuate our traditions and our manhood. If you have sons, you are a man because your name will survive, it will not die, and your property will not be stolen. A woman feels like a complete woman if she has given birth to a son who will build her a house and carry her husband's name.

This interviewee infers that in the context of the DRC, men always desire to have male children as a symbol of culturally idealised masculinity. This idealisation has pushed many Congolese men to take a second wife if the first one could not produce a son, making her useless to the husband. Many Congolese women have survived emotional and sometimes physical abuse because of this condition. Accordingly, Boss DBN 2021 shared:

> As a man, I understand how treasurable a son is to me and my wife, and to the family. Many families give humiliating names to their wives who have not engendered them a baby boy.

Although this discriminatory cultural attitude morally destabilises most women in the DRC and depicts how women are viewed as sub-humans in society, the practice remains widespread. Encouraging sex selection as men's preference for a boy over girl children fuels discrimination and gender-based

violence because it symbolises that strong masculinity that many men crave. This attitude would reinforce men's appreciation of their masculinity and breed gendered violence between the couple. Beyond partners' relations deteriorating due to moral instability and lack of harmony in their family, gender preference also prevents the woman from relaxing, having freedom of speech, being open before the husband and lack of fresh ideas in the family owing to the fear of her not having a male child. On this point, interviewee Beta DBN 2021 agreed:

> Women must give us boy children; otherwise, I cannot say I have children. If she does not give me a boy child, she will not have a say in the family. Yes, and in the home, she burns and dies internally. I know she may choose to seek strategies for getting a boy, but the consequences will be tough if the husband discovers it as he may inform the elders.

However, if the preference for boy children over girls persists, large-scale family conflicts could explode since the problem has reached the families of men and women. Their indifference to the woman emerges and regrettably reduces the chances for both the man and the woman to harmonise. This elucidates how the lack of a boy child has always stimulated Congolese women to embark on seeking support via witchdoctors who give herbs to the woman promising her to get a baby boy for her man. But unfortunately, such an adventure has often been fatal to the husband, who collides with both in-laws' families, and the woman being discovered goes through forms of GBV.

Male children's preference over girls in the DRC mirrors systemic social, cultural, political, and economic injustices against women and a direct violation of women's rights. Both men and women appreciate having a male child, giving them pride and honour. For the woman, it confirms her motherhood and full integration into her man's family. The man feels he is masculine, more valued and a complete and real man who is respected at family and community levels. For that reason, Giza DBN 2021 stated:

Even our wives know the importance of having a boy child. A real man must have boy children, it is an added value. If you have no son, society looks at you as incomplete and sub-man for a girl cannot inherit your belongings.

Lytton and Romney (2019:281) and Perrin et al. (2020) argued that this attitude is so widespread that it fragilises family bonds and affects sex-selective abortions, infanticide, abuse of female infants, mistreatment, and serious health effects for women who did not bear male children. Biri DBN 2021 mentioned:

A family without a boy child is instable, and no one respects it; neither the neighbours nor the parents do. The family lacks its key root, for if the father dies, their property is in jeopardy. Consequently, many men have abused or expelled their wives for not delivering boys. A girls-only family is like a field without a fence, which sometimes causes some women to abort a girl pregnancy.

The above verbatim shows how families are shaken if they have no male child. Although girls are mostly unwelcomed and discriminated against in favour of boys, dowry payment continues to be a source of income for many families in the DRC. Research by Stark et al. (2018:20) and Lubunga (2016) demonstrated that dowries had become a tradition that caused many parents to see their daughters as a business.

Besides, in many Congolese communities and families, gender-biased sex selection epitomises and fuels partiality and violence against women. Sex discrimination in favour of boys is a symptom of widespread cultural, economic, political and social injustices against women and a clear violation of women's human rights. Interviewee Seka DBN 2021 argued that *"the birth of my son elevated my status, while the birth of a girl lowered my head. I had placed my wife under a lot of pressure to have sons."* A woman worried about having sons will not only be influenced in her reproductive choices but will be forced to maintain the lower status of girls by son choice. Nolo DBN 2021 shared his view, adding that *"it is also*

women who bear the consequences of giving birth to an unwanted girl child; and still, she can tolerate abuse, abandonment, and even divorce." This situation is very frustrating for some women who eagerly want to discover the sex of the foetus to know which attitude to take. Because of the fear of lacking a boy child in the family, some women become curious to learn which sex the foetus is, which can sometimes lead to abortion if it is a girl. However, Glass et al. (2018:155) pointed out that aborting female foetuses depicts increased violence against women, resulting in a severe shortage of girls to marry. For example, Schuler and Islam (2018: 53) discovered that in Sudan, a shortage of women available for marriage has led men to engage in human trafficking and forced marriages with women from other cultures, as well as the sharing of brides between brothers.

Moreover, sex selection may impede female children from developing self-confidence and motivation because they feel rejected. Such frustration can cause them to suffer trauma, self-hatred, hopelessness or isolation. In some areas of the DRC, sex discrimination shatters the social life of girls because it either tactically excludes them from social opportunities or simply denies them the prospect of showing their capacity for public performance, like working or studying. According to Mulungela (2011:49), this leads to assumptions that female children cannot perform intellectually, morally, professionally, physically or spiritually in all the spheres of life like boys do. That being said, even if the choice is for male children, girls still have roles in their families or the community. Similarly, Sala DBN 2021 agrees that "…*and boys prevail in my choice, but girls are also good because they can do housework".* This interviewee shows how girl children are discriminated against through house chores. Boys are not involved in housework, yet girls are prepared for them since they are very young. This illustrates how most Congolese men discriminate against girls, saying that *"having only female children is like having no children at all."*

4.3.4 Each man knows his tasks

The results of this research show that roles are gendered in society. This conveys how society has a norm that regulates the distribution of tasks between genders. In other words, society has preset tasks to

allocate to males and those to females. This disparity in men's and women's social task distribution in the DRC is the result of socialisation and has been blamed for men abusing women. From an early age, boys and girls are educated differently. Izumi (2017) emphasised that traditional gender tasks in any society reflect a socialised power imbalance between men and women, causing people of all genders not to enjoy equal rights. This elucidates how Congolese women have been socialised to stick to tasks connected to their gender and not compete with men, a situation that has led most women to lack prominence and to be absent in work competing opportunities. Such a social norm denotes gendered violence because it limits and prevents many women from taking responsibility or engaging in any other aspect of public and private life but still grants men their rights. This confirms what Bede DBN 2021 said:

> Society favours us for working outdoors, but our women stay at home. And you know it; that is a norm taught to children when they are young. ..Yes, I work but my wife does not, that is distribution of responsibilities in the family because it helps us men to be at our position of real men. It helps us manage our families well.

This interview illustrates that many Congolese families are impoverished because it is only the men who work while their women stay at home, even if they are earning little. Rafferty (2018:19) underscored that the division of domestic labour between men and women continues to be unequal in most societies as women perform the majority of household chores. Indeed, these gendered social responsibilities hinder women's economic and social development and affect their households and society at large. Moreover, task distribution at the family or social level pushes some men to resort to hard power. Unfolding the impact of sociocultural norms on male refugees' understanding and experiences of gender-based violence, interviewee Nolo DNB 2021 specified:

> We live in a society where each of us has his/her specific roles to play. It scares us to see people not abiding to those norms. And so, we feel obliged to react because we cannot mix. I understand …but women have their roles, and we men have ours. We, men, rule society, which allows that I

can sanction my wife for failing to carry out her house chores. I also know that social responsibilities affect the financial growth and progress in many families because it often keeps the woman on the compound, in the kitchen and in rudimentary cultivation.

Given the above narrative, we can deduce that gendered domestic chores affect men's gender-related abuse. This interviewee's response is depressing and shows no signs of hope for change and peace for DRC families and communities. Gender-based violence results from social duties and significantly impacts the flow of stability, solidarity, and harmony within families and communities (Glass et al., 2018:150). This situation could lead to various violence against girls and women across communities. Gendered violence in the DRC must be understood historically and culturally. Girl children and women mostly do domestic tasks due to patriarchal support for masculinities. In a broader sense, males are free to seek employment outside their communities and families, which women are not allowed to do. This has also resulted in mothers training their younger daughters in household chores to prepare for womanhood. The context has therefore been violating the female children's rights and has perpetuated the cycle of abuse to them.

Furthermore, Kazadi (2018:72) revealed that task distribution, in many societies, is related to patriarchal dominance that has long been the rule that gave men the right to punish their wives. Domestic violence in the form of physical assault can leave the victim unable to carry out her daily domestic activities, which can cost a lot to the family in terms of finance. On the other hand, the woman may seriously hit back at her man abuser, and he gets seriously injured. This may plunge the family into financial crisis as the only breadwinner has been injured and cannot work. Teefah (2019:3) disclosed that the effects of domestic fights have caused many children to be expelled from school for lack of fees, or the man may lose his job due to a long absence from work as the wife victim has wounded him. In a nutshell, the sociocultural standard of task distribution has the effect of slowing down the flow of family and society positive achievements (Lugano, 2020; Kazadi, 2018: 7). In other words, unequal task distribution enslaves females in their communities and cultures, leaving them vulnerable to a myriad of types of male domestic abuse.

In many DRC families, the division of housework is always traditional, with women doing chores within the house and men working outside the home, such as cow keeping, planting and field maintenance, home repairs, etc. Congolese men's perception of gendered violence is that women must always perform activities such as washing, cooking, and caring for infants, livestock, and sick or elderly relatives living in or outside the household. Furthermore, Boudreaux (2021:25) specified that most women often struggle with emotional labour spent in childcare, romantic relationships, the families of both couple members, and even the couple's friends. Since women overwhelmingly carry out these activities, Izumi (2017) concluded that the changes are not uniformly applicable to all heterosexual or homosexual partnerships. Gendered stereotypes reinforce the division of labour because they prioritise men's work over women's. Accordingly, many informants concurred that *"a true man must have a job and exert his masculine power over his family members, especially his wife,"* which connects with the theory of masculinity. Traditionally, Congolese men have been their families' breadwinners, making them more powerful and superior to their women. This enlightens how society has set responsibilities by which both men and women must abide. To support this claim, interviewee Beta DBN 2021 specified:

> The impact remains that society encourages each of us men and women to adhere to our respective roles at family and community levels. Each of us, men or women, and even children must know what we must do; when and how to do it. How can you dare live in a community where no one has specific responsibilities to carry out, or does not know what they must do, as male or female? To me, this is normal and natural in our society. This is like social order and sign of respect for one's duties.

The above interviewee's verbatim mirrors the role of patriarchy in supporting men's ruling position in families and communities. Considering patriarchy in the DRC, men rule their families, a position that gives them more power than anyone. The position endows men with the masculine power of ensuring children and women carry out their social responsibilities.

4.3.5 Religion places men above women

This research revealed that religion in the DRC encourages the normalisation of masculinities and puts men over women in everything. The role of religion in the DRC is undoubtedly crucial in replicating patriarchal structures and traditions that enforce power inequalities between men and women, which Congolese men appreciate because it backs their masculine power and control over women. Kazadi (2018:72) came up with similar results as religion plays a significant role in Congolese men's lives by replicating the patriarchal structure that encourages male dominance and behaviour correction, especially in marriages. The country is a deeply religious nation and very patriarchal, confirming the prevalence of gender-based violence. In line with Simister and Kowalewska (2020), the major religious beliefs in the DRC include Christianity, African traditional religions and Islam, whose leaders are feared, loved and revered. Religious institutions encourage females' virtuousness to sustain the principles that eternally inferiorise women to men. Such ideology boosts gendered abuse in the DRC since it reinforces Congolese males' attitudes and beliefs that women are passive, which makes it hard for women in abusive marriages to seek divorce. Surprisingly, some feared, and respected religious leaders in the DRC also perpetrate abusive acts. Several reports have surfaced claiming that some clergy of all faiths have defiled young girls, and some have sinned with the wives of their congregants (Lugano, 2020; Kazadi, 2018: 67; Teefah, 2019:3; Simister & Kowalewska, 2020). Besides, how women are approached on such topics is very ironic; they are told to be prayerful and optimistic for a shift in circumstances where they report such cases. Interviewee Bezos DBN 2021, for example, revealed that "*pastors and priests often preach women to be meek to inherit their heavenly Father's Kingdom, stay on their knees, and God will change their abusive men*." This clearly demonstrates that DRC's clerics cover up Congolese men's abuse of their wives. Besides, religion instructs women to cover and hide their bodies to discourage men from being sexually aroused and to remain quiet to avoid making men angry. According to Lugano (2020:243), such manifestations are insignificant suggestions since they do not address the patriarchal power men impose on women in their homes and war zones of their masculinities.

Religions in the DRC enforce patriarchal influence by empowering men's rule over women; patriarchy sounds like a form of violence because it neglects women's dignity and place in society. Equally, the DRC communities and religions build on patriarchal norms, which supports the theory of masculinities that informs this research. The findings of this research have confirmed that hegemonic masculinities countrywide, together with religions, allow men in their leading social roles to dominate women and other gender identities and even exclude them from the social arena. Respondent Waka DBN 2021 said that *"God made us leaders as he made Adam to rule what he had created. This is a natural function every man must hold in family and in community."* This interviewee confirms that Congolese men consider women second-class citizens in the country's patriarchal cultures, showing how they are discriminated against. As a result, imams, priests, and most pastors are men who uphold masculinities, which promotes gendered discrimination (Imms, 2000; Ohambe et al., 2014). The implication is that the men who lead religious institutions in the DRC are thought to have been designed by God/Allah, confirming their natural position in their churches and families.

However, patriarchy embeds in structures that can change, which affirms transformative masculinities that respondents admitted challenge what it means to be a real man. The father's rule need not be everlasting and feminist history and analysis have demonstrated how historically conditioned these structures are (Amanda and Tidy, 2018:89; Kazadi, 2018; Rakoczy, 2021). DRC religions endanger women's status by leaving them in an eternal state of gender inequality, which denies women to hold some positions in some areas of social and political life in the country. The relationship between religiosity and gender inequality factors significantly impacts the preservation of gender inequality. This is because Lugano (2018:238) believes that patriarchy and religions subjugate women by psychologically shaping their brains to internalise their subordination status before men. Therefore, patriarchy is interwoven in the religious tradition in distinct and pervasive ways. Respondents in this research confirmed that the images of God in the Bible and the Qur'an are overwhelmingly male, which encourages men's authority and the subordination of women. Accordingly, Soya DBN 2021 stated:

God is a man, and he created Adam before drawing Eve from him and making Adam Eve's husband. This simply reminds us that we men are original and superior to woman. God never created a woman the same as the man. Man was created originally, and the woman came from a rib of the man. Again, see…and you too know that God is a man, the Lord, the King, and the Father.

The oppression of women through patriarchal social structures increases in the religious context since the presumed maleness of God and the male identity of Jesus is used to justify women's subordination. Congolese men impose themselves on their families using religion as a scapegoat. Thus, patriarchy and religion oppress women by placing men above women. Accordingly, Borego and Carrasco (2017:5088) point to the predominance of male language for God in religion, it is conventional teaching on women's inferiority, the family codes in the New Testament that mandate women's subordination, and its hierarchical framework as all conveying gendered violence. Based on the findings of this research, most respondents, here represented by Jobege DBN 2021, agreed:

> ...religion assists us men in imposing our masculine power on women. It enables us to submissively manipulate women. Religious women happily abide because they have been promised Heaven if they are submissive and do not speak in public. No man can hate a woman who follows the Holy Scriptures scrupulously.

On the other hand, the perpetrators of gender-based violence appreciate devout women because they never question the word of God, which benefits the abusers in intensifying their abuse. In this vein, Miller (2020:1400) reiterates that very religious women will always keep a blind eye to the abuses men inflict on them. Congolese male refugees avowed that men hide behind religious beliefs to harm women once those principles have infiltrated women's minds. To endorse this, Nunu DBN 2021 confirmed:

> We [men] were made in the image of God. God fashioned Eve from Adam's rib, but she was never made to be like us. The Bible also states that men must subdue women and that women must obey

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us men. We marry them because they are morally and physically vulnerable humans who need our protection because we are stronger.

Because they are more morally and physically vulnerable than men, most religious women turn to prayer in times of suffering, deep gratitude, or humiliation to calm their emotional attitudes. However, this attitude misleads many women because they believe God always inspires their pastors' or preachers' supplications. Moreover, Ongala (1993:88) indicated that some DRC pastors also force their wives and children to attend their churches. This applies to immediate family members and distant family members, aiming to increase the number of church members. That said, the findings of this research confirm that the abuser may equally prevent certain family members from practising their religious beliefs or manipulates them to his advantage. For example, Cobra DBN 2021 specified:

Compelling someone to adhere to a church/mosque is an apparent make believe trick that lies to the world that the imam's mosque or pastor's church is strongly supported. Imams and pastors apply the adage of 'stones and sand of a river always follow water'.

This interviewee showcases how some Congolese church leaders resort to their masculine power to prevent those under their authority from practising their religious or spiritual faith. Such clerics may go so far as to force their family members to abandon their religious practices to join theirs (MacMelton, 2015:55; Mandy, 2021:112). Additionally, Congolese Catholic churches and mosques promote gender imbalances since they never allow both genders to sit together during prayers, which sounds like abusive and discriminatory practices toward females. Respondent Wayi DBN 2021 echoed that religion is associated with gender inequality in the sense that

It instils imbalance in the minds of the people by using the technique of firm trust in the Creator. In Islam, women never pray with men and their bodies are completely covered. Even though this is a discriminatory rule, all Muslim women accept it as normal and follow it.

Religion itself sounds like a fluid concept because it embeds interpretations and practices that demonstrate how it differs depending on cultural and historical contexts. Despite their complexities, certain religious norms and traditions may foster gender inequality and women's subordination through responsibilities in society (Miller, 2020:1400). This endorses the socioecological theory in the context that at cultural and religious stages, perpetrators or victims adopt the cultural and religious principles and values they are exposed to. For example, research by Richard et al. (2013) demonstrates that teaching people God is a male and women are inferior human beings fosters GBV. Similarly, the above writers admit that society giving more freedom to men than to women eventually culminates in abuse. Furthermore, by elevating men above women, religions encourage men's attitudes toward violence and discrimination and perceptions of gender-based violence in the DRC. The findings of this research indicate that the religious socialisation of women makes them associate with religion as they stick to some of its ideals. The verbatim of interviewee Sanu DBN 2021 confirmed it better, saying:

> The Bible wants women to take greater responsibility for their children's education. We must make this very fascinating for our wives since we are heads of our families. We men represent God in our families. Again, our religious beliefs do not encourage women to seek jobs outside their homes. They want our women to stay home and take care of the children, the house, the husband and the visitors to get the blessings of God.

When men admit that they represent God in their families, they place themselves in a higher societal position. To Nyahagen (2019:93), churches are male-led institutions that impose their line of conduct on women using the Holy Scriptures as their scapegoat to infringe on women's rights. This portrays how the DRC is a patriarchal society where religion endorses masculinities. Such religious attitudes exist in the DRC, and they have often fuelled gendered violence as they "deter gender parity and transgender and condemn homosexuality and transgender identities because they perceive them as immoralities" (Musimwa, 2019:50; Mwendanga, 2018:47). Views of respondents were dissimilar on gender diversity and transgender people; some supported discrimination against them but others opposed them.

I do not think there is something wrong with who they are. They have the ability to choose because God has endowed them with intelligence. What does one do if such individuals appear in their family? I do not believe we should despise them for being what or who they are (Sera DBN 2021).

Those people cannot be encouraged by someone who believes in God. I do not see how a man can choose to become a woman, and how a woman can choose to become a man. I am also aware that the Bible forbids a man from sleeping with another man in the same way that he sleeps with a woman. As a man, I must ensure that God's word is respected, not only in my family but in society as well (Igo DBN 2021).

The above responses illustrate the discrepancy among Congolese men about how they view "religion puts us men above women" as one of the sociocultural norms that cause abuse to women. That means some men would perpetrate gender-based violence against transgender people and gender variations, and others would not. In DRC, transgender persons and those involved in homosexuality are considered cast, which makes them abused due to their gender and sexual orientation. This sustains the socioecological theory because, at the national level, the country's position toward GBV and spreading information on it may positively influence the perpetrators countrywide (Chetty & Agee, 2009). In other words, the DRC is a patriarchal society in which genders outside females and males are banned.

4.3.6 Man's control over female's sexuality

From the research results, interviewees revealed that a man's entitlement to his wife's sex in marriage is an influential factor that helps understand Congolese men's views of gender-based abuse. Amani (2019) ascertained that entitlement to sex could also lead to sexual assault and sexual harassment, which many men believe are common in a couple's life. Married men in the DRC consider they have full access to and exploit their wives' sex because they paid the dowry. Not seeking permission for sex implies that they do not negotiate or consent to their wives' sexual intercourse. Unwillingness to obtain the wife's consent leads to forced sexual intercourse, which results in several effects, including unintended

pregnancies, humiliation and infection with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), HIV/AIDS (Coleman and Franiuk, 2021; Eng et al., 2017). According to respondents, if a woman objects to unprepared sex, the man has the right to return her to her parents for re-education, which becomes taboo. As a result, Sala DBN 2021 pointed out:

If I legally married a woman and paid the dowry, she has now become fully mine. Because of "that thing", men pay the dowry. No man can pay the dowry if a woman does not have it. She leaves her parents knowing that is the most valuable thing she has brought to me. Why should she hesitate to give it to me? She is aware that I have the authority to return her to her family because she has refused, and her parents will be furious against her.

Men are aware that women have always followed their orders. Based on Congolese tradition, women fear being expelled from their homes if they refuse to have sex with their husbands. Amani (2019) and Bulonza (2020) confirm that this situation may cause problems for the woman's family because they must pay a fine for the husband to welcome her back if she is expelled for refusing sex with her husband. As such, the context of patriarchal society gives men more power than women, and men's entitlement to women's sex is an expression of masculinities. Therefore, interviewee Soya BDN 2021 admitted:

A true man cannot beg his wife for sex; he simply takes it because he paid the dowry and being a decision maker, the woman must abide to what he says. The woman must obey her husband. It is not uncommon for us men to jump on our women. Most of us make our wives do it, and we may even beat them if they refuse. And some of us have even threatened to return our wives to their parents for counselling and reeducation.

According to this interviewee, men's entitlement to their wives' sex often leads to gender-based violence in marriage. Most men disagree that forcing a woman into sexual relations is unacceptable behaviour of gendered violence. They claim that paying the dowry makes the wife available for sex whenever the man desires it. Okoko (2020) agrees that gender-based abuse between husband and wife due

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to sex entitlement remains a private matter, and sex appears to symbolise the love between partners. This condition poses a significant risk for married women because they cannot confide in third parties. Similarly, Radi DBN 2021 shared:

> No one can be encouraged by the story of a woman who refuses to have sex with the man her parents gave her. That is a taboo in our culture, and sex should not be bargained, because if men know, they will realize you are no longer a man. …and you know, such a situation humiliates her entire parents and relatives. Normally, this is not considered as abuse since it is a man's right.

The majority of the interviewees admitted that a man should not have to bargain sex with a woman he married. Even if she is unhappy in her relationship, she must be able to satisfy her husband's sexual desires at any moment. All of this occurs because we live in a patriarchal culture where men want their masculinities to be dominant every moment (Braun & Davidson, 2017). Moreover, men abuse their women sexually because they know their in-laws would encourage them by blaming their daughters. They even prefer marrying a younger woman, which they think could reduce stress because they are energetic, have never been sexually abused, and are easily manipulated as good bed instruments. In the same vein, Siniyo DBN 2021 declared:

> My wife is reluctant to having me sexually, yet it is my expression of my masculine vigor and I like it a lot. She is younger and more experienced than me, but she knows all sorts of sex acts. She should teach me too, but she often refuses me, and I have no other choice but force her and sometimes slap her to make understand. Choosing a younger woman is to get satisfaction from her.

Men who care little about women's feelings will resort to gender-based violence against women who refuse to have sexual intercourse for any reason. This situation was perceived as another dimension of Congolese men's dominance over women in families and societies. Many men believe marital rape does not exist because their women are born to serve them sexually all the time. Furthermore, since men are the

heads of the families, the wives have no say against the man's desires because they are the decision makers for everything in the household.

> A husband cannot rape his wife because rape happens to unmarried women only or to single ladies. A man has the right to do any type of sex as well, and his woman must satisfy his sexual desires day and night. It is her sex that keeps her in my house; she must not say no to it (Pablo DBN 2021).

This means that in their intimate relationships, girls' and women's choices over their bodies are influenced and manipulated by their male partners (Bickell, 2017; Bonzaier, 2020; Ogisu & Williams, 2016). Indeed, most women have weak decision-making abilities, which men exploit to coerce them sexually. Again, women rarely challenge their husbands forcibly taking their sex because they see it as an act of submission and affection, yet they are dragging abuse against themselves. Many abusers like it when their victims are silent about the harassment they have suffered, making silence an excuse for most men to abuse women. This often occurs in the DRC because sociocultural norms in the DRC prohibit women from discussing bedroom issues in public for fear of being sanctioned for having violated taboos (Amani, 2019; Bulonza, 2020). In reality, men are aware of such women's frustrations and take advantage of them. Ndibi DBN 20121 adds:

> You can exploit a woman sexually if you know what she fears. Again, God has made us men to make all decisions in the home because our wives lack decision-making ability. Forcing them into sex makes them understand how much we adore them. In a man's house, a woman cannot decide about her sex!

Such norms sometimes lead to intimate partner rape and other forms of assault, the most prevalent types of violence against women and girls. Many DRC cultures compel women always to be ready to satisfy their men's sexual desires (Okoko, 2020). In this context, Giri DBN 2021 sustained:

When a girl gets married in our country, her aunts advise her to be faithful and submissive to her husband, and to provide him with as much sex as he desires so that he does not pursue it outside their home. They even warn her that a woman is obligated to have sex with her husband if he requests it, even if she does not want to.

The DRC cultural language does not accept that a married man can rape or sexually assault his wife; instead, such sex is considered common among married couples. Bulonza (2020:77) and Braun and Davidson (2017) contend that patriarchal trends based on male sexual entitlement over women's bodies lead to sexual assault and other sexual abuse. In other words, this occurs because men consider women as sexual objects for which they must meet their sexual needs. Most participants agreed that having the right to a woman's sex after marriage does not imply raping her. As a result, Igo DBN 2021 reported:

As a husband, I believe a man cannot rape his wife. Rape occurs when single women and girls are coerced into marriage. A married man has the right to have whatever kind of sex he wants with his wife, and she must respect her husband's sexual preferences at all times. She has no right to refuse sex because she came into your home for that reason.

On the other hand, a few participants claimed that something done against a woman's will means the couple is not communicative, which leads to abuse. Therefore, obliging a woman into sex is unacceptable because anything with a force component is wrong. This depicts that even though we are living in a patriarchal society with abusive norms toward women and other men, there are a few people who oppose these norms. Conclusively, Nyoka DBN 2021 stated:

But again, I think this should be negotiated because a woman may not be in the mood. Forcing her is totally unhuman and it devalues her. This can cause her contaminate diseases or get unwanted pregnancy. Those norms we have are dangerous for women, girls and even some of us guys.

As a result, a reasonable man should discuss and negotiate sex with his wife to avoid having a forced one. Compulsory sex with a woman is deplorable because it humiliates her and undermines her self-esteem. Research by Allan (2019) concludes that everything a husband can do to his wife with force and without negotiation portrays abuse and is therefore incorrect. A sexual privilege often leads to coercive intercourse imposed by a man on a woman, implying that the man is unconcerned about his woman's feelings.

Forced sex is still perceived as an expression of another aspect of men's superiority over women. Respondents strongly agreed that a true man could not ask his wife for anything because she knows that the husband usually deserves it. During the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown cycles, women were more vulnerable to abusive husbands who forced sex on their wives many times a day when both were locked indoors. According to Pablo DBN 2021, "*It was a good opportunity to impose oneself on her because she had nowhere to go at the time*."

This confirms how appalling sexual imposition was among many couples during the lockdowns, resulting in a slew of other types of abuse. However, a few respondents were unable to discuss sex entitlement in marriage. Radi DBN 2021 and many others claimed that the word did not fit the context because "…*it is not imposed sex. She is your wife, and that is not coerced or forced sex. It is simply your right, not rape or assault*." On the other hand, Beta DBN 2021 and Nolo DBN 2021 confirmed:

> What we men know as sex entitlement is nothing else but rape because you are raping your own wife. You do it without her permission, it is marital rape! So, sex privilege, it is my right… is your nice way of saying you coerced your wife into sex, sexually assaulted or raped her.

The preceding point examined men's right to their wives' sex as a source of male gender abuse. This belongs to the wider effect of sociocultural norms on men's views and understanding of gender-based abuse. It is now critical to examine how socialisation can contribute to men's gendered violence.

4.4. Socialisation

4.4.1 Socialisation and power relations

Miller (2021) defines socialisation as a long-term process by which people learn culture to fit into society. This process occurs in many social settings and throughout a person's life stages.

During the socialisation process, an individual can also learn about power relations in society because both interconnect through gender socialisation. Aware of their child's sex before birth, the parents start with the social categorisation phase that will last the rest of a person's life. Leaper (2014) and Swain (2005) agree that the planning for the child's birth often considers the sex of the child, such as painting the infant's room pink or blue, and then after, society plays an influential role. Thereafter, the socialisation process continues in a society where the child starts learning about social norms. Similarly, male socialisation in the DRC occurs at all levels of society, where men learn about the cultural norms of being a true man. These standards have negative and positive aspects, and gender-based abuse is negative. Gender-based discrimination is a pervasive category of violence that is embedded in social inequality in female-male relationships (Alexander et al., 2016). Because men hold positions of prominence in society, these connections are reinforced by social power dynamics that cast women in unfavourable gendered roles.

Most interviewees agreed that socialisation is a potent tool that society employs to reinforce gender-based abuse against girls and women by strengthening social power relations. This explains how the family has diverted from being a site for privacy and freedom of speech to an oppressive place. Interviewee Nolo DBN 2021 said:

> We learn a lot about behaviours in our society as we interact with people near or far from us. What we live everyday impacts us in our lives. Our society gives men more power and the women suffer of that. It discriminates against women and their daughters. We see abuse of mothers and children every day and around us. This hurts daughters, sisters, mothers and wives in our homes. Families seem like now battlegrounds that are not safe haven. That is now the legacy we men have inherited from our society.

Gender-based violence can happen in different settings, and the household is one of them. In the DRC, this is often caused by those men who misuse their power and want to control women within the context of male privilege. Most Congolese men like to exercise their social and physical power over women and other men who are weaker than them. Interviewee Sera DBN 2021 confirmed:

...that behaviour of abusing our women, I think that is committing violence as an ultimate resource for us men to derive power within our relationships. Also, our society has mechanisms through which we men learn our inequalities between us men and our women; that is a structure that influences abuse to women.

The ideas of this interviewee reflect those of Anderson and Grace (2018: 220), who demonstrated that abuse is a widespread means that belongs to a system of coercive controls through which men maintain societal dominance over women. Indeed, the DRC's societal dominance causes women to remain culturally unequal to men, which reinforces GBV. Socialisation makes men and women acquire their personal identities and learn the behaviours, norms, social skills and values appropriate to their social position (Chetty & Aggee, 2009). On the issue, Pablo DBN 2021 admitted, "...*sometimes, children, men and women of the society construct gender norms in society in a deliberate or unintended way.*"

Constructing gender facilitates power imbalance, and the latter produces gendered violence, which becomes a resource for creating masculinities. Congruent with Eng et al. (2017) and Zeba (2019:12), socialisation encourages gender-based violence in the form of learned behaviours that are modelled, rewarded, and even supported by the broader society through patriarchal communities and families. In the DRC, patriarchy remains one of the key causes of gender-based violence but also one of the variables that stimulate it. This implies that the process of socialisation in the DRC encourages the principles of patriarchy to promote the power relation that is already present between men and women in society.

4.4.2. Power relations and women's vulnerability

The results of this research expose how socialisation is rooted in the DRC sociocultural environment that is detrimental to women. Social norms promote gender differentiation, responsibilities and behaviours appropriate to each gender, which eventually enforces gender-based violence attitudes and beliefs into the minds of men as long as they have learned how to behave manly at their younger age (Bhana, 2016; Larremore, 2016).

Most interviewees shared their opinions regarding how power disparity in the DRC has inculcated discrimination into men's minds. Interviewee Boss DBN 2021 commented that:

> When I was a child, I learned I was more powerful than my sisters. My sisters and I were not raised the same way. We the boys were educated to protect and lead communities and families. Our sisters learned how to cook, clean, and take care of the children. The power of my sister differs from mine. I believe she will grow up to perform different social responsibilities.

A close examination by Leaper (2014:122) and Parkes (2016) confirms that socialisation would mould boys into self-sufficient, strong, and real men capable of gaining their independence while holding their egos in check. Socialisation prepares men to use power as a privilege to control women. Dirango (2016) and Kozina (2015) state that authority, domination and exploitation are linked to and regarded as an entity possessed by the individual or group. In other words, Congolese men understand power through power relations inherent in the sphere in which they operate, thereby developing a structure. Interviewee Sathu DBN 2021 defended this position as he maintained:

> We do not get power because we are guys. Power is something that exists because our culture permits us to use it. Our power relationships are similar to the other relationships in which we are involved, but they are not identical to them....you clearly understand that power, both individually and collectively, is connected to violence.

Congolese men have always used this privilege over women to retain a position of superiority over them. This infers power dynamics are linked to gender-based abuse, resulting in a pattern of violent behaviour in every society where men use it to obtain or retain power and influence over women and others (Grace & Eng, 2020; Nho & Seng, 2017: 175; UN, 2016). In other words, men appreciate those gender ideologies that limit women's opportunities, such as education and job prospects, because they aggravate females' vulnerability. Refusing Congolese girls and women job opportunities in the name of socialisation is frustrating because this leads to their failure to support themselves and their families. Corroborating this claim, Bezos DBN 2021:

> Many women in DRC are unemployed despite their education. In our villages, culture forbids women from seeking employment outside of the home. The girls are now taught in the same way as their mothers, despite the fact that they are educated. This sends the message that girls can study but will never work once married. We men often use the excuse of socialisation to force themselves on women.

Biased power relations depict the negative side of socialisation because they victimise girls, women, and even some men. Imbalanced power makes girls and women become helpless because it pushes them into poverty, which makes them remain endless dependent on men. This situation increases females' risk of being subjected to gender-based abuse, sexual exploitation, and even trafficking. To Anderson and Grace (2018), socialisation is abusive to girls and women because it requires them to adhere to socially discriminatory standards. Accordingly, Congolese women are often oppressed at the individual, family, social, and national levels due to negative socialisation portrayed through local laws, norms and policies. In the DRC, abuse of women is embedded in the local structural and social strata because they deny girls and women access to equality and rights, making them more vulnerable (Lubunga, 2016). This is why Congolese girls and women decry their vulnerability, claiming that society's customs, rules, and legislation in connection to gender changes are harming and oppressing them. A respondent stated:

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Our society never considers the vital reality of our women. I think that men and women need to enjoy the same rights that can promote them equally in their rights and decision making, and enjoy the benefits the society offers them. To me, fair laws, traditions and policies can make gender equality become a contextual reality that lifts our women from social vulnerability (Beta DBN 2021).

Due to cultural norms and poverty, some circumstances trap girls and women in webs of subjugation in their home communities. This describes how girls, women and older women are powerless in their surroundings regarding the boys and men in their lives. According to interviewee Igo DNB 2021

This is frustrating and fragilising. It limits these girls and women's access to educational opportunities and empowerment initiatives. Example is that when rural girls leave their families and migrate to cities, they become exposed to abuse, violence and sometimes human trafficking. They are frustrated and cannot socially network.

We may deduce from the preceding statement that when the effect of socialisation is negative, girls and women abide by it, although it fragilises them. Once they are vulnerable, abusers can easily reach them and subject them to gender-based abuse.

On the other hand, the ultimate resource of structural oppression is gendered violence, which derives power within connections to control abuse and discrimination. In reality, Congolese men abuse women not because society tells them they should but because society confirms that it is acceptable for them to be in control. To confirm this, Giza DBN 2021 asserted that "m*y parents used to tell me that if I fail to assert myself as a powerful and real man, I will end up poor alone."* This interviewee's assertion describes the DRC society and how it encourages Congolese men to use the power it endowed them with to be real men in their relationships. In consequence, Olson and DeFrain (2019) indicated that if a man fails to resort to his social power appropriately, he may end up being exposed to other men's control and violence. Culturally, Congolese men are depicted as the breadwinners of their own families, a position that

has won them respect at all levels of society. Research has found that breadwinning increases male power within the family, boosts social legitimacy, and provides men with a resource for demonstrating their masculinity (Albert, 2007; Halliday, 2011; Morell, 1998; Richard et al., 2013).

In the DRC, socialisation maintains masculine influence through supremacy and control over women. For example, Anderson and Grace (2018) ascertained that power misuse triggers gender-based abuse in heterosexual and same-gender relationships. This explains the role of patriarchy in the aetiology of gender-based violence, which Jobe DBN 2021 described as "*a mechanism of learning hierarchical controls that men use to maintain social dominance over women*."

Consistent with the socioecological theory, the individual is a part of a larger community and can interact with its structures at various levels. Equally, such interaction has allowed Congolese men to learn to behave in accordance with local social norms in their communities. Albert (2007) and Halliday (2011) admit that the interaction process starts at home, where male children learn about patriarchal masculinities and the abuse of power, and continues at school and in community relationships that surround them. Consequently, Congolese children who witness the exploitation of masculinities and power at home, church, school, and among their peers internalise violent attitudes and behaviours that influence them in adulthood (Lubunga, 2016). This life-long process prepares both boy and girl children for adulthood by introducing them to types of gendered discrimination that they can either perpetrate or suffer due to the power imbalance that society spreads through different institutions.

On the other hand, girls' socialisation in the DRC varies from that of boys because they are prepared to become real women. Olson and DeFrain (2019) agree that girls' socialisation helps them to develop into the woman society requires, i.e. a woman who is submissive and invisible in public spheres of society; a woman who is fervent and sensitively considers the needs of others while ignoring her own. Daudi DBN 2021 refers to this as "*...abusive and unequal socialisation of girls in society*."

Congolese women, like men, learn to socialise through communities, social structures, public media, and peer groups, where they learn about social expectations and roles, as well as the silent ways of coping with different types of male violence in the family and societal levels. Several scholars argue that

every member of society, male or female, consciously or unknowingly but deliberately constructs gender through social behaviours designed to separate men from women (Book & Morgan, 2020; Caron, 2020; Connell, 1987; Kazadi, 2018; Lugano, 2020). In the DRC, these social norms include practices and actions that society has developed and retains to distinguish men from women in their socialisation process. On this basis, Lusha DBN 2021 said:

> Our culture has laws that men and women must follow and protect because they teach us what to do and what not to do. They encourage our women to socialise for us in order to understand that they are weak and under our influence.

Similarly, socialisation distinguishes women from men by social behaviours and roles, such as reminding women of their subservient yet complementary roles as caregivers and nurturers (Brickell, 2017; Parkes, 2016; Way and Rogers, 2017). Furthermore, the DRC women who question their men's masculinities expect to face their hard power, which aims to culturally silence them, a good strategy for conquering and dominating women. This describes why feminity constructs gender as caring, loving and passive to hinder women from using aggression to gain control in their relationships (Larremore, 2016; Way & Rogers, 2017). In the context of the socioecological theory, this confirms how gender-based violence can be learned from what we hear or see around us from different actors, making it a behaviour that men and women can learn, and families and the wider community or both together can model, reward and promote (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2017; Berkmoes et al., 2017).

4.4.3. Parents, domestic socialisation and gendered stereotypes.

The results of this research confirm that the role of the parents in the socialisation of their children remains crucial. Brescoll and Uhlmann (2020) note that gender socialisation begins while the mother is still pregnant. After birth, both parents become actively involved in the process by exposing their children to contextual socialisation. This inaugurates a social categorisation phase that lasts the rest of the children's lives. Through socialisation, Grace et al. (2020) acknowledge that parents teach their children about the

social world, including the attitudes, behaviours and expectations that are often associated with them. During an in-depth telephonic interview, respondent Soya DBN 2021 reported:

> When we were still in the DRC, when my wife was pregnant, people would ask her the gender of the infant in her womb. My wife and I had to prepare the arrival of the child. Then, we started introducing that child to our Congolese society in which we live and would be living. I thought this was divisive because our children must familiarise with what a boy would become and how a girl should act, the contrasts between the poor and the rich, life and death, city and village, happiness and unhappiness.

Indeed, this interviewee exemplifies how socialisation in DRC cultures views the world in various ways, and it wishes for children to start learning from their parents at the family level. Consistent with the findings of Leaper (2014), through parents, society prepares the type of men and women it desires by familiarising the children with differences in attitudes toward both genders. This nuance is instilled in Congolese children from a young age, emphasising the importance of girls being obedient and boys being powerful and leaders. Gender labels are a social identity that has a powerful impact on the lives of boy and girl children. According to Grace et al. (2020), children spend most of their early childhood at home with their families, learning from their parents and older siblings. Most interviewees who were parents shared how they influence their daughters' and sons' gender development by modelling and encouraging various behaviours and activities in them. Interviewee Bede DBN 2021 backed this up by saying:

> I am a man and a father. I know my power over my children. I also know the role I can play in my children's developmental lives at home. My children look to me for guidance. But I do not act or speak the same way with my sons as I do with my daughters. When it comes to boys, I am strict and never smile, but when it comes to girls, I am a gentle father. In most of the times, it is my wife who can better address the emotions of her daughter, because girls will grow up to be soft like their mother. I too speak to my boy because he must grow up to be like me, his father.

This interviewee confirms that family is the most significant means of socialisation in DRC since it is the core of a child's life. Certainly, the Congolese child's primary socialisation happens within the family circle, where they acquire the behaviours and beliefs required to integrate into the local community in which they are. To back up this point, Daudi DBN 2021 asserts:

> Our home is the most important place where we teach our children morality and good manners accepted by society so that they can become productive members of society. You can see how we, as parents, and our extended family, socialise our children. That is why, through socialisation, the home serves as the foundation for our children's present and future.

Based on this interviewee's words, we understand that Congolese families play an important role in their children's social attitudes and values development. The family can socialise their children deliberately or inadvertently, as parents and close relatives may not be aware of the messages they send, although they contribute to the children's socialisation (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2020). Interviewee Sala DBN 2021 supported this by stating:

> I grew up seeing my father go to work, and other days to take our cows to the meadow and return in the evening, but my mother stayed at home. They never told us to do that, but we were seeing their acts and hearing their words.

Indeed, Congolese children who are raised in families with both female and male parents may easily internalise gender roles because they see the mother acting as a homemaker and the father as the breadwinner. Hence, Allan (2019), Amani (2019), and Coleman and Franiuk (2021) disclose that children will learn to value things differently depending on their gender when parents buy dolls for their daughters and toy trucks for their sons. For this reason, most gender disparities are attributed to socialisation differences rather than genetic and biological influences (Marks et al., 2009; Liang & Johnson, 2019). Gender socialisation in the DRC categorises genders from birth, which means that Congolese boys and girls

are educated differently, with fathers socialising the boys and mothers educating their daughters. This backs up what Siniyo DBN 2021 said:

> It was our parents who opened our eyes to gender issues. Our mothers were talking to our sisters and our fathers to us. We understood we were not the same with our sisters in social context. Our mothers taught our sisters to be clean, obedient, and quiet. We the boys were in the hands of our fathers. We learned how to become men and strong. During our teenage, we learned about gender categories. Our activities and games were different from those of our sisters. We were playing games that require physical and thinking force, while our sisters played simple ones.

Society has preset norms for each gender. Boys and girls who do not conform to those standards are often discriminated against, shamed, and ostracised by other children of their age and group, which has a detrimental impact on their self-esteem (Gilmore, 1991; Swain, 2005). This illustrates that when parents treat their children differently, gender differences form in their minds; a father will not treat his son the same way he treats his daughter and the mother. Parents typically prefer sons with limited financial resources. As a result, sons may prioritise resource opportunities over girls, such as health care and education. Richer parents socialise their daughters and sons in their unique ways. However, in both social classes, the tasks children are assigned gender-stereotyped. The experiences of Beta DBN 2021 (a) Dewis DBN 2021(b) tell us more:

> Depending on the situation, both rich and poor people allow their children to socialise. A wealthy man would purchase toys of cars, sports equipment, musical instruments, etc. for his sons, but dolls and kitchen sets for his daughters. For poor families, the father will persuade his son to take the cows to the bush or collect wood and grass for building huts, but the girl will go cook, fetch water and wood (a).

My father used to force me to play football and drink alcohol when I was a child, but he never did so with my sisters. And if I did the same mistake with my sisters, I would be beaten up and denied food, but their girls were not (b).

The examples above show how Congolese parents teach their children how to socialise. Children do not have control over how and when they interact with others. They yield to their parents' drive based on pre-established social norms. This permits the boys' masculinities to develop and the girls' soft obedience and submissive behaviours.

Parents' gender-typed expectations, on the other hand, can arise when a father and a mother consider their children's personality traits, skills, behaviours, and even roles. Nzonga and Rudolph (2021:89) find that boys are more violent than girls in most cases; girls are better communicators and readers than boys; roles can motivate boys, not girls, to engage in science. However, compared to the years before the unending armed conflicts in the DRC, today Dirango (2016) and Lubunga (2016) discovered several attempts to counter gender discrimination in the DRC. These scholars endorse that gender equity is on the rise, owing to an upsurge in organisations and some men committed to balancing gender behaviours and beliefs. Furthermore, there are currently more disparities among parents, as some stick to traditional expectations while others articulate egalitarian expectations for their daughters and sons (Brander, 1980; Liang and Johnson, 2019). Accordingly, Cobra DBN 2021 confirmed that:

As a father, I believe that my daughters and my sons have the right to work; however, I adhere to tradition in other areas, such as household roles. Where necessary, I am always strict with my children's behaviours to make sure they do not grow out of the traditions.

Many male parents encourage aggressive behaviour in their sons and hold their girls to higher expectations than their sons (Miller, 2020: 1413). This connects with how Congolese fathers and mothers contribute to gender-role socialisation for their children, as they remain the major role models from whom children learn gender stereotype-related behaviours and perceptions. On the other hand, the world is always

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changing because people's lifestyles have altered dramatically, causing everyone in the family to generate some income. This has led some Congolese parents to feel compelled to seek employment and work outside the family sphere. Males are increasingly involved in childcare and housework, but this does not relieve the woman of her household responsibilities. In a similar understanding, Biri DBN 2021 admitted:

> I have my job, but when I am off, I decide to stay at home and that does not make me a woman. When my wife returns from work, she must complete her domestic duties. My son has no idea why I stay at home to care for his younger siblings. He now considers gender labels, but he also realises that I, as his father, am responsible for them while their mother is away. I believe that by doing so, he will understand that a man and his woman will sometimes share roles.

The perspective of this Congolese male refugee infers that parental gender-role modelling affects children's education. The children who live with parents of different genders mostly feel this impact, as they would imitate either parent's conduct. Conversely, those raised by the same gender, like gay or lesbian parents, are less likely to develop attitudes toward gender roles.

4.4.4. Institutional socialisation and gendered abuse

4.4.4.1. Role of the government

According to the findings of this research, the DRC government plays a crucial role in fostering gendered socialisation, which impacts Congolese men's experiences and understanding of GBV. The DRC is a strong paternalistic and hegemonic country with a government that gives males more privilege than females. As most interviewees repeatedly stated, such discrimination starts with rites of passage based on government-established age norms. According to interviewee Bede DBN 2021:

> Our country, the DRC, has laws that state that a boy or girl is mature when he or she reaches the age of 18. At this age, boys and girls can become fully and legally responsible for themselves. When they reach the age of sixty-five, they are considered elderly.

The government categorises citizens based on age, which is consistent with the quote from this interviewee. In the same vein, Ndushabandi (2017:28) confirms that age provides some advantages to some people, reflecting gendered imbalanced power and unequal role distribution, both of which disproportionately affect girls and women. An interviewee confirmed this perception, saying, "*In our country, DRC, a girl can marry at the age of 16, but a boy must be at least 18 years old. Girls mature faster than boys*" (Igo, DBN 2021). This impact is that some village girls may marry as young as 15 years old, confirming that child marriage is motivated by gender inequality and the perception that girls are inferior to boys. This point explains how the government determines the points at which men and women require socialisation to begin a new social life.

Furthermore, the government empowers more males than females, which implies that the different governmental institutions do not do enough to promote gender equality at all levels of society. Gender inequality is tolerated in the DRC, which confirms that socialisation is gendered in the country. Accordingly, Pablo DBN 2021 claims:

> Our country is run entirely by men. You see men in every office you visit. Teachers and headmasters in village schools are all men. We just see men everywhere. I am curious as to why Congolese women study if they are unable to work.

This respondent's opinion implies that Congolese women's involvement in the labour market remains deplorable and poor. This explains why most women have limited employment opportunities, limiting them to low-wage jobs or housework. From the family to the government, gendered socialisation patterns and gender-role stereotypes persist, restricting women's role perceptions and identities. DeHart-Davis et al. (2020) acknowledge that social structure contributes to gender inequality and that the labour division between men and women within a society results in differences in their gendered behaviour. This is why Beta DBN 2021 revealed:

In many public institutions of our country, you cannot see fathers and mothers do the same work. That difference teaches us that there are specific jobs or activities that a man can do and those that a woman can do. Our government should not encourage that. In our families, we were brought up with the mindset of categorising people. You now understand that this may affect today's younger generations. This is true because no one is opposing it in our communities and institutions.

The views of this interviewee prove how the DRC government distinguishes between men and women in their everyday activities. Being a strong paternalistic country, DRC has norms that allow traditional leaders to rule in remote areas of the country. This hegemonic ruling divides genders based on customs by separating Congolese's everyday lives in their communities and culture as a whole. Similarly, the division of labour between men and women establishes gender roles that eventually contribute to gender-specific social behaviours (Amani, 2019:19; Boushey, 2019). In DRC, stereotypes make such social behaviours persist because the government does not empower women sufficiently and does not insist on educating men about gender complementarity. In other words, the gendered division of labour in DRC reflects how the vast majority of church leaders, lawyers, officials, military personnel, ministers, and even most organisation managers are men (Bulonza, 2020:76). Empowering men in all aspects of life is another form of patriarchal socialisation that describes Congolese men as most powerful compared to women. This is the public socialisation of GBV in the form of gender discrimination, meaning that women in DRC are powerless and second-class people. Interviewee Cobra DBN 2021 elaborated further, stating:

When I grew up in my village, I rarely saw a woman in a position of power among soldiers, preachers and even teachers. We had the impression that women and their daughters were not meant to deal with household chores. They were not prepared for work. Our government should set a good example of social inclusion for women.

This refers to how the Congolese government discriminates against women via activities. In other words, what Congolese encounter in life strongly influences their behaviours and perceptions of

circumstances. In this vein, Ndushabandi (2017), Rafferty (2018:2140), and Bulonza (2020:47) reaffirmed that familiarising boys with seeing men in offices and other positions of command deeply influences them to assume that women cannot work. Cunningham (2018:300) refers to this as "a socialisation of gender disparity that results in open gender-based violence that is detrimental to women's moral and professional development." Interviewee Soya DBN 2021 took a glimpse at some of the domains in the country and confirmed that "*...also our country's ministers, lawyers, police units, the parliamentarians, and everywhere, women are a handful; men are imposing themselves everywhere*." According to Okoko (2020:23), stereotyped socialisation victimises women, resulting in them being hugely underrepresented as public-sector organisational executives. This shows how the government endorses patriarchy in the DRC's villages, where girls and their mothers face horrifying discrimination. Indeed, most girls do not have access to school education and are not encouraged to seek it, and women cannot find decent work, indicating that the DRC government promotes gender discrimination. Gender inequality is exacerbated at all levels of society in DRC, from the family to the presidency of the republic and all the way down to local government administration. When Goldberg (2016) and Byaombe (2020) thoroughly examine the context, they conclude that women have been brainwashed about gender roles, discouraging them from competing with men in their jobs. The prevalence of such a gendered imbalance mindset in DRC fosters a gendered bias toward the few women in government institutions management. Bulonza (2020:52) asserts that male company leaders believe that only men can pursue employment because they are family breadwinners, and women are unqualified to work efficiently in offices. According to Sathu DBN 2021,

> Men defame women because the government does nothing to hinder men's masculine dominance over women. This often causes male managers to sexually harass female job applicants. Such administrators believe that women are sexually capable but professionally incompetent.

As a result, the female gender role connects women to competence-abilities and skills related to home and family, but not to competencies required in schooling, advanced business, or professions (Borrego & Carrasco, 2017:5088). Such selection is supported by patriarchal and hegemonic beliefs, which

hampers Congolese women from developing a learned, helpful attitude. Nonetheless, few women struggle and succeed because they understand how to develop cross-gendered qualities that disrupt socialisation. According to Amani (2019) and Coleman and Franiuk (2021:316), masculinity and femininity should be viewed as two distinct traits within the same individual rather than as opposite ends of a gender-role spectrum. Some Congolese women continue to face the gender pay gap despite developing adequate skills to work in government institutions. According to interviewee Nyoka DBN 2021,

> Money makes a man a man. My mother and father were both teachers at the same school, I recall. They were both teachers with a bachelor's degree. But we were aware that my father earned more than my mother. My father stated that this was due to the fact that he was the man and had additional responsibilities in addition to breadwinning.

This clearly demonstrates how the DRC government fosters wage disparities between men and women based on social patriarchy. Because the government cannot limit gender inequalities, Goldberg (2016) admits that men will hold higher positions and earn more money than women, including indirect and overt discrimination based on lifestyle choices. In other words, gender stereotypes cause women to be paid less because society provides men with more opportunities for higher-paying jobs. According to Byaombe (2020), gender wage disparities between men and women result from gendered socialisation and beliefs that those who employ and set wages have purposefully imposed.

4.4.4.2. Influence of educational institutions

In general, educational institutions, such as schools, socialise children by teaching them positive aspects of citizenship, civic and moral education and culture. However, the results of this research indicated that Congolese schools propagate attitudes and perceptions of gendered discrimination through behaviours and opinions. Cunningham (2018:298) predicts that life-threatening toughness will train boys to become masculine social actors who are morally strong. Similarly, Okoko (2020:26) confirmed how the girls socialise about submission and how to take care of the community and the family, which reflects their

motherly behaviour for the glory of their families. In addition, by observing how the management team of their school is constituted, either male, female or mixed staff and how they appear or behave, gender imbalances and social roles will influence children.

Since DRC has mixed and mono-gender schools, the interviewees' perspectives differed regarding the influence of schools on children's gender perceptions. Similarly, Byaombe (2020) confirms that schools have an impact on children in learning social norms because they are like a family. This replicates the effects of socialisation in Congolese schools, considering the time the schoolgoers spend in school as a community.

Many rural schools are mono-gender in DRC, with boys' schools with male teachers and girls' schools with female teachers. Having a single-gender school staff can cause children to perceive gender as discriminating, prompting them to believe that women are incapable of teaching. As a result, Bede DBN 2021 communicated the following:

> In my village, we were a school of boys only, with only one woman among our teachers. We learnt how to read and write, as well as a variety of other skills. We gained a lot of knowledge in our classes and from engaging with other children. When we made mistakes, our male teachers scolded us, while our female teacher was more compassionate.

Even though Congolese schools are mono-gendered, children can still learn from their peers by listening to how they express their ideas and thoughts about gender. However, because same-gender students chatting about gender will have similar beliefs, which may differ in a mixed school, this may perpetuate gender stereotypes (Ndushabandi, 2017). For example, in a male-gender school, the teachers behave more severely with the boys to help them grow into true and emotionless men. Although most Congolese schools are mono-gendered, the children can still learn with their peers by listening to each other share their feelings and thoughts. Congruent with Lazarus (2016), listening to others' opinions can often facilitate them to give new significance to life experiences. Congolese children learn how social interaction works through opportunities to observe and participate in social situations.

Where boys and girls attend and female and male teachers work in DRC, there are mixed-gender schools. This can create an environment where Congolese children have access to various cultural perspectives on gender. This is because both boys and girls have different biology when it comes to their core gender differences. In the context of DRC, mixed-gender classrooms may offer both boys and girls equal opportunities to learn how to adjust to gender diversity, emphasising mutual respect and gender identities. Therefore, Congolese school children can appreciate engaging with people of the opposite sex when they reach adulthood. Mixed-gender classrooms offer equal opportunities to both boys and girls to learn how to behave in gender diversity, promoting gendered mutual respect and gender identities as secondary to the societal role of the human species (Lynch, 2016). This infers that DRC mixed-gender schools introduce the pupils to social tasks distribution through gendered activities and how teachers treat them. Siniyo DBN 2021 said, "*sometimes our teachers could give us, boys and girls, roles to play; and also, were imposing on us what and how to dress at school*." Accordingly, Baker (2018:113) mentions that the images drawn in children's books about women with babies on their backs or in their hands and other tasks society have assigned to women remain fixed in the learners' minds regarding gender formation. Similarly, Lazarus (2016) admits that children understand what masculinity means since they are exposed to the images of men who are soldiers, playing brutal sports, embarking on prestigious games, and executing some heavy jobs, and also, the leaders in those photos are men. This reveals how the Congolese learners' images are exposed to their school books, as well as the exercises they are assigned, all help them understand the behaviours and roles of men and women in society. When these children familiarise seeing pictures of mothers in the kitchen, they get the impression that Congolese women's only task is to cook but not to work outside the home. In other words, children understand gender and task distribution by connecting images of men and women they see in books with those they see around them at home or school. Susan (2021:300) contends that what children see for an extended period in their current environment, whether in reality or pictures, has a powerful impact on their way of living and thinking. This makes the children grow up believing that women are always discriminated against, leading to abuse or discrimination. All of this indicates how gender divisions can be constructed, and stereotypes can be formed. Such an

impact leaves Congolese children with the impression that women must give and receive while men must take and impose.

Another aspect that many interviewees raised was that the school program and children's performance in schools could also cause Congolese children to misinterpret gender. Lynch (2016) and Orr and Baum (2015) support this idea by describing how the contents of most school manuals contain images or small readings depicting boys doing well in sciences and girls excelling at dancing and reading. Interviewee Jobege DBN 2021 mentioned that *"…and we were great boys in school because when we had math, chemistry and physics difficult exercises, the girls used to come to us for helping them."*

Although school exercises may generate gender differences, teachers must encourage both boys and girls to keep to the skill that they are most comfortable with and that works well for them. During teaching practical skills in DRC mixed schools, teachers encourage boys to operate machines while stimulating girls to type or sew (Ndushabandi, 2017; Byaombe, 2020). This discrepancy shows how Congolese teachers and teaching programs socialise pupils about gendered roles, leading to gender discrimination and abuse of women.

Furthermore, children attend school after being socialised at home by their mothers' skills to tell stories, some of which are violent. This instils in the children the belief that violence is natural and that women are skilled at telling stories and tales. According to Bulonza (2020) and Goldberg (2016), the impact of such stories is greater after the children have attended school because then they start sharing them with their classmates, portraying gender roles and stereotypes. This is how Congolese boy children are exposed to violence via stories from a young age, and the process continues at school. Familiarising Congolese children with coercion, gender discrimination, harassment, and violence as normal explains the country's hostilities, resulting in women being objectified and raped. As a result, Rafferty (2018:2023) and Robinson-Cimpian (2014:1276) argue that when a patriarchal culture socialises its children with aggression, it becomes violent. People learn about violence, but they need another learning experience and a safe venue to speak it freely to unlearn it. This is where both men and women can gather to discuss the need for a comprehensive rethinking of the socialisation process.

The same rethinking may be applied to early education, with a greater emphasis on instilling equal values in both boys and girls at home and in schools. According to Pant (2014:289), such education would emphasise that boys and girls have tears and can cry and that boys and girls have stamina and can be strong. For this reason, Bede DBN 2021 averred that

> Our sons and daughters need to learn positive manners about our Congolese culture. In the minds of our children, such education can foster a good understanding of gender. It can also help them achieve gender equality as they grow older. This necessitates our commitment to gender stereotypes and expectations, as well as our roles and obligations as men in society. These beliefs can assist us men, as well as our children, improve our attitudes and views about gender and violence.

Overall, socialisation in DRC schools creates stereotypes and continues to place greater importance and value, as boys mature, on their role in public life and the workplace. This contrasts with the girls' situation, in which they perform unpaid jobs as family guardians, caregivers, and community workers when they become mothers. In contrast, Byaombe (2020) observes that intimidation in some DRC schools unusually affects boys and encourages hegemonic masculinity among pupils. In this vein, Bede DBN 2021 revealed that *"school fighting is widespread among children at school. It denotes that boys are physically strong. Also, boys can control groups with their strength."* This denotes how bullying is a gendered behaviour that is used to penalise boys who do not follow gender norms (Vojdik, 2014:933). Boys who terrorise others in schools are viewed as violent, impulsive, and gifted with prized male attributes by their peers (Byaombe, 2020; Pant, 2014; Rafferty, 2018). Bullying victims are unwilling to speak up about their experiences, and by linking masculinity with brutality, violence against gender-nonconforming boys becomes acceptable (Baum 2015). Furthermore, homophobic masculine norms drive the bullying of males who do not conform to normative masculinity ideals. Some Congolese males may engage in exaggerated masculine behaviours such as intimidation out of fear of being labelled feminine. According to Bulonza (2020), this mindset would help the boys develop their manhood while simultaneously stopping them from speaking up for girls who are being abused, discriminated against, or intimidated. The context clarifies why

the Congolese society makes the gendered socialisation of violence against boys and girls look natural by not being very strict about fighting in schools.

4.4.4.3. Effect of workplaces.

Interviewees mentioned workplaces as another social entity that contributes to gendered abuse. The workplace in DRC is a place where female and male managers and employees interact regularly, and it promotes gendered socialisation in a variety of ways. Nolo DBN 2024, an interviewee, stated that

Congolese men and women socialise about gender at work. This interaction expands on what already exists in global society. It describes the power disparity between male and female workers. It is about the disparities in behaviour that managers expect male and female employees to exhibit at work.

Gender inequality pervades DRC society, affecting both public and private institutions. In other words, any institution in DRC bases its internal regulations on preset societal norms. Indeed, unequal relationships between female employees and male administrators impede gender balance in organisations because they foster gendered discrimination and abuse. This employer-employee relationship reflects unequal power distribution and marginalises women in subordinate positions. In line with Chalmers (2014), gendered work describes, distinguishes, organises, and values the dynamics of interactions between female and male workers in terms of feminity and masculinity in a particular socioeconomic context and at a particular time.

Gendered socialisation through workplace segregation is embedded in organisational structures, procedures, and behaviours. Holvino (2016) agreed that such discrimination occurs when male administrators use human resource activities to impose a detrimental gender imbalance on women. As a result, Bede DBN 2021 admits that *"those institutions employ both men and women, and their policies affect women more than men. Yes,...as an example, consider salary. I believe they make decisions in order to exclude women."*

Pay disparities between men and women are egregious in DRC. They are one of the most unjust policies in most of the country's workplaces. It appears unfair that Congolese men and women with the same job status or role do not receive the same salary. Employers discriminate against female workers by establishing and implementing biased policies and decisions with wage disparities. As a result, Igo DBN 2021 shared that *"...both my father and my mother had the same degree. They also taught in the same high school and in parallel classes, but my father was paid more than my mother."* Congolese women earn less money than their male counterparts in their careers reflects cultural and social views of unequal power. This disparity is a microcosm of a society that places a higher value on men than women. According to Janes et al. (2014), when women become pregnant in the middle of their careers and must take time off for maternity leave, they earn less than men. Giza DBN 2021, another interviewee, added

> Women who work in our country are compensated less than men. This happens because women must care for their children while they have given birth to them. Women interrupt working to care for their children. When the babies are sick, as well as for other reasons related to motherhood, women feel the need of break. In addition, once a woman has a child, she travels less frequently. All of this, I believe, often causes employers not to promote women or even raise their pay.

According to this interviewee's verbatim, staying at home for maternity shows how the Congolese culture requires women to prioritise family questions over jobs. According to Holvino (2016), such prejudice, recruitment strategy, dismissals, partiality, sexual harassment, and even the maintenance of sexist views stand for workplace discrimination. In addition, Sera DBN 2021 believes that "...*this discriminates, of course, against our mothers, our women and sisters, but it benefits us men. We feel lifted up and proud to be men and breadwinners*." This interviewee indicates how Congolese employers believe that since men are the breadwinners for their households, they are entitled to work harder for the betterment of their families. This is why in most African countries, while the father works, the mother takes maternity leave and is not paid her full salary, which is essentially less than that of her male colleagues (Stamarski et al.,

2015). Such attitude propagates in societies and work institutions where women are perceived primarily responsible for domestic responsibilities and child upbringing.

Furthermore, the findings of this research confirm that gendered socialisation at work may also be the type of communication that female and male workers engage in, as well as their behaviours. It sounds critical that both employees and employers develop the skills necessary for harmonious collaboration and effective communication. Beta DBN 2021 shared:

> Communication matters among people. I know that men and women communicate differently at work. You are correct...this can ultimately result in squabbles and even misunderstandings between them.

According to this interviewee, how men and women naturally interact differs and may cause conflict because it is linked to everyone's behaviour. Consequently, interviewee Gege DBN 2021 claimed:

> Workplace behaviours differ between men and women. Some employers in our country prefer submissive women who do not talk much.

This is also a common Congolese cultural tradition which forbids women from participating in public debates with men or reacting to their husbands. Congolese traditions support that uncouth woman can turn violent, causing "their managers to view them as discourteous staff who cannot be encouraged or worked with" (Stamarski, 2015:148).

On the other hand, abuse is said to be a man's domain. Similarly, Sala DBN 2021, an interviewee, stated that "*aggression symbolises our masculinity, and it is a part of us guys. If I am a violent man, that demonstrates I am manly strength.*"

Gender stereotypes can emerge in an environment that is not conducive to positive connections between female and male personnel, obstructing effective communication by causing tension and discord and lowering the company's confidence and efficiency (Serdar, 2016). Gendered socialisation in the workplace can also lead to male managers portraying other men negatively in terms of communication in

some situations. Although stereotypes of the female gender can portray a woman as an incapacitated individual who is not devoted or eligible, Mittal and Singh (2020) believe that stereotyping men can portray them as corrupt and egocentric individuals who only deal with their own personal achievement and satisfaction. According to Lubunga (2016) and Stark et al. (2017), gendered stereotypes in Congolese workplaces push men to consider attractive female employees as equals because they want to use them sexually, which also helps those women get promoted or pay raises. Using a stereotype to describe either gender will only lead to miscommunication, confusion, and discord in the workplace, which is a dangerous work practice (Eng et al., 2017). Employees are professionals, and they should all conduct themselves in their own unique way.

4.4.4.4. Impact of public media

The outcomes of the research show that the media has a significant impact on how people view gendered abuse and socialisation. Because socialisation begins in childhood, Serdar et al. (2016) and Susan et al. (2021) found that exposure to television and movies can affect children's perceptions of gender and cruelty as long as they encourage the internalisation of gender role expectations. This explains why television strongly influences the attitudes and behaviours of Congolese children who are exposed to it regularly. Hence, Lugones (2021:150) admits that most children prefer watching television to finishing their homework, which may contribute to developing pervasive behaviours. This is true in that what children see on television, such as dehumanising attitudes, gendered antisocial behaviour, and gender-based attitudes might become familiar to them. As a result, interviewee Dewis DBN 2021 stated,

> That is true, and we cannot deny it. Our children, for example, enjoy viewing movies and films on the media. This, I believe, exposes our kids to negative behaviour. They also learn about overt gender inequality from there. They learn gendered roles in the same way.

The above interviewee confirmed that television could cause children to believe that violence and gendered abuse are natural. Research by Lundula (2018) on the effect of media on men's socialisation in

urban DRC confirmed that when Congolese children see on television male characters committing violence in armed conflicts, men beating their spouses in the home, boys harassing girls in school, and all types of discrimination at work, they internalise that men have the right to abuse women. Because DRC has been plagued by interminable violent wars in which males assault women, children may internalise the idea that violence is a better method to resolve issues and that harming women is normal. Several researchers have confirmed that exposing boys to gendered harassment in any environment and on any media helps them to consider patriarchal condoning men's aggression toward women as a regular part of any woman's life in their adulthood (Collins & Rebecca, 2011; Erica & Greg, 2018; Scharrer & Blackburn, 2018:163; Serdar, 2016). Overall, the patriarchal world depicted in the media surrounds children in adulthood, prompting and perpetuating what they socialised with regarding gender and violence in their childhood.

Conversely, other interviewees shared that the media and films deeply influence Congolese men's attitudes and behaviours of gendered discrimination by presenting women in stereotypical roles and with less appealing positions than men. In other words, they reiterated how gendered socialisation in the DRC society often results in unfair stereotyping of women in the media. Most of the interviewees shared the same ideas with Wayi DBN 2021 as he confided:

> In movies, you can witness girls and women, boys and men performing roles that are very different. Girls and women play minor roles, while boys and men occupy important and dignified positions. Consider a woman crying, acting as a mother, a survivor of gender-based abuse, cleaning the house and doing the dishes, and a variety of such roles.

According to the above interviewee, the media might influence men to be involved in gender discrimination and adopt gendered social roles. The media promotes masculinity and gender inequality in the DRC since females are allocated soft and sometimes degrading roles while males do respectable and energetic ones. This confirms that the media significantly impacts the DRC's gender imbalance as a socialisation process. Watching movies that depict men and women as prominent characters in their distinct roles in the media already delivers the message that the masculine gender overpowers the feminine one (De

Langis, 2018:188; Kangethe et al., 2014:280; Pennell et al., 2015: 218; Susan, 2021). This illustrates how rare it is to see a woman or a girl in a position of power in DRC because men largely dominate and give orders to them. This also connects to what Sala DBN 2021 considered "*broadcast advertisements and other kinds of advertising promote and perpetuate gender discrimination and stereotypes.*"

This supports Grace and Eng (2020) and Hawkins and Coney (2017) arguments that by portraying women as inferior beings, the media brings women in soap operas, periodicals, and books as objects for men's enjoyment by presenting women acting to please and satisfy a man. As a result of gendered socialisation through media advertisement, DRC is portrayed as an oppressive society in which women are at men's service, dehumanised and dominated in their societal positions. Alternatively, gendered messages can be dangerously spread through the media, objectifying female performers as mere servants of males (Boonzaier, 2020; Damas et al., 2020; Scharrer & Blackburn, 2018). This is seen in Congolese music, where female actors are dressed modestly and led around by men on leashes as if they were dogs rather than humans. Culturally, the DRC media strengthens men's authority by depicting and socialising their masculine supremacy, which confirms boys and men are socialised to act as superiors, leaders and hostile. This attitude epitomises the hegemonic masculinity model as it demonstrates bravery, competitiveness, fearlessness, power, strength, and virility in order to proclaim their imaginary superiority over women and consolidate their intellectual, physical, and sexual supremacy (Collins & Rebecca, 201; Michele & Darnell, 2016). This condition of making women appear irrelevant or invisible is biased because it depicts men and women in stereotypical ways that reflect and maintain socially acceptable gender stereotypes.

4.5. Conclusion

In line with the research questions regarding the socio-cultural norms and socialisation, this chapter has analysed the impact these factors have had on Congolese men's understanding and experiences of GBV. The chapter explained how the interviewees understood each factor and the experience they had had about it. A further examination was carried out on how sociocultural norms and socialisation affect men's attitudes regarding GBV in DRC and how those male refugees still remember what was going on while

living in DRC. It was revealed that the sociocultural norms cause men to create social bonds and reinforce their masculinities, how they hinder women from owning property and how men prefer male children over female ones. Such social norms were discussed in connection with social task distribution, religion discriminating against women, men as breadwinners and their entitlement to their wives' sex in the marriage. It also presented how socialisation connects with power relations, how women are vulnerable because of gendered socialisation and how socialisation occurs at the family level. Also, the role of religion in influencing gendered socialisation and abuse and the role the government, educational institutions and the workplaces play in perpetuating gendered socialisation and gendered abuse were also discussed. The chapter also assessed the role of mediatic socialisation in promoting gendered socialisation and discrimination against women. The influence of contemporaries and their impact on promoting gendered socialisation were not forgotten. The findings confirmed that all those factors are socially powerful to instigate gendered socialisation and perpetuate it in favour of men, leaving the women feeling their social burden. These factors remain influential in giving men more power in society, but at the same time keeping the women in eternal social bondage. This chapter has examined how men learn and familiarise themselves with gendered socialisation that condones discrimination and GBV using the socioecological theory. Such socialisation starts in the family, expands in society, and men support it because it favours them. This has also explained the use of the theory of masculinities because it embodies a set of attributes, behaviours and roles socially constructed and associated with boys and men.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CONTEXT OF WAR IN DRC, CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITIES AND EXPERIENCES OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

5.1. Introduction

The second objective of this research was to examine how the context of war contributes to the formation of masculinities and how renegotiating masculinities can influence the understanding of gender-based violence. To do so, the researcher asked his interviewees about the impact of the DRC war on the creation of masculinities and gender-based violence experiences. The data collected show that the DRC's cyclic armed conflicts, which began in 1996, have affected men's experiences and perceptions of GBV. Men have become more aggressive due to the wars, exacerbating the victims' burden of unequal gender relations and roles rooted in pre-existing patriarchy and socio-cultural conditions disregarding violence. Due to the wars, some men have become addicted to new ways and tactics of gender-based abuse. Rape and sexual harassment, as well as other atrocious types of brutality, were perpetrated by male civilians, combatants and soldiers, and even some women to mock and shame the victims privately or publicly. The victims were traumatised, and their social stratification and relationships were broken due to their humiliation.

In a nutshell, the chapter's sections analyse how repeated armed conflicts fueled GBV and how war and military institutions helped soldiers develop their masculinities. Besides, the sections explore the prevalence of GBV and how Congolese men perpetrated or suffered gendered violence throughout the conflict. Finally, the chapter examines how men renegotiate their masculinities after military conflicts.

Below are the themes that emerged from the information the interviewees shared.

5.2. Repeated armed conflicts

5.2.1. War did not create inequality and GBV

During the data collection process, many interviewees described armed conflicts as an activator of gendered violence. Over a long period, the horrors of armed conflicts in DRC have influenced men's views of gender and violence. In other words, the armed conflicts in DRC have exposed some men to new methods and strategies of abusing women. Although GBV intersects with the DRC's repeated armed conflicts, it extends beyond the conflicts via a range of social norms. Byaombe (2020) and Marmaid et al. (2021) argue that gender-based violence has existed in DRC as a structure that encourages some men to develop masculine traits and dominate women. In other words, the war did not create disparity, gender-based abuse, or other social norms such as patriarchy and hegemonic masculinities, which had previously patronised gender-based discrimination.

The advent of cyclic armed conflicts worsened the situation of violence by introducing new methods of abusing women. Interviewee Nolo DBN 2021 claimed:

I cannot confirm that rebellions and wars created violence in our country. No, those permanent bullets did not because we, Congolese men, had previously abused our wives. In our society, there are norms that we men adhere to. We will follow our social rules. They existed before the battles and will continue to exist afterward. The war came and met those norms in place; it will go, but those norms will remain.

Without a doubt, the preceding narrative accurately confirms the existence of gender-based violence in DRC prior to the outbreak of armed conflicts. This demonstrates that the Congolese society oppresses women thanks to societal norms and gendered socialisation because it accepts it as a normal way of life. Men use masculine power to dominate their wives in the home, but Byaombe (2020) acknowledged that the war taught some men new tactics to abuse women in more atrocious ways than ever before. In the Congo, hegemony and socialisation have supported gender norms and unequal power distribution, while

rebellions have dramatically increased the amount, severity, and exposure to violence. Accordingly, interviewee Ndibi DBN 2021 confided, *"abuse of women occurred long ago from the times of our ancestors, but the Interahamwe and the Mayimayi rebels made it more awful and seen in every corner of our country, affecting citizens of all ages."* Sexual harassment, according to Mwambusa and Balola (2017), arises from a power dynamic between men and women, in which women are inferior, and males are leading. This means that Congolese men seek a variety of partners to feel manlier, which leads them to regard women as inferior beings. To this end, interviewee Radi DBN 2021 states,

> As true Congolese man, I cannot fail to demonstrate my great sex appetite with my different lovers or offer them gifts for additional sexual satisfaction. I think all this demands me to be financially capable of purchasing one or more wives, as well as possessing the physical, economic, and social power to protect all of my wives from other male predators.

In other words, most Congolese men are preoccupied with upholding masculinity as socially described. To some extent, the DRC constitution encourages men to consider women second-class people who depend fully on their husbands. Nordas (2011: 888) says that under Congolese law, married women must obtain their husbands' approval before engaging in any activity, such as opening a bank account, travelling, or looking for work. These restrictions mirror how Congolese men wield societal authority and responsibilities that stifle their women's ability to act. This illustrates how the power imbalance in DRC has led to sexual harassment.

Consequently, using rape to abuse and exploit women during armed conflicts is a novel approach that had never been used in society before, but combatants used it to dehumanise and terrorise the victims and their communities. Therefore, some Congolese men became even more dangerous than they were prior to the advent of armed conflicts. Sala DBN 2021, another interviewee, added:

> The community and family hated raped women. Families gave bad names to the victims and banned them banned from the family and the community and they were cast out of the family and

community. Communities accused impregnated women of doing so voluntarily in order to bring curses through the enemy's dirty blood.

This interviewee reveals how women have been victims of the atrocities perpetrated by armed conflicts, even if they never desired to be raped. While combatants have used brutal rape to dehumanise their victims, some civilians, units of the national army, elements of the UN Peacekeeping Force, and rebel groups from neighbouring countries have also been involved in the atrocities (Coleman, 2014:7). In other words, the battles converted men and women's bodies into a collective battlefield, a sign of claiming hegemony and ethnic differences and tensions on conquered territory, through massive and recurring rapes. To Wata DBN 2021, *"men in villages and cities frequently assume control in order to feel powerful, leading to tribal tensions. This happened before the war in our country."* As a result, the DRC has become the worst place in the world to be a woman, resulting in the parties to armed conflicts claiming disproportionate power. This exemplifies how revolting the GBV epidemic is and how it emanates from a system that encourages men to assert their masculinity and superiority over women and other men. As a result, some researchers have advocated that feminists broaden their analysis of GBV to include masculinised violence against women, as well as a link between violence against men, poverty, and women in a dominating context (Damas et al., 2020:561; Mulvey, 2016; Olson and DeFrain, 2019; Richards et al., 2013 Rodriguez, 2017).

On the other hand, Mugoli and Bahati (2016:22) confirm that combatants introduced mass rape of women as a cheap weapon of war, along with the destruction of women's genitals as an expression of their powerful maleness. Raping women in a war started long ago, in ancient Babylon, when soldiers were given permission to rape as a reward for their victories. The victims had to bear the same (Coleman, 2014:31). In times of peace, the scale of sexual assault in the DRC rebellions reflected cultural attitudes about women (Merger, 2010). Some Congolese males used to urge women and girls to have sex before the war, but it was not a huge social issue because it was kept hidden. In the past, sexual abuse was tolerated since disclosing it would have major social consequences for the victims. Silence on the subject of sexual harassment meant that such questions exclusively concerned the man, his wife, and their respective families. Several

researchers have concluded that power remains a gendered social norm that males employ to construct and enforce their heterosexual, patriarchal, and aggressive masculinity (Bulonza, 2020; Byaombe, 2020; Marmaid et al., 2021; Snider, 2008; Vojdik, 2014:948). In this vein, Sala DBN 2021 argued:

> A combatant is a combatant because he has a gun. I am a man because my society says so, and I have money, food, and shelter. Being men makes us superior to women in our culture, and our society recognises us as such. I can force a woman into sex to prove her I am a man. Yes, she cannot denounce it because that is taboo. During the conflicts, many of us learnt to pass on three, five, or nine women to express our manhood throughout the conflicts.

During the armed conflicts, many men abused women, following traditional local norms that give more power to men over women. This happens because the culture condones and normalises violence against women, making it difficult for victims to speak out. DRC is a patriarchal society where men discriminate against women; consider them less powerful, leading to abuse as an expression of their maleness. According to Mwambusa and Balola (2017), this situation became more shocking during armed conflicts because it exacerbated GBV due to gender disparities and men's misuse of power. The implication is that armed conflicts have caused more harm to women than traditional norms in terms of GBV, and men have become more aggressive toward women in families as the effect of gender roles, power dynamics and the expression of masculinity.

5.2.2. Armed conflicts encouraged sexual violence to deter men's retaliation.

The outcomes of this research confirm that combatants in rebellions used sexual violence to deter men's retaliation against them. Rebels, some national army units, and civilians had begun to use sexual violence extensively in the DRC's recurring rebellions to shatter society and terrorise their victims and families (Evans et al., 2016; Grace & Eng, 2020; Ndushabandi, 2017:32). To support this, Radi DBN 2021 stated:

Rebellion after rebellion dissolved social order, and the rule of law and justice were extinguished. Male combatants formed their own order and subjected both males and females locals to sexual atrocities. Rape and sexual abuse became more prevalent during armed conflicts, threatening, muzzling, and frightening men and women. Men could not raise their voices because they were afraid; instead, they fled.

These opinions from Radi DBN 2021 imply that sexual assault and rape were used due to increased levels of violence, a breakdown in social cohesion, law and order, and the compounding of existing vulnerabilities. All these factors, combined with the norm of impunity, crumbled the social order, discouraging conflict-affected populations from fighting back (Rodriguez, 2017; Wood, 2013). The conflicting parties used conscious sexual violence for various reasons, including humiliating and terrorising the local population. In other words, Cohen (2013) and Byaombe (2020) confirm that raping female and male populations makes men feel degraded and subjugated. Men lost hope when they discovered their masculinity had been ridiculed through direct or indirect emasculation and sexual violence against their wives and children. This sounded like ethnic cleansing, which increased fear among men in families and communities, prompting them to flee rather than fight.

Combatants were sometimes allowed to engage in sexual abuse to reward or compensate themselves because they were not paid. The implication was that the rebels used sexual violence strategically as a threat or warning to gain control of specific regions. For this reason, Pablo DBN 2021 argued:

They had to create chaos in order to gain economic or political control, which weakened the law and order on the ground because everyone was afraid. Fear and power weakness caused men to abandon their land, providing an escalating opportunity for enemies to abuse their women.

The above interviewee's views confirm that as conflict escalates, gender inequalities and abuses of power generate more violence against women. According to Leiby (2019:436) and Cools and Kotsadam

(2017), brutality against men and women is frequently rampant in mineral-rich provinces as a strategy to force men to flee the area for fear of being sexually abused. This means that the intensity of the DRC's war increased the kidnapping and rape of men and women because men had been silenced, creating a horrific environment that drove men to flee for fear of being sexually abused. Raping a man is more heinous than raping a woman because it implies raping his family and community. This frequently occurs when the power of the invaders exceeds that of the local men, forcing them to accept their weakness. Mwambusa and Balola (2017) argue that such context indicates that the local men have been overpowered and that their only option is to surrender or leave the area. Congolese male sexual victimisation was less common than that of women and girls. Still, it caused more shame and chaos in many communities and men and boys were even less likely to report abuse because of the stigma associated with it. Interviewee Sini DBN 2021 said, *"I believe that sexual violence is a woman's plight. If they rape me, I am now like a woman. My status of a man becomes useless. So, I can sit on it."* This interviewee expressed the views of the majority of Congolese men. The shame associated with male rape shatters not only the victim but also his family and the community due to the stigma attached to it. When a man is raped, he is considered to have same-sex contact, which is taboo in the DRC. In other words, Damas et al. (2020:567) and Mulvey (2016) explain that by fleeing, the men recognise their frail masculinities, allowing the enemies to dominate everything on the land, including the people completely.

5.2.3. Armed conflicts diminished civilian men's masculinities.

Many interviewees revealed during the in-depth telephonic interviews that the DRC's armed conflicts were a major factor in fostering fighters' and men's masculinity. According to Nateralma (2021), male fighters used physical toughness, hatred, and insensitivity during armed conflicts to sabotage local males' masculinities. As a result, interviewee Bezos DBN 2021 stated, *"...having been beaten, humiliated publicly, and sexually abused made us men look like objects. At the time, our power was non-existent."* This situation seriously threatened Congolese men's status, undermining their ability to provide for and protect their wives and children. Furthermore, as many men had lost their jobs, women started making

decisions and feeding their families. This frustrated most men's masculinity, pushing them to resort to verbal and physical violence to recover their masculine status and family leadership (Banwell, 2012; Dirango, 2016; Michele & Darnell, 2016). Accordingly, interviewee Birisi DBN 2021supported this opinion

> Yes, as you can see, my brother! As we men had failed, women attempted to exert economic influence and make decisions based on their own needs. Can you still refer to yourself as a man after this? You are no longer a man if a woman makes the decision and feeds the family while you are present. You deteriorate into an ineffective, angry, and frustrated man. You then become abrasive and violent, either verbally or physically. My wife is not supposed to feed me as a man, but I am responsible for feeding her and the rest of the family.

According to the above account, the war caused Congolese men to lose their sense of masculinity because they could not fulfil their duties as family breadwinners, implying that their wives had taken over decision-making for feeding the families. According to Lubunga (2016), a man unable to feed his family becomes powerless and useless, and many men perceive this as a loss of masculinity and manly positions as family heads. In other words, Congolese men became frustrated because armed conflicts had rendered them jobless, which disempowered them as women began to feed their families. Furthermore, the war situation humiliated and disrespected men, causing rebel masculinity to suffocate that of local men. In line with Lwambo (2016), the context of armed conflicts always causes many men to lose their jobs, which is another aspect of men's disempowerment that often causes them to develop a constant fear of losing authority over the family as men. As a result, many Congolese men's only option for concealing their dishonour and regaining their respect and position as family heads and providers was to reestablish their masculinity through applying their hard power. Men resorted to violence and aggression to express their emotions and distress caused by armed conflicts. In other words, they became violent to assert their power because their masculinity was threatened. According to Nolo DBN 2021,

The main issue was that the war had caused us men to lose our businesses. Our wives began to move around to feed the family. The rebels reduced us to ashes, and our wives took on the role of us men in the home. As you can see! I am not sure how they go about looking for food. Do you believe they will still respect you? You, as a man, must seek ways to restore order in the home.

Nonetheless, this interviewee describes how the Congolese armed conflicts mocked men while benefiting women. This depicts how men lost their masculinity because the combatants mistreated them and how their wives replaced them with family issues. Armed conflicts provided both rebels and men opportunities to assert their masculinity, each on their own side. In other words, Congolese rebels imposed their masculinities on men, and the men imposed theirs on their families. Men's violence is often the result of stress caused by their perceived failure to live up to masculine expectations or when they preserve their normative masculine expectations (Berke et al., 2016:84; Mulvey, 2016; Rebecca, 2017:512). Thus, Congolese men's expression of negative idealised masculinity qualities was their main reason for using violence against their partners. This indicated their distress in situations threatening their idealised masculine identity as Congolese men adjusting to their traditions.

5.2.4. Combatants forced males into sexual taboos.

Some interviewees who had been rebels confirmed that during the DRC's armed conflicts, many combatants forced boys and men to violate sexual taboos and engage in incest. According to Stroebel (2020), a taboo is an implicit restriction on an utterance or behaviour based on a cultural feeling that it is excessively repulsive or, possibly, too sacred for ordinary people. Such prohibitions can be cultural or religious, and they exist in all communities, but they differ from one culture to another. During the Congolese conflicts, combatants forced people to commit taboos, although they were extremely embarrassing and unwelcome in communities. Taboos symbolise how the nature of the conflict in DRC has resulted in a high incidence and extreme cruelty of sexual violence since 1996 by describing it as an epidemic, sexual terrorism, and war within a war (Zihindula et al., 2018). As part of their warring strategy,

all parties to the conflict committed sexual atrocities at various levels. The apparent motivations of the perpetrators of sexual violence in this conflict include vengeance for previous sexual violence, morale-boosting troop rape, and ethnic cleansing. Giri DBN 2021, an interviewee, explained:

> We committed rapes on both men and women here and there. It was sometimes due to our rituals. For example, we might be enticed to rape a virgin girl in order to gain magical power. The same was true for elderly women and children. Yes, there were taboos, but that was the rule. We believed that by doing so, we would be able to win the battle with little opposition.

This describes how the systematic perpetration of sexual violence in DRC exceeded human comprehension in intensity, scale, and methods of intimidating, punishing, and controlling conquered communities. Similarly, Daudu and Shulika (2019) confirm that rebels could hang pregnant women alive for magical powers in armed conflicts, as well as superstitious beliefs about raping young virgins, such as using the blood from a broken hymen for charms that they believed would protect them from bullets. Such strategies violated local traditions and shattered the cultural essence that holds most Congolese communities together, often leading to taboos. Interviewee Nyoka DBN 2021, indicated:

> All of this was done on purpose to frighten communities. We knew they were abominations and social interdicts, but we had to appear to be invincible super fighters. Ha ha ha! Yes, we could rape women in front of their husbands and relatives, or disembowel a pregnant woman, or force rape a girl or a woman before killing her.

Such barbarism had negative consequences as it spread a general threat among local communities, including death, displacement, forcible recruitment of combatants, and disgracing communities. DRC has a variety of traditions with predominantly patriarchal power dynamics that place women and girls at risk in relation to men. During armed conflict, social structures, norms, and taboos that make behaviours such as sexual violence socially unacceptable were broken. As a result, sexual violence against boys and men during

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warfare remains taboo in DRC, as it is an emasculating practice used by combatants to humiliate men, families, and communities. Joko DBN 2021, an interviewee, shared:

> That is utterly unacceptable in our culture. It is shame. Ha! When that is done to a man, he becomes like a woman. He no longer has any power, and people will mock him. To cover it up, even if no one knew, he cannot say anything because he knows the consequences. Yes, that is a taboo, and no child should be allowed to see his or her parents' genitals.

The DRC is a paternalistic society in which the man is the leader of the community and the family. Sexual abuse against that man becomes a taboo and a source of shame in his community and family because he has been denigrated by other men who appear to be more powerful than him by reducing him to the status of a woman. According to Daudu and Shulika (2019), forcing men into incest remains a brutal and widespread tactic some rebels use to achieve their military and political objectives, taking root in the country's rampant impunity. The setting of DRC makes the concept of taboo appear complicated because it intermixes the sacred and the forbidden, which makes it impure, disgusting, and cursed sexual actions and practices (DelZotto & Jones, 2002). This means that when a taboo is broken, it frequently generates complaints or potentially dangerous psychological consequences because it cannot be discussed publicly.

This research recognises that sexual violence during armed conflicts disrupts peacetime norms and has caused taboos in many Congolese communities. This means that the cultural perception of sexual violence as a taboo act is both a stimulant and a deterrent for perpetrators and victims. Congolese combatants used such tactics as their fighting strategy during conflicts to make female human bodies their combat zone (Hunt, 2010). They acted in this manner because they were aware of how harmful sexual assault, through taboos, destroys the victim's body morally and physically during armed conflicts and detaches family and community harmony by collapsing traditional norms and values. Male victims of such atrocities never reported their ordeals because they could not find the right words to express their anguish. They were afraid of stereotypes because they were symbols of families and communities.

On the other hand, combatants used incest to shame and terrorise communities and families. Incest, according to Stroebel (2020), is sexual activity with a member of one's immediate family. The specific relationships that can be construed as incest vary by culture. During the DRC's armed conflicts, people were forced to commit various forms of incest, such as sexual intercourse between parents and their children, children of the same parents among themselves, and so on. Nyoka DBN 2021, an interviewee, stated:

> We needed to secure a space that we could control as the fighting intensified. Forcing boys to sleep with their sisters and sometimes their mothers in our presence was one of the most degrading tactics we used. The men were also compelled to do it, often with a gun around their neck, in front of our fellow combatants, family members, spouses, or community members.

According to the above respondent's response, women and girls were objectified and reduced to symbols of subjugated land. The various forms and magnitudes of sexual violence perpetrated against women and men during armed conflicts continue to be prevalent and underreported because they were an expression of cruelty on the part of the perpetrators (Jones, 2000; Rebecca, 2017:512). Furthermore, in some cases, fathers were forced to rape their daughters, while boys were forced to rape their mothers, sisters, and other relatives. No child should be forced to see his parents' genitals, but they were cruelly forced to by the combatants. As a result of being forced into sex with their children or witnessing their partners or daughters being raped, men and women were psychologically traumatised. This negatively impacted the victims and their families because the perpetrators used it willingly as a weapon of war to inflict severe consequences on local communities. For example, interviewee Beta DBN 2021 confirmed:

> It was horrifying, satanic, and everyone was terrified. What kind of man will you be now that you have had to witness your sister or female parent naked? It truly kills you morally; you are no longer alive. You can see now! They force you to see, and the war continues as bullets fly over our heads on a daily basis. Even if you are still breathing, you are already dead as a result of that felony.

All in all, sexual violence with incest was humiliating and traumatic for victims and communities alike. Males who witnessed sexual abuse against a family member experienced the same level of psychological trauma as those who experienced it themselves. Although witnessing was not identical to being a direct victim of sexual violence, the consequences were severe because witnessing was also a form of violence. This implies that men who witnessed such atrocities were far more likely to use violence against their female partners than men who did not witness them. Combatants used various forms of forced rape or forced incest male rape, including forced anal rape, fellatio on local men, anal rape with objects, and being forced to rape other victims, including family members or the dead (Mulvey, 2016). Furthermore, they used the term 'rape plus', implying that they were willing to infect their victims with HIV/AIDS (Jones, 2000). Congolese men were also subjected to sexual violence, such as forced sterilisation and sexual slavery, and genital violence, such as penis amputation and electroshock or beatings to the testicles.

5.3. War constructed militarised masculinities

5.3.1. From home and community socialisation to violence in armed conflicts

The influence of the environment on an individual's socialisation is crucial. Similarly, a boy's social surroundings can guide his education in relation to his masculinities. In this vein, the DRC's cultures approach masculinity from various perspectives and pick distinct points of orientation. According to Lwambo (2013), families and communities can influence how men enact and understand masculinity. Congolese families initiate their boys in the classic sense, with rites of passage as a key component of their male identity. In other words, parents socialise their children with gender roles, which later familiarises them with prejudice and domestic and familial violence. Congolese children are raised in situations where gendered domestic and familial violence is common, acquainting them to different forms of abuse such as sexual, physical, and emotional abuse.

Most of the interviewees in this research emphasised the importance of learning in shaping individual gender identities. According to Dixon et al. (2021:3122), families condition their boys for their future social positions through their dress code, games, and activities. In other words, men's current

behaviours can be learned at a young age in their society. To support this thought, interviewee Bede DBN 2021, stated

> I was raised at home, in my village, and in my community. We could hide and play in little houses we constructed in grass or banana leaves when we were younger. This was a sign that we were maturing into men and would soon have our own homes. These were some of the games that we, as boys used to enjoy. Girls had theirs as well.... Yes,…and I am aware of some. They could tighten some rugged clothes on the belly and claim to be expecting children. That is how our society conditioned us to believe we are maturing men. Again, I learned how to be a good boss by observing wealthy individuals in my area. I was able to observe my father's actions that greatly influenced me, and I can admit it now. He used to remind me that even though my sisters were older than me, I always came first in everything because that is how the world works.

The above interviewee shares how society promotes gendered activities and how boys can learn to grow into men by observing the people they meet daily. Given the significance of early childhood conditioning in the socialisation of boys, the DRC's lack of stable family structures is especially concerning. According to Jumapili (2019), boys typically grow up in broken or dysfunctional families due to war, urbanisation, or poverty. Furthermore, other boys often grow up without positive male role models because their fathers have been killed, making women take over as heads of households or because the fathers are aggressive, irresponsible, or out of home for longer periods.

On the other hand, the media's influence on a university education can have a similar effect on boys. This implies that gender is not an innate trait but a product of training. The relationship between humans remains a process in which they present, perceive and perform gender. Gender is a construct that men form in everyday life. A boy never inherits his gender at birth but rather, he adapts to his surroundings. To put it another way, West and Zimmerman (1987:136) contend that education and socialisation influence a person's behaviour at the risk of gender assessment, including masculinities.

In terms of masculine attitudes and beliefs, parents in communities and families have a significant influence on boys. The DRC is a strong paternalistic society where boys learn about traditional hegemonic masculinity and other forms of masculinity that they will need to become true men. Boys learn how to avoid feminity, obtain status, inexpressiveness, accomplishment, adventurousness, independence, and violence through their parents at the family and communal levels (Jumapili, 2019; Orchowski et al., 2018: 425). In other words, the boys' environment encourages them to become violent and forbids them from having and expressing feelings, being vulnerable, and having sexual feelings for men. The boys are influenced by status and achievement norms to grow into men who must always be successful in what they do, aspire for wealth, and be capable. Boys who are self-reliant and communicative are more likely to grow up without sentiments, solve contentions without the assistance of others, and never appear weak. Moreover, to Arnet (2015:659) and Sprig (2018), boys are pushed by the culture of adventure and violence to fossilize how to grow up taking bodily risks, being violent, and, if necessary, being an irresistible men. Masculinity is based on the weakening and fear of feminity, which means that boys are socialised to suppress their feelings, seek control and authority, compete, and believe that men are superior and that sexuality is a fundamental means of showing masculinity. This is in line with what the interviewee Giza DBN 2021said:

> We used to go on adventures as kids, and we used to be nasty in our games and even with our relatives and neighbours. It was occasionally perilous, but it helped us compete physically and construct a wall around ourselves. Other children may fear you if you are strong and hostile, and anyone who has been abused may refer to you as a protector. Our fathers and other males in our circles encouraged us to grow up to be men, to learn to manage our emotions, to dominate those around us and to seek command. As boys, we learned that males are superior. I recall that we used to discuss ways to ensnare girls to satisfy our sexual desires. This was also a method of demonstrating to other boys in our circle that we were true men; in that environment, we were more than the other boys.

A basic feeling of disbelief, the urge to control, the ability to influence others, and repression of human needs are necessary for a boy to develop into a successful man. In line with Simon-Butler and McSherry (2018), men have attributes such as needing less sleep than women, bearing discomfort, and ignoring the food. This describes how Congolese men embrace hegemonic masculinity through violence, dominance, competition, and the desire to rule. Accordingly, men in many households and communities resort to physical violence because they believe it is an essential component of hegemonic masculinity. In other words, many men in DRC have demonstrated their masculinity by committing aggressive or violent acts against others, most notably women and gay men. Masculine socialisation has encouraged boys to become violent in DRC households and communities. Braising boys in such an environment familiarises them with aggressive behaviours. By conceptualising the aspects of masculinity in relation to rape perpetration, socialisation has fostered sexual aggression in the form of rape during the DRC armed conflicts. Accordingly, Dixon et al. (2021:3122) confirm that young boys can construct their masculinities around the characteristics of avoiding the feminine, achieving status, toughness and aggression, limiting emotionality, non-relational sexuality, and domination and control.

Furthermore, large families, neighbours, and the village remain the social environment in which boys live. In this environment, boys spend a lot of time observing and learning from the behaviours and examples of individuals around them. According to Dolan (2010), the traditional environment is one of the most important factors that allows boys to develop into men. Some interviewees described the situation as a "reunion des sages," or a gathering of village elders, in which boys participate and learn passively at the village level. These gatherings allow boys to meet older men who are always willing to teach them about their traditional culture. The "reunion des sages" can also be viewed as a framework for education, nonviolent conflict resolution, and local culture. Even while many young males are no longer interested in such gatherings, their educational value remains undeniable. Bringing gender equality into the question at these elders' meetings, one can easily understand how they stand for a mixed blessing.

On the one hand, Blumer (1956) shows how cultural gatherings for elders in every society provide opportunities for young boys to stay linked to their cultural roots, internalise societal values, and receive

advice on better ways of establishing their identities. Conversely, Demetriou (2001) and Pascoe (2013) discover that the conceptions of masculinity and femininity that boys can learn from elders' community meetings are frequently contrasting and categorised. Furthermore, they acknowledge that the gatherings encourage discrimination, marginalisation, and subordination of women. Most of the topics they discuss exclude women from playing an equal role in traditional rites of passage like circumcision and other initiation ceremonies.

Boy socialisation is a conventional hierarchical process that considers young boys as incomplete men as long as they do not have their own families. Jobe DBN 2021, one of the unmarried interviewees, put it this way

> It is a difficult setting, I know, and you know it, as well. Outside of my family or community, I can be a boss, but not in the presence of my male relatives. Married men will not appreciate you as a single boy. They neglect you and cannot value your business. They keep reminding you that you are not a member of your village's older community. We single boys are looked down upon, and no one can give us advice since everyone believes we are incomplete men.

Failing to value the boy renders him worthless. If a boy is useful, however, society and family may allow him to contribute to development or financing under the guise of a married man from his family. Older men should recognise that naturally, young boys mature as they struggle to solve their problems. For instance, city boys might aspire for prominence, and as a result, they can live up to new male ideals they have familiarised themselves with within their surroundings. According to Pendlebury (2020: 171), the media, certain good singers, and all those superstar idols can have a big influence on young boys' masculine behaviours and qualities. Furthermore, some metropolitan boys may be single, but they are educated and hold degrees, or they may even run successful small enterprises. Such boys, despite their achievements in life, are not men because of their marital status. According to Monteith et al. (2019:119), depicting the framework of boys' family structures in this manner prevents bachelors from having a voice in their families and communities despite their social achievements.

Older males in the DRC do not appreciate the efforts of young boys because they do not believe boys are wise enough. In this vein, Reynolds and Shendruk (2018) emphasise that many cultural traditions make boys feel abandoned, a circumstance that leads them to admit that they lack moral and social support from their elders' community. The reason for this is that the ideals that elders instil in the boys have less impact than the boys' efforts to understand their expectations and cope with them. The boys' efforts include having a respectable occupation that allows them to feel like they belong. As a result, Arnet (2015:658) and Gedney et al. (2018:400) confirm that young males look for other techniques to acquire access to the kind of income they need to gain attention and respect. This explains why young boys travel to cities, among other reasons, because farming in the village does not pay well and is not a valued career. In this way, the boys can willingly forgo principles like honesty or hard effort for material gain. Interviewee Sathu DBN 2021 admitted:

> We love and respect our elders, but the things they used to tell us revealed they despised us boys. As we grew older, we realised that our culture's traditions did not always encourage us. We must find new ways to value ourselves when society rejects us as men. We need to rethink how we can build a positive reputation. Because you are single, society may look down on you, but you are more than a married man. I believe that providing food and other support to the family is more important than getting married. Marriage alone does not transform a boy into a man. This is why we must educate ourselves and seek out or begin a decent employment outside of the community. You can see how this relates to one of the reasons we moved to South Africa. To me, work is the most essential thing for a man, even if he misbehaves in order to become wealthy.

This respondent freely acknowledges that seeing a boy as an incomplete man motivates him to look for other ways to assert his male quality, which pushes the same boy to toil hard. Similarly, Donaldson (1999:650) and Olenik-Shemesh et al. (2019:344) acknowledge that education and employment are also important options for a boy to become a man. Education leads to a job, and a successful career allows a boy to earn money for his marriage. This explains how education can help men cement their authority by

providing them with skills, information, and chances. Jumapili (2019) claims that while education can empower girls in the DRC, the country's educational system typically disadvantages them. Men consider girls' education as a threat to prevailing gender standards because society condones discrimination against females. This happens because men believe that when a woman is educated, she becomes uncontrollable and even arrogant. The education of boys remains debatable, as several interviewees expressed concern that modern schooling is ruining boys. Interviewee Cobra DBN 2021stated:

> In my opinion, our education as boys is more significant than that of our sisters. We were educated thanks to our parents' sweat. They could farm their fields in order to pay for our schooling. You see now! We boys are incapable of doing the job that our parents did in shaping us into the people we are today. When we are educated as boys, we become useless and perverted, and I believe we rob our parents because education makes us egoistic. This because most boys that we are desire what we cannot acquire.

5.3.2. Men must avert behaving feminine

Most interviewers shared that every male must feel like a man rather than develop feminine characteristics. All males who dislike feminine traits avoid all feminine attributes, including empathetic feelings, and so learn how to hinder emotions. In other words, real men learn how to devalue women by believing that any woman is different and inferior to any man. In families and communities, boys learn how to disdain women, an attitude linked to combatants engaging in sexual aggression against women and girls. As a result, the interviewee Seka DBN 2021 admitted that

> Our families and society taught us as boys that we should never copy or behave like women as we grew up. We discovered that a male never cries or behaves in the same way that a woman does. We learned that women and girls were beneath us, and that no man should bargain with or respect them. When the war broke out, combatants used this attitude to rape girls and women. This occurred

because the fighters were from the local community and were well aware that women were of little value, making them readily raped.

According to this interviewee, the DRC society has encouraged male sexual aggression through social and family instruction on masculinity. As a result, patriarchy promotes hegemony, which leads to rape. Parker et al. (2018:44) point out that society encourages males to treat women with disdain rather than respect by socialising boys to devalue women. This implies that individual women should not have the same rights as males, which links to self-report of a higher risk of rape and actual sexual aggressiveness in the DRC. This sexual arrogance has frequently grown into violent sexism or animosity toward women, a situation that has existed as a major risk factor for the rape of both men and women during the DRC's armed conflicts.

5.3.3. Men should conserve status and fight for achievement

This is another hallmark of male status in DRC culture, requiring a man to maintain his status and fight for achievement. This means that Congolese men must have a suitable female companion to maintain their status and move toward achievement. To put it another way, Burrel and Flood (2019:240) underscore that men need women of their calibre, women who are only available to high-status men. This illustrates the masculine aspect of how some men seek attractive and gorgeous women to become their partners. The same masculine attitude existed among top-ranked combatants as they could dispatch their subjects to capture women with good shape and beauty for them. However, the belief of a high-status woman is never a universal masculinity trait. According to Beres (2018), most men cherish this kind of masculinity, although it depends on the culture and the man seeking such a woman.

However, the constant denominator is that many consider such a woman an item or a trophy woman who confers status on the man who has won her (Beres, 2020:229). In the DRC context, a similar attitude of masculinity applies to men and the women they seek. Interviewee Gege DBN 2021 confided:

When I was younger, I learned that women must fear a real man. Men believe this is normal masculine behaviour. A behaviour that makes us men preserve our manly status, even if it warns of impending violence and other sorts of abuse. When I am violent to my wife for example, I consider myself as more powerful than her. She is worthless in my eyes. This gives me the confidence to treat her cruelly. I cannot behave in this manner if the culture does not support it.

This happens because the men learned that resorting to violence is a masculine trait that objectifies and dehumanises women and men. Such a masculine attitude remains a forerunner to abuse and violence in many households. Similarly, Fehlberg and Pepper (2016) confide that masculinity pushes men to handle women as objects in interpersonal relationships, a situation that proliferates sexual violence or other forms of abuse. Taking women as sex objects endorses sexual violence and other forms of abuse in the DRC families and communities. So concisely, Congolese men grew up in a hostile environment to women that they developed demeaning images of women.

5.3.4. Men should be threatening and violent

According to the interviewees, traditional masculinity demanded men to be rough and willing to use violence when necessary. According to Morison et al. (2007:28), these views are real triggers of violence and aggressiveness, including sexual violence against women. Boys are educated in a similar context in families and communities of the DRC. They grow up with such attitudes that they often apply in their homes as they get married. Aragbuwa (2020) underscores that those men who abuse their wives physically have socialised that toughness and violence are expressions of masculinity. Having grown up in a violent household or community, boys will always resort to violence when an opportunity occurs. This explains why those males who participated in the DRC armed conflicts adopted these attitudes of violence largely. This happened because violence is associated with views that condone rape and sexual assault, making soldiers more likely to embrace interpersonal violence (Carlson et al., 2019:889). Acceptance of interpersonal violence, as it is for rape of women and the self-reported propensity of committing violence

against women in most cultures, predicts attitudes that promote violence. Furthermore, hypermasculinity is a collective measure that includes a willingness to engage in violence. This depicts how, in times of armed conflicts, rape can become more common among tribal villages that backed the concept that men should be tough and aggressive, as well as villages with high levels of interpersonal and community violence (Aragbuwa, 2020).

Masculinity is always crucial for men who appreciate violence and sexual assault. According to Ali et al. (2016), this model maps a path toward increasing interpersonal violence in many families and communities. During armed conflicts, however, this situation takes on an appalling image, as combatants and civilian men rape women to prove their masculinity. Thus, Oparinde and Masha (2021) emphasise the connection between war and violence because they reinforce masculinity and bring about the social disruption that even persists among civilians after the conflict has ended. Interviewee Bede DBN 2021 asserts

> When there is war, rape is used. The soldiers and the civilians do it to confirm their manhood and no one threatens them. This is a good opportunity to confirm we are men and we can practise on as many women as we want. Sexual coercion is normal, it is part of any man's sexuality, and it is any man's entitlement. Soldiers did not create it but it is embedded in our society. But, this has consequences in the present and even in the future when peace is restored.

The above interviewee indicates that men sustain their masculine power through sexual coercion during armed conflicts despite this having consequences. This depicts how men justify their sexual aggression and use of force to get sex to express their masculinity. Even though this focuses on soldiers during the war, Boaz and Stern (2013) expose the profound sense of entitlement to sex among Congolese men. This approach is pervasive in the broader society, where men often resort to aggression and coercion to confirm they are real men.

On the other hand, the DRC's traditional hierarchies have mutated to harmonise with other structures, but the idea of connecting power to sexual prowess remains preserved in society. Interviewee Sathu DBN 2021 explained this attitude better

> Our country has traditions on which men and women must abide. Some are good and others are bad but that is how it is. Er, you see now that in the past the custom allowed a chief to have many women to prove he was a real man. Now, today, every man feels he is a chief and can have several women. I think some men see their masculinity is stronger through women's bodies.

DRC's traditions condone men who amass women for their sexual lust. Similarly, Zalewski (2017:204) interprets how men consider women's bodies as available commodities they can easily acquire, an attitude that fully discards female partners' consent. Such a condition infers that masculinity is coercive because it triggers sexual violence, and both coexist with other forms of gender-based violence. Similarly, many interviewees admitted that gender-based violence is a general rule relating to men's holding economic assets and the resulting social status and cultural ideals that favour and empower men over women. To this point, interviewee Dewis DBN 2021 revealed:

> A man is a man in everything because he has everything. Women will envy him and come to him. His material possessions grant his masculinity and power of dominance. A man can beat his wife and no one will ask him because he is educating her, as people say. There is nothing wrong with that because that is their way to affirm their masculinity.

Gender-based violence has become appalling in DRC because men want to confirm their masculinities and are economically fit compared to women. During conflicts, discriminatory cultural norms degenerate because men do not want to be challenged in their decisions, and they know women have nowhere to go since there is chaos countrywide (Hayes & Burges, 2003; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2004). In this vein, interviewee Lusha DBN 2021 admitted:

The war context has caused more chaos as nothing is controllable. Men have become brutal to confirm they are real men. I saw a neighbour husband returning from where he had been and demanded something from his wife that she could not possibly give. ….For instance, he may ask for a meal, though he left no money for it when he left the house. Since the woman is unable to deliver, the husband will not hesitate to beat her.

It is crucial to see it in the context of general violence to understand men's violence against women in the DRC context. Before armed conflicts emerged, men had been violent toward women because of the dynamics of violence among men. According to Snow (2013) and Wall (2010), those underlying forces include power imbalances, unequal distribution of economic resources, impunity, and the need to assert hierarchical structures and preserve masculine privilege. All these factors, combined with the chaotic environment due to warfare, made most men use aggression to confirm their masculinity.

Several interviewees pointed at the unending armed conflicts as worsening men's use of masculinity because the state seemed to be nurturing it. According to Paula (2015) and Paula (2017), in warring regions, the government can be the primary source of violence when it shows an unwillingness to find sustainable peace. In other words, restoring viable peace can shake out those societal norms that condone masculinities and cause gender-based violence against women. In the context of the DRC, the government has the power and the means to teach men to move to constructive masculinities to hinder traditional norms and even empower women and girls. This context describes how both the men and the state would be respectable. Due to corruption and impunity, the DRC institutions seem to be the root of sexual exploitation, exploitation of labour, interethnic tensions and, very prominently, land grabbing and cattle theft (Karbo & Mutisi, 2012).

In many cases, state agents facilitate and endorse violent masculinities, such as arbitrary taxation or rape and extortion through armed forces or police. Overall, the wealthy and those who influence the resource-poor and underprivileged commit these crimes to confirm they are real men. Interviewee Beta DBN 2021 describes this context in this way:

The warfare has its role in encouraging men to masculinity. Masculinity makes them believe that they can rule and do not accept advice and do as they think makes them more men. It is the public authorities who are the most violent to make sure their masculinity is respected. You see, this is why most police chiefs prefer being posted to the hills in the countryside. There, they are free to impose a whole goat as a fine for nothing. Another characteristic of public violence is the proliferation of tax, even taxes that do not exist. And in conflict over land only those that have money get justice.

Interviewees for this research depicted themselves as both victims and perpetrators of GBV in the DRC, a system that excels in corruption and exaction. This is comparable to what interviewee Ali DBN 2021 called *"an irresponsible father who does not care for his children, indirectly forcing them to become thieves in order to confirm they are real men."* Due to the advent of armed conflicts that caused mayhem, the UN (2010) states that this situation caused the erratic payment of salaries that practically forced some officials into bribery and exaction has become a lifestyle for many Congolese. Using force to impose on people what to do regardless of their consent remains one of the many characteristics of armed conflicts or masculinity. In peace or warfare, this condition reflects how males assert themselves as men differently, often via violent techniques of exaction that use the inconsistent sincerity of state institutions (Joe, 2017).

During the DRC's armed conflicts, combatants expressed their masculinity by forcing women from the area under their control into marriage. To Connell (2005), the warlords used this context through unconditional marriage to negotiate safety. In other words, women could give in to their captors and provide them sex for joy and celebration of triumph, thus becoming their conditional and temporary wives at the site. This demonstrates how men use their authority to exert control and management over women. Combatants forced women to withdraw from their husbands and children, leading to separation from the families to whom they were most devoted. This demonstrates how male combatants resorted to traumatising women and sexual assault because of violent conflicts. This illustrates how male combatants exacerbated women's chronic despair and anxiety because of losing contact with their families. This was a

disempowerment method utilised by male combatants against men. By kidnapping a woman, her husband becomes powerless and loses confidence in himself as a man, a situation that endangers the husband's masculinity.

On the other hand, male combatants' masculinity was fundamental to the perpetration of sexual violence toward women. Interviewee Joko DBN 2021 highlighted that *"as we warriors committed violence against women and other males, we were simply proving our status as men with arms."* When a man has been a victim of another man's violence, he becomes more violent than before. Any beliefs that encourage violence are part of men's masculinities, which justifies how Congolese men conduct themselves in their homes and communities during armed conflicts. In other words, when another male ridicules a man, he would direct his rage at his family members, who would be powerless to resist him. The same is true for a soldier; once wounded or defeated by an opponent, he becomes extremely vicious when victimising a civilian who is powerless in his presence. All this often occurs because men fear disempowerment, which makes them lose their maleness.

Disempowerment experiences exacerbate gender-based violence but are not its nexus. In other words, many men may be entitled to sentiments of anger and frustration, but they are not entitled to violence. For this reason, Belvedere (2017:55) asserts that the association between failed masculinity and violent masculinity should not be confused with a cause-and-effect relationship. This conveys that the treatment of rape as a natural and understandable effect of male disempowerment would suggest its excuse. Similarly, Jaime (2016) and Lundula (2018) argue that discussions that attempt to link rape to men's experiences of oppression involve consequences, such as producing excuses and the degradation of masculine pride as the propensity of rape.

5.3.5. Men should govern their emotionality

Congolese families and communities teach traditional masculinity to boys and men to manage their feelings by burying their emotionality. To this point, Jewkes et al. (2020) believe that male children's effect and fear of emotions encourage them to develop strong masculinity. This demonstrates how Congolese

society values traditional masculine gender norms through promoting masculinity and masculine gender roles. Furthermore, because they learned it, most Congolese males who perpetrate violence in their families hide their emotions. Interviewee Bede DBN 2021, described this situation in this manner

> …Yes. It is not something to hide. I grew up in an environment where I could not cry because I was a boy. My mother used to beat me while telling me not to cry. Crying is for women, she instructed me. This, I believe, is what causes males to become callous to the suffering of others. Because that is how they grew up, when men abuse their women, they believe they are not harming them. It becomes more complicated when a man abuses another man. Because other men can laugh at him, the man victim will hide how another man has mistreated him.

The above narrative illustrates how society encourages men's emotionlessness as a part of their masculinity. On the other hand, according to Geig and Flood (2020), male victims of GBV are unable to discuss their experiences due to the component of masculinity that promotes a real man not to be emotionally expressive like a woman. This occurs because many Congolese males were socialised into traditional masculinity, where they learned to repress their emotions to maintain control and minimise vulnerability. As a result, Pease (2017) and Levon et al. (2017:521) conclude that men's normative incapacity to recognise, explain, and experience a wide range of emotions is due to their constrained emotionality. In other words, men are encouraged to exhibit unemotional and apathetic attitudes to demonstrate masculinity. As a result, men are more unemotional than women, according to research conducted in Cameroun by Dworkin et al. (2015), demonstrating the significance of masculine socialisation in establishing gender differences. This is like a syndrome that develops when society promotes masculine ideology, which includes feelings like fear, empathy, and tenderness. However, these emotions should not exist in the thoughts of males, especially those men on the front lines of conflict, because nurturing them communicates men's vulnerability (Gibbs et al., 2018:515). On the other hand, anger is associated with higher status; thus, it becomes the only acceptable emotional attitude that society encourages men to exhibit.

On the other hand, many interviewees recognised that emotions drive most males to commit various crimes, including sexual assaults. Men who suffer from affective mismanagement cannot control or cope with negative emotional states such as despair or anger (Zounlome et al., 2019). This situation foreshadows the majority of Congolese men committing various forms of rape in their families or communities. Constrained emotionality can anticipate sexual assault and other forms of violence since it fosters such attitudes in both households and conflict zones. Similarly, many Congolese males become ruthless because of their inability to channel their rage constructively. In reality, this contradicts the research's theory of constructive masculinity. Men who practice constructive masculinity should be able to channel their anger positively, absorbing the negative effects of masculinity. Unfortunately, many Congolese have become prone to anger because of not positively perceiving masculinity. According to Well et al. (2020), holding to anger remains a condition that fuel emotionality, implying that the danger of masculinity can lead to physical violence. Because of their emotional restrictions, Congolese male survivors of violence in their homes or communities cannot freely communicate their ordeal. The latter roots in dread, encouraging victims to sit on their ordeals, causing many men to suppress their positive masculinity. Positive masculinity can help survivors disrupt the cycle of violence by preventing them from committing abuse, which Pettifor et al. (2015:79) believe can happen if males manage their emotions and gender rigidity well. Congolese men who have formed warm relationships with their daughters in their families and communities can help to prevent violence, including rape. As a result, low empathy appears to be a risk factor for several forms of violence, including sexual assault, even if the effect of empathy appears to be evident only when combined with other factors.

5.3.6. Men and sexuality

Sexuality is one of the factors that determine a man's masculinity. The concept of traditional masculinity wants males to establish their manhood by having regular, impersonal sexual intercourse with a variety of women that most men view as conquests but not as humans (Gibbs et al., 2018:518). Men lure and exploit women in this context, ultimately leaving them injured and hurt. This depicts why Congolese

men are perceived as less safe than women, making them brag about their sexual conquests to their friends. Similarly, sexual assault connects to such attitudes regarding women and sexuality. To interviewee Nolo DBN 2021:

> As a man, I think sex has nothing to do with love. Women are the ones that have sex for love. You see, if you are a soldier for example, you will not need love to have sex. You only have to think of it, and do it if you can. In the thoughts of any man, this is normal. Yes, …and I agree that it is not a sin. And….you see…I do not think that sexual intercourse is as important as you believe.

In this vein, socio-sexual males believe that sex without love is normal and that having several partners is not harmful (Pulerwitz et al., 2019). Such men always endorse the myth of rape and think sexuality is a game, which also connects with attitudes conducive to rape. Hypermasculinity is a multidimensional construct that encompasses sexually calloused attitudes that connect with the preparation of sexual aggression.

In the context of this research, the importance of nonrelational sexuality is that it predicts sexual violence. Thus, May (2021) confirms that the perpetration of sexual violence has two paths: hostility toward women and promiscuity. The latter path describes the kind of men who prefer having numerous casual sexual encounters rather than engaging in sexual relations as part of a committed relationship. Sexual promiscuity predicts the perpetration of sexual violence at family and community levels.

5.3.7. Control over women and other men

Interviewees in this research confirmed that society has always encouraged men to develop attitudes of controlling others, a condition that makes them feel they are more masculine. This mindset exemplifies how Congolese men have been educated to exert their masculine dominance, which encourages aggression in general and sexual assault in particular. Moolman (2017:42) confirmed the link between power motivation, the desire for influence and control, and coercive sexual behaviour. As a result, Congolese men commit gendered violence, such as sexual assaults, because they feel that in sexual

relationships, men should be more dominant. According to Elmien and Kelapile (2016:515), distrust of others and the inclination and ability to manipulate others is a component of traditional male ideology relating to power and control. This builds on the widespread assumption that sexual relationships are based on exploitation and that the other sex is untrustworthy. Thus, Wata DBN 2021 shared the attitudes of most interviewees who stated, "*we are men because of masculinity, and we can conduct sexual assault or rape because we believe women are dangerous, deceitful, and untrustworthy.*"

5.4. Military institutions in the construction of military masculinities

This section discusses how military institutions, the state, military training, and culture all play a role in forming military masculinities.

5.4.1. The role of the state

One of the factors that can facilitate the construction of masculinities in the state. In the DRC, political power and gendered politics constantly inform and alter one another, triggering the emergence of masculinities. According to Evans et al. (2019: 77), how a country handles its systems can reveal if it has a gendered structure. This viewpoint explains how a country's laws and regulations differ, the effects of its policies on women and the relationships between women's movements and the government. We may understand how state masculinities operate in the DRC by noting the centrality of the paternalistic hegemony system.

On the other hand, the DRC government's authoritarianism increased, confirming the link between masculinities and governance. Lwambo (2011) demonstrates how the government used the army and police to use tear gas to disperse protests in the country's city streets. During the Kabila dictatorship in 2018, the practice was frequently violent, involving the army, police units, and the civilian public. This demonstrates how the DRC government routinely supports aggressive masculinities and confirms how a political administration may be harsh and savage by jeopardising people's lives. According to Dolan (2010), Kabila's tyranny employed soldiers and police to demonstrate its callous savagery. According to Jumapili (2019), the UN Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) identified over 700 transgressions across the country in October

2017, including extrajudicial killings and rape. The use of military or police force to intimidate and kill civilians is an example of how the state uses military masculinity to limit the freedom and rights of the population.

Many countries enforce state masculinities through violence as one of the cornerstones of masculinity. When a confrontation breaks out, the government may be forced to think carefully about how to push the opponents back (Blumer, 1956; Demetriou, 2001; Pascoe, 2013). In the DRC, each battling party could use force to prove that they are manlier. This scenario has arisen because troops are males who desire to demonstrate their military masculinity. The context has frequently resulted in fighting parties unleashing their masculine combat powers on the local population in conflict zones. Male soldiers, in general, employ their military and masculine forces to neutralise civilians and hostile camps. When this occurs, the masculinities of government soldiers and combatants who are also males clash, resulting in the most powerful masculinities ruling over the weaker ones. Therefore, the winners start dehumanising the defeated team through emasculating acts such as male rape and sexual assaults, raping the women and killing males in the defeated camp. To this point, interviewee Soya DBN 2021 shared:

> A man is a man when he is a man. Yes… In other words, a man must defend and protect his wife from harm. He must be willing to give his life rather than be mocked. A man who can transform another man into a lady is more than his victim. A man who takes your wife has turned you into a thing. When a man like you rapes his woman, he has reduced you to another woman. Worse, if he rapes you, you become crap and lose your voice in front of your woman, children, other men, and your rapists since they have shamed and ridiculed you. Men will regard you as a cast, a thing.

To this interviewee, a man must defend his masculinity. In other words, male combatants and soldiers use their masculinities to ensure the emasculated opponents understand their masculinities are subjugated, making them feel the weight of their adversaries' maleness. The defeated team's masculinities will be considered fragile because they were subjugated through humiliation.

Government brutality increased in the DRC because it implicated soldiers and police units in frequently using military-style equipment and techniques against civilians. This brutality depicts the government's masculinities through military, police forces, and male control. According to Charmaz (2006:1170), this illustrates how state policing and police masculinities link with masculine hegemony and state power of control. To highlight this, Hearn (2014) mentions how the DRC government utilised the police and the army to disperse protesters in different parts of the country between 2011 and 2012 when people demanded that the president quit. This confirms how the army and the police's callous use of force on the population can cause fear in crowds because both powers are imbalanced. Such force is the outcome of increased violence and cruelty because of the police's militarisation. The Congolese police and the military institutions continue to produce numerous asymmetrical power relationships where any perceived lack of maleness invites suspicion. Despite all this happening to the civilians, some female police and military units may also be penalised if perceived as too masculine. Such segregation directed toward female units in both the army and the police depicts how men consider women inferior to them globally. In other words, female recruits will not get the same training as males. Because of these self-fulfilling performance expectations, Collison and Hearn (2005:294) and Nagel (2015:403) claim that women's training requirements are lower than men's, resulting in female troops and police units that are less competitive than their male counterparts. Training women in a deficient manner and service culture in the army confirm how the DRC masculinity sustains that women are weak physically. Being a strong paternalistic and hegemonic society, Congolese women endure gendered abuse in all the state's structures. This is an attitude that creates wider gaps regarding gender and the place of women in society.

The researcher believed that the concept of government masculinities might apply to the DRC State, which seemed logical. The approach allowed for the discovery and comprehension of the mechanisms of the DRC's engendered political process' norms. By preserving brutality as a manifestation of masculine authority, such masculinities confirmed the existence of mutual support between the police and the army in establishing statehood and masculinities. This is because both institutions incorporate male troops who can use force, which is one of the fundamental characteristics of masculinity. The context refers to the diversity

and contextuality of policing, police masculinities, and political masculinities in the DRC. State masculinity does not imply a single political leader but a dynamic or monolithic state system. The DRC police, on the other hand, clearly represent the state as one of its violent arms. In line with Connell (1995; 2005), the government remains the primary conceiver of policies historically reliant on political transformations and shifting political actors within any country's structures.

The relationship between police masculinities and a political leader's gendered charisma indicates the DRC's links between law enforcement and the political system. This condition highlights why the country's changing configuration of hegemonic masculinity and accompanying police masculinities emerged. In reality, militarised masculinity is a defining feature of the DRC's policing approach. This demonstrates the connections between authoritarianism and changing masculinity types throughout state branches. According to Majors and Biilson (2019), in the absence of well-established democratic institutions and a system of checks and balances, especially in the face of arbitrary political authority, a country can demonstrate that reforms engender a more democratic type of policing may only be transitory. This confirms that inside the DRC national police and the ruling body, the idea of equating masculine authority with political and institutional power has often been marginalising. The same analogy explains why women and femininities are underrepresented in the country's institutions. Despite women's rising but slow participation in some domains, this backdrop characterises the country's sites as historically created domains of men and masculinities. Discrimination in the DRC's state institutions stems from deeply held and harmful attitudes and beliefs about being a male.

5.4.2. The army and the construction of masculinities

The part the army plays in forming military masculinity is unquestionably significant. According to Blumer (1956:682) and Gubrium and Holstein (2017), the institution individuals belong to is intertwined with social identities and concepts of self. This illustrates how Congolese soldiers find meaning in the army because they have access to the symbolic and material resources they need to create their own meaningful identities. In other words, the military services soldiers receive to assist them in developing a male identity.

In this context, masculinity and violence overlap because the military use aggression to express their masculinity. Traditional gender norms in the DRC cause men to acquire masculine characteristics such as strength, power, and competitiveness, as well as less emotion and affection, especially toward other men. This means that sometimes some men can demonstrate their authority by bolstering their position with weapons. Accordingly, using arms might indicate men's status when earning economic and social achievements and holding power over women and other men. In this line, Kabaseke and Kitui (2022) confirm that militarised masculinity is the most visible and harmful in an armed conflict. Interviewee Soya DBN 2021 supported this thought by stating:

> When there is war, men have to define themselves. Soldiers have guns and this gives them more power over everyone in the villages they have occupied. In our country men who become soldiers are uneducated and sometimes desperate because they are also from resource-poor backgrounds and most of them have no education and social networks. This is why they become more brutal because they suffer that inferiority complex. They know people know who they are and to cover up this, they resort to violence to show they are more than an ordinary man.

This depicts how the military experience is disempowering because it involves harsh living conditions, erratic income and pressure to commit acts of violence. In other words, combatants can achieve some economic and social gains inaccessible to many, but their supposed power comes at a price. Interviewee Nolo DBN 2021 adds:

> Someone who becomes a soldier in our country is someone whose community has vomited. This links with social sanctions because I have never seen a family that respects a soldier, they will say of him that he has become a bandit or a thief. I know that a man who associates with the military or rebels will be stigmatised when he wants to return to normal life in society, which can cause him trauma.

This implies that soldiers in the DRC have their masculinities built because they are armed. Interviewees admitted that they would sometimes like to join the national army or the rebel group because carrying a gun brings pride to them, and the people around them see them as supermen. Combatants are well aware that people around fear them because the arm they carry gives them a different definition of being a man. Nevertheless, civilian and military cultures differ and are unclear in the context of the DRC because of the ongoing warfare the country has experienced for over three decades and hosts numerous armed groups. In other words, combatants often operate in their villages, and many civilians are either ex-combatants or family members of combatants.

For this reason, Kim (2020) admits that militarisation shapes the masculinity of soldiers and that of civilian men in the villages armed conflicts operate. This denotes the difficulty of separating military violence and civilian violence in the sense that compelling people into displacement illustrates violence and trauma and challenges the notions of manhood. Furthermore, Pascoe (2013:1425) affirms that emotional control, overt heterosexual desire, and physical fitness are all variables that determine male personality in the army. Hockey (2022:155) and Padilla and Riege (2002:122) agree that male soldiers should possess certain characteristics such as self-discipline, self-reliance, the willingness to resort to aggression and physical violence, and risk-taking. Looking at society, we can see that soldiers come from a society where patriarchal hegemony allows men to develop similar attributes.

Most males join the army to safeguard their country, but many Congolese do so for power and economic reasons. Connell (1987) believes that serving in the army is a way men value because it allows them access to hegemonic masculinity's resources. For instance, Congolese soldiers are feared because of the military power and physical health they developed through their training, which provides them with security associated with hegemonic masculinity. However, Karner (1998:203) believes that the military is an institution that does not produce any form of hegemonic masculine identity because no soldier may acquire gendered identities just by serving in the military. In other words, Congolese army personnel do not have gender identities; rather, they are built through the means the army avails for them. Fighmey (2006:309) and Cahill (1986:299) emphasise that the military contributes to creating a hegemonic

masculine identity for its personnel by providing a suitable environment and useful tools. Similarly, Connell (1995:77) writes hegemony is likely to be formed only if there is some correlation between a cultural epitome and institutional authority. Nevertheless, the concept appears relevant to male troops in that it permits them to assert their hegemonic masculinities properly. This shows how the army of the DRC empowers its soldiers to use force legally to maintain political and physical supremacy over others. Furthermore, Holstein (2000) reveals that many armies often give their troops the ability to employ masculine violence, aggression, risk-taking, physical ability, and self-discipline as tools to confirm they are males. These tools remain useful features of hegemonic masculinities that the army can utilise to impose their dominance on enemies, nations, states, and individuals they desire to submit to their military and political will.

5.4.3. Training soldiers and military culture

People who work in a community must understand how it operates and what it expects of them. Similarly, every person who aspires to military service must undergo training and learn about its culture. According to Campbell and Mayerfield (2000:540), training and masculinities in the military are co-dependent since the training can become an instrument to reproduce masculine stereotypes. In the DRC, soldiers learn how to celebrate military masculinities by reinforcing aggressive traits and promoting violence and misogyny. Furthermore, Carrigar et al. (1985:555) admit that recruits learn to shun the attributes of empathy, impartiality and sensitivity because they cannot promote the development of required military masculinities. These norms seem to be rather the opposite of the typical military hyper-masculinities. Even though not all soldiers want to act this way, the military training organisation shows them that it is okay (Higate & Hopton 2018:345).

The military training curriculum should remain unchanged, even if foreign forces arrive to help, as is the case of peacekeeping units in some nations (Holmes, 2019:68). To put it another way, the usage and implementation of the military training curriculum should not change military norms. In truth, the DRC army's training programs mostly benefit its male soldiers. This illustrates the Congolese context in which

top army commanders frequently oppose gender mainstreaming programmes. Brown (2020) says that many soldiers in various countries have this mentality since they constantly desire training that promotes gender stereotypes. That being said if the trainees can reject the training programme if they believe it will not assist them in enforcing gender norms that will benefit them.

On the other hand, Kimmel (1996) believes that military masculinities can be beneficial if they include feminised qualities. In reality, this backs up the constructive masculinities paradigm that guided this research. Accordingly, Congolese military training should encourage recruits to learn mixed attributes, such as bravery and strength, empathy and patience. Thus, Sprig (2018) recommends that men in the army work against their masculine stereotypes and become great change agents. Unfortunately, many Congolese troops lack these attitudes, which explains why there has been little progress in gendering the military system. This seems intriguing because any training that may gender the Congolese military is likely to create positive masculinity standards in the military, which could be a strategic approach to dealing with soldiers' toxic masculinities.

The DRC military training system should improve in the areas of gender mainstreaming and the recruitment of female troops into its ranks. Male soldiers are meant for aggression, while female soldiers appear inherently peaceful. Military training should look into this by using a tight selection of recruits instead of enlisting women only because of their female traits. Cockburn (2011) argues that male training should begin with the assumption that men are biologically aggressive, which is a good place to start when educating them to be effective soldiers. Furthermore, Hill (2019) suggests that soldiers' training should address sexual lust because it is a natural behaviour of any male. This explains why Congolese male soldiers frequently abused women sexually during armed conflicts to demonstrate their military masculinity. Overall, the issue would be difficult to resolve if the major reasons male troops engage in sexual aggression during the war are ignored (Higate & Hopton, 2018; Johnson, 2015; Messner, 2000).

Developing a masculine body in each soldier is a culture that is never left behind in any military training. According to McCreary et al. (2015:402), military training emphasises muscular strength and physicality because every soldier must have these as part of his masculinity and ultimately must perform

them throughout their career. Physical fitness is a requirement in military physical training because it is a male trait that every trainee must attain. Therefore, physical training is important to DRC soldiers because it lets them affirm their masculinity. Glaser and Strauss (2017) endorse that military training is crucial for soldiers' growth in their careers and a needed symbol of reaching manhood. This helps to understand why Congolese troops uphold standards that emphasise certain conventional male characteristics associated with hegemony and patriarchy. Higate (2022:110) believes that in order to master their duty, soldiers must learn how to live by traditional hegemonic male virtues. Therefore, military training should promote traditional masculine values such as risk-taking, seeking honour and courage, pursuing adventure and heroism, and sexual virility (Padilla & Riege, 2002:114). These features are crucial for they trigger troops to develop powerful military hegemonic masculinities. These traits exist in the Congolese military. They are adjusted by restriction and dignity to permit soldiers to express their male principles of liberty, equality, and brotherhood among their various teams. These manly characteristics and the principles of bravery, boldness, and determination are combined to promote positive soldiering in the army. Overall, when a soldier achieves this manly ideal, it displays in his physical body.

Furthermore, a soldier's emotional maturity is required to fulfil his manly character in the military. Godfrey et al. (2021) believe that masculine military ideology inhibits soldiers from accepting their emotional exposure. As a result, military training cannot tolerate emotional and physical fragility because it destroys masculinities, especially during wartime. This demonstrates that Congolese soldiers learned to act macho and like genuine warriors during their training to confront any enemy during combat. Congruent with Chinkin and Kaldor (2013:171), armies legitimise and idealise violence in training soldiers to shape them into ready-to-fight male bodies. Employing weaponry as an extension of the body for military men is as important as physical power in the corporeal image of the military. The idea is that carrying a gun gives Congolese troops a dual power: they are men with guns. In a nutshell, weapons are an important aspect of hegemonic masculinity among soldiers.

The military training culture also looks at soldiers' sexual activities as a sign of masculinity. This highlights a substantial link between the military environment and high-risk sexual activities. As a result of

this condition, Congolese soldiers' hypermasculine power and military experience have often caused them to engage in harmful sexual behaviours. This confirms that soldiers' acquaintance with hypermasculinity causes them to abuse women in the lands sexually they have conquered during the war (Parker et al., 2017). Soldiers' professional culture encourages them to take risks, implying that their work is linked to high-risk sexual behaviour (Myers, 2018). Similarly, Congolese soldiers are known for being brutal and associated with the country's armed conflicts. In effect, when the army was preparing for battle, all of the soldiers participating were willing to undertake a risk that may be fatal at times. However, when a soldier is not on the battlefield, he may engage in risky behaviours such as unprotected sex. Military sex, like any other man, demonstrates the primacy of the male sexual body and performance in the identity of a soldier (Hinojasa, 2019). Soldiers, in other words, enjoy conquering; they can conquer land in a battle and also conquer women. This validates how Congolese male soldiers have used sexual assault as a means of proving they were real soldiers. Morin (2017:253) backs this up by stating that a male soldier who conquers many ladies and lays them on his bed has achieved more than an ordinary man.

On the other hand, military culture reinforces the idea that soldiers' status is determined by their uniforms. According to Morin (2017:253), the military uniform is a component that provides soldiers status during their training. Regardless of a soldier's age, his military uniform is a cultural emblem that communicates masculinity. During the Congolese armed conflicts, however, some soldiers were able to remove their uniforms to hide from the enemy, which revealed they betrayed their masculinity. Therefore, during their training, soldiers should learn that their uniform is incredibly symbolic even in difficult times. As a matter of fact, Shields et al. (2017) suggested that the military's social structure should develop gender patterns that provide male troops with a sense of masculinity through the dangers they face in their vocation. In military culture, for example, the uniform is a visible emblem that primarily conveys a sense of strength, an important trait of masculinity. Similarly, Arbeit (2017), Connell (2000), and Gedney et al. (2018) believe that military uniforms contribute to altering the way soldiers develop identities in their armies by conveying power relations, prestige, authority, and roles. Therefore, during military training, soldiers should learn how their bodily practices, such as dressing, sports, and sexuality, position and transform bodies and

subjectivities in society. As a result, the desirable muscular physique and the symbolic meanings of the uniform highlight the importance of bodies in the military because they can establish a specific type of masculine identity.

Looking at culture and military training, it is clear that the army has its own culture. Like the rest of the country, the Congolese military is controlled by men at all levels. This illustrates how hegemony is ingrained in the thoughts of males, regardless of their status, the community in which they live, and the institutions in which they work. To this aim, O'Brien et al. (2015:360) propose that enacting a policy that balances gender and ensures women's safe inclusion can help break the cycle of gender monotony in the army. Accordingly, the DRC military should include initiative gender integration into recruit training and thus move toward a healthier command climate in the army. According to Ohambe (2011), the few DRC female soldiers do not serve in combat, which may compel the army commandment to develop new standards and procedures to ensure the participation of both genders. Although hegemony and patriarchy contribute to this scenario in the general population, Ohambe (2011) believes that it occurs because women lack masculine qualities such as physical strength, wrath, harshness, and violence. Excluding female soldiers exists in the DRC army because the social climate encourages male leadership in all aspects of society, excluding women. To promote cohesion and mission success, troops of both genders should assimilate into the military culture. The training staff fosters a culture of obedience during basic training, resulting in a foundational military culture (Pendlebury, 2020:170). The DRC military's behavioural culture seems negative, as it faces concerns of high sexual assault and brutality incidences. Sexual assault rates in the military are shocking and do not seem to scale down, with recent reports indicating that male military personnel commit sexual assault in the ranges of 29 and 52 percent (Jumapili, 2016).

Furthermore, reports on the Congolese army reveal that 99 percent of sexual abuse perpetrators are either ordinary citizens, men in the regular army or combatants (Puechguirbal, 2003:1277; UN, 2016). Despite the prevalence of sexual offences, the Congolese military and civilian authorities are unwilling to prosecute the military involved. According to Ferdinando (2018), military officials should be methodical in purging their ranks of illegal and disgusting behaviours because they tarnish their own and the country's

reputation. This could work if Congolese military and civilian tribunals had the capacity, credibility, and political impartiality to efficiently and fairly judge such crimes (Puechguirbal, 2003:1277). To effectively combat the pandemic of sexual violence, a comprehensive approach encompassing both international and national judicial processes must be created. The International Criminal Court (ICC) should immediately begin issuing arrest warrants for senior commanders who have used sexual violence as a weapon of war, as it can be considered a war crime, a crime against humanity, or even a constitutive act of genocide. However, the ICC is unable to handle the majority of the cases. Increased civilian and military criminal penalties for sexual crimes, enhanced arrest, detention, and prosecution capabilities, and increased recruitment and training of female police officers. A civilian court of appeals for victims of sexual abuse to replace the military court that currently handles such cases should all be part of the plan (Jumapili, 2016; Ohambe, 2011). If the military and the justice system work together to decrease sexual violence, the entire army can be effective and regain a positive reputation.

5.5. Prevalence of GBV in war

Interviewees discussed various points that confirmed the prevalence of gender-based violence during the different armed conflicts the DRC had been experiencing.

5.5.1. Violence against women existed prior to the war

The DRC's cyclic armed conflicts have significantly impacted men's involvement in gender-based violence. Many interviewees regarded war as an activator of gendered violence because the cyclic armed conflicts created a structure that encouraged some males to be dominating and masculine at home and in society. Interviewee, Nolo DBN 2021, asserted that

Before the conflicts, we had a society that tolerated us men assaulting our wives. The wars came to dominate and shatter our cultures. Now you see…Things became worse, but we know that armed violence comes and goes, but the harsh norms remain.

The idea behind this discourse is that war did not generate inequality, gender-based abuse, or other societal norms such as patriarchal and hegemonic masculinities, which have already encouraged gender discrimination. This entails that unending armed conflicts just created new ways of abusing women because the societal constraints had become less strong. GBV existed in the DRC prior to violent conflicts. Long ago, Congolese women had learned gendered socialisation and were subjected to discrimination in families and society; both considered normal. Men turned to masculine authority in their homes and dominated their spouses, but the conflicts taught them new and atrocious methods to abuse women.

Most of the interviewees revealed that in times of armed conflict, sexual assault mirrored cultural attitudes toward women in times of peace. Hegemony and socialisation in the DRC have favoured gender roles and power distribution, while rebellions have dramatically increased violent exposure. In line with Sala DBN 2021:

> …abuse to women is like an old song that males sing, and women repeat. The Interahamwe and the Mayimayi militia also made it much worse and more pervasive. It has impacted citizens of all ages.

In other words, in the DRC, women are constantly behind men; men are commanders because they have greater authority than women. This implies that masculinity is highly valued in much of the DRC. As interviewee Radi DBN 2021 put it:

> ...as a true Congolese guy, I cannot fail to demonstrate my great sexual desire with my various partners or present gifts for extra sexual satisfaction. All of this demands that I am financially capable of purchasing one or more wives, as well as possessing the physical, economic, and social power to protect all of them from other male predators.

All of this suggests that most Congolese are driven by a desire to fit cultural ideals of masculinity, even though expectations are set so that meeting them is nearly impossible. Masculinity is sometimes measured via sexuality. For many Congolese men, insatiable sex urge defines a real man and is a tool for

dominating women, either in the home or outside the home. They believe that being masculine means the man has money and multiple partners, is physically built, and is influential in society. Having money, physical force and social influence are tools men can use to protect their families and wives, and so they feel they are well defined as men. The roots of these pressures on men to match masculine values can be seen in the Congolese constitution. To confirm this, Nordas (2011: 888) discovered that under Congolese law, married women need their husbands' permission to create a bank account, apply for credit, start a business, travel, or look for work. These limitations show how Congolese males wield societal authority and responsibilities that stifle their women's ability to act.

5.5.2. Gendered violence built on existing power disparity

The power imbalance was one of the factors that widespread GBV in the DRC during armed conflicts. The power disparity between men and women is prevalent in the DRC, and sexual harassment has taken a different path with subsequent rebellions. On several occasions, Boss DBN 2021 eye witnessed:

> …that some men have accused raped women of knowingly sleeping with the Interahamwe. These are our enemies and a woman who gets their babies have betrayed us. How can a woman on our land decide to have a baby with an enemy? They will deliver a baby who has the blood of that enemy. Not good at all!

Accusing a woman of being raped translates as the latest tactic Congolese men learned during the rebellions to blame their wives. Prior to the war, some Congolese men would press women and girls to have sex, but this was not a major social issue because it was kept hidden. Moreover, a girl who had sex before marriage was often considered to disrespect her elders and social norms. A woman who violated sexual norms could be returned to her parents, indicating that she had not been adequately educated about the tradition. Times immemorial, society encouraged silence about sexual harassment by implying that such issues were the concerns of the couple and their families. This was done to safeguard the family's prestige

and the man's masculinity and control over the woman. Indeed, power is still a gendered social norm that men use to build and enforce their heterosexual, patriarchal, and frequently violent masculinity.

Similarly, interviewees revealed that public rape and sexual assault were committed against men and women of all ages, from children to the elderly, turning the victims' bodies into a collective battlefield, symbolising hegemony and ethnic divisions on conquered land. According to Wata DBN 2021:

Men in villages and cities frequently claim power to feel powerful, which often leads to tribal tensions. I heard of this, and it happened in our country before the war, and after, before I left.

This interviewee argues that the disproportionate power claims of the armed conflict parties caused the DRC to become the worst place on the planet to be a woman. This shows the nature of gender-based violence and how it is caused by a system that encourages men's masculinity and superiority over women and other men. To acquire an acceptable level of masculinity in their military careers, soldiers and combatants must also be financially self-sufficient. Interviewee Sala, DBN 2021, stated:

Soldiers and we combatants were hardly compensated, but we had our guns, and the country is in chaos. Then, you too you see that resorting to sexual harassment to make up for everyone's lack of pay can become very easy.

When a man's financial emasculation is complete, he turns to sexual harassment to assert his dominance. Furthermore, the majority of former combatants and soldiers interviewed for this research said that *"…in front of our families, if we cannot support them with basic financial needs, …so we become upset and even intimately abuse our wives as a result of not being paid (Boss, DBN 2021)."*

In another context, interviewees entailed that rape could occur in a woman's home or with a stranger. When a husband rapes his wife, it is not a big issue, and most women put up with it. However, the situation becomes much more alarming when a stranger does it, whether during or after the war. Despite the fact that most victims are aware of the consequences of sexual assault, many opt to keep silent rather than report it for fear of serious societal repercussions. A woman who has been raped is considered to

devalue herself and stain the family as her blood has mixed with the enemies. This makes her be expelled from her home and, in some cases, from the village because she is viewed as a cast. This connects with interviewee Sathu DBN 2021: "*when I am not happy and I have taken a glass of beer, I take sex and impose myself as a man during the intercourse; and if she opposes, I can beat her. But another man doing it to her creates a mess in my life and that of the woman.*" This interviewee confirms that women have been educated to bear with men forcing them into sex. Poverty alone does not trigger gender sexual violence in the DRC during the period of war, but it is an important influence on the masculinity-rape relationship. Masculinities among soldiers and those in the family overlap. In reality, poverty is one of the country's oldest problems, and the Congolese have never benefited from the vast mineral and other natural resources engorged in their country (Lwambo, 2013; Mugoli and Bahati, 2016: 31). These natural resources have long been a target for exploitation and the driving force behind various rebellions.

5.5.3. Gendered violence for hypermasculinity

Hypermasculinity caused GBV spread during the armed conflicts. Despite being the world's most mineral-rich country, the DRC has never prospered economically. The Congolese have not only failed to benefit from their own richness but have also been victimised by those who believe the land is theirs. Being in the army gives men a sense of security and exposes them to a culture centred on hyper-masculine ideals and dread.

> When we were enrolled, we were very young, and at our age of innocence, we were welcomed. Yes, ...we were seriously baptised in the army, and we were severely reprimanded in case we fell asleep while on duty or violated orders. We were abused in different ways pitilessly, confided interviewee Cobra DBN 2021.

Lubunga (2016) discovered that a shortage of income had led many Congolese males into the army, which has been used as a tool for both random and systematic sexual harassment. Nonetheless, numerous

Congolese males who had been coerced into joining armed groups had been abused in the past. According to interviewee Radi DBN 2021

> …combatant learners had some activities to perform. Our activities were limited because they challenged circumstances. Also abused people could not expect us to protect them. There were also situations in which we had to commit heartless large-scale atrocities in neighborhoods. This was done by all of us combined, new or experienced fighters. But before this, we all were forced to ingest high dosages of narcotics.

This interviewee's verbatim confirms the results of research conducted by Amanda and Tidy (2018:101). They agreed that when new recruits join the army, they are taught about military life, including combat training, where they are forced to demonstrate or develop their masculinity. The context implies how new male recruits are exposed to various rituals and activities that allow them to display their social uniqueness as men through hypermasculinity's symbolic and physical performance that devalues women. For example, combatants forced new recruits to ejaculate into small holes made on the ground or in trees, according to Lubunga (2016) findings. As a result of what they practised throughout their training, some combatants excelled at degrading their sexual assault victims during the DRC's armed wars. Such denigrations appear to have encouraged new recruits to condemn women when required to celebrate male sexual supremacy over women.

The abuse was clearly prevalent among male warriors. Gang rape of women conveyed the perpetrators' expression of their masculinity, and it was used to attract and socialise male fighters in conflicts involving forced recruitment. According to the results of research by Graaf (2017) and the American Journal of Public Health, male rape of women during conflict is a frequent practice among armed groups and militaries because it strengthens and reinforces group cohesion (AJPH, 2013). To put it another way, DRC combatants and soldiers utilised gang rape to reinforce their units and raise morale. Heavy-armed, hierarchically organised gangs, engaged in enormous and dehumanising rapes of women as part of their military activity in the DRC.

The perpetrators' resolution aims to shatter villages by generating instability and widespread terror to consolidate their authority. The team's devotion to internal order is sealed by collective humiliation and male dominance to spread mass sexual harassment by male combatants. This has often led the perpetrators to damage family relationships by breaching local sex taboos and rapping a huge number of women. Interviewee Bezos DBN 2021 pointed out:

> I was dismayed. My family tore apart as all of us eye-witnessed the Interahamwe and the Mayimayi raping my wife. Ah! Just wait (silence)…. Ok. They voluntarily did so since they were aware that it embarrassed and emasculated me and my sons, even the male neighbors. That is right…shame! And masculinity is lost. You see! When someone is forced to watch his wife being raped and is powerless to protect her.

The combatants' disregard for local social norms, such as taboos, is demonstrated by public sexual harassment. They used this tactic to keep their battalions together, indicating that the perpetrators were bolstering their alliance. Any team member opposed to the practice would likely be viewed as uncommitted, insubordinate, and a traitor whose goal was to demoralise the team's dynamic. Both female and male rebels used sexual violence against men and women as a tactic of war to impose their masculinities and govern the local populace on their own land.

Masculinity during the armed conflicts was also depicted through a man's role in protecting his family. Similarly, Lubunga (2016) confirms that the DRC's family code mentions that men must defend their families, particularly their wives. When a woman is raped or sexually abused, it means her husband has failed to protect her. The implication of this is that perpetrators utilised rape as a tool to disrupt the social structure that communities had been protecting for ages. As a result, numerous families and communities in war-torn places have made it illegal for women and anybody who has experienced sexual abuse to join them. Interviewee Jobe DBN 2021 said:

...men in our country's villages could not tolerate a raped lady returning to her family. They said that such a person had been tainted psychologically by enemy blood and had become a social outcast that could not enter the family.

This explains why, after a sexual assault or rape has occurred, most husbands could separate from their spouses. According to Amanda and Tidy (2018:108), the failure of men to protect their wives from sexual abuse has had significant psychological consequences in men's minds, as it has led to the belief that they have lost their masculinity. In the same way, stigma damaged male survivors to the point where they could not heal, causing their families to struggle to recover from their shattered societal standards. Consequently, male victims were labelled as emasculated, homosexual, or weak. Bede DBN 2021 echoed:

...that my brother who was sexually abused by another man would never confess or forget it. For the rest of his life, he will be haunted by it. He is no different from a homeless dog.

Raping a man creates a stigma that reduces his masculinity since it makes him appear less manly than his aggressors. Consequently, the male victims have become defenceless creatures whose masculinities have lost their social significance since they are being mocked everywhere (Graaf, 2017). Men were humiliated inexplicably by calling them "homeless dogs", which disdain made them feel worthless in front of their partners. Thus, Congolese male victims were plainly embarrassed because the authority they had used to exert domestic gender-based violence was now being used against them more terribly.

5.5.4. Gender roles reversed during armed conflicts

During data collection, most interviewees stated that gender roles were socially well organised before the start of armed conflicts in the DRC. Men had their social duties, women had theirs, and children had theirs as well. Every society has its own established gender hierarchy because, in normal times, females and males have distinct duties to play in the family and community for the society's smooth functionality. Agoben (2018) and Seate and Maestro (2016:197) confirm that societies follow a predetermined social

order based on male and female roles. However, these positions are reversed when conflict strikes because it undermines the country's long-standing social order.

Similarly, Yaro (2015) discusses how cyclic armed conflicts can affect both men and women, while women and children remain significantly more vulnerable than males. The context of the DRC became more complicated because rape was widely used as a weapon of war. Armed conflicts disrupted long-held gender roles, reversing them in unexpected ways. According to Fehlberg and Pepper (2016:675), war disrupts the political arena and societies and families as males work in women's jobs and children take on parental roles. Interviewee Sala DBN 2021 shared:

> Many of our neighbours' children were collecting reeds for hut construction at that time. Their fathers could care for them, could pound cassava leaves in mortars, make food for their children, and a variety of other duties. This had never happened in our villages before, but nothing else a man could do in the absence of the woman. Those men could involve in jobs women were doing before the invasion of our land. The war changed the ways of living of everyone in the villages.

This interviewee's verbatim implies that armed conflict has resulted in a confrontation between two or more parties resulting in numerous combatants raping women, others kidnapped, slain, or even banished from their homes. Concisely, Congolese armed conflicts caused many changes, mostly exposing males to myriads of challenges in their families and communities' roles. In line with Canan et al. (2018: 3522), war is harmful to men's morality and behaviour; it forces men to adopt women's ways of life and, in some cases, to behave like them because the wife is absent. Another family had both parents, but the conflict had physically harmed the woman, rendering her unable to do any work. If the man decided not to remarry, he could take over his wife's duties in the family. Men taking over women's roles in their families have frequently resorted to gendered violence in the home, especially when both husband and wife are present. However, if the man became unproductive, the woman could also assume the husband's obligations. In circumstances where women were kidnapped, taken as war hostages, or killed, men took over their women's roles. This often caused the man to "lose his social power and status, making his masculinity doubtful as

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he was perceived as a woman" (Dixon et al., 2020). Interviewee Bede DBN 2021 supports this opinion in this way:

> A man can undertake some household tasks, but not at that level. The villagers were baffled as to what had happened to him. He was now bending over the babies, spending days at home doing emasculating chores. This caused other men to perceive him as an unnatural and imperfect man. They could mock him as well.

As a result, reversing gender roles was not a choice for some men but rather a situation forced by the conflict. This situation made these men feel emasculated, which Jumapili (2019) and Lwambo (2013) defined as humiliating for men because it blemished their masculine values in society. For example, it is taboo in Congolese culture for a man to enter the kitchen to cook since society has kept it an exclusive role for women and girls. Nonetheless, because of the repercussions of war, men began to perform the jobs that their women used to undertake before armed conflicts disrupted the social order.

Indeed, Congolese are unaccustomed to seeing men carrying out home responsibilities, which leads them to accuse wives whose husbands do so of having bewitched them. Because of this, many men took out their frustrations on their spouses, who are the closest to them. Gender is based on socially created roles, behaviours, activities, and qualities that a specific society believes to be proper for men and women (Beres, 2020; Carlson et al., 2019: 891; Morison et al., 2007; Parker et al., 2018). The context of war destabilised family and community structures, as well as the lives of the victims and other people in society. The problem grew more intricate as it involved a larger framework of unfair gender relations and violence. Jumapili (2019) illustrates how the increasing gender division of labour and power can shift gender roles.

Globally changing gender roles are largely hooked on the everyday gender distribution of labour and power, a setting that normally shifts during and after conflicts. According to Majors and Biilson (2019), conflicts have contradictory and varied consequences on men and boys because gender roles may vary. Gender roles in the DRC forced men to take on jobs previously reserved for women, but after the conflicts, men returned to their ordinary gender roles in their families and communities. This demonstrates how males

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who reversed responsibilities found them very hard, faced major financial challenges, and returned to their traditional gender roles. Notes should clarify that Congolese men struggled to adapt to domestic and childcare obligations traditionally assigned to women. According to interviewee Siniyo DBN 2021:

> My father was spending hours at home pounding manioc, cooking for us, washing the dishes, taking the goats to the meadow and many other tasks. I could not understand how he was doing tasks for women. We too were helping with collecting firewood and fetching. We were boys at that time but we could help dad because we had no choice. Our father was doing things for women because of the war, but after the war, I saw him resume his old role. In times of war, people could not laugh at us even if we were doing women's job. It was after the war that they could mock us, which triggered dad to stop doing them. You know, when a man is busy doing housework, he cannot have time to work for a living or socialise. He is fully stuck at home, working on several household activities. This is not a man's life, and it is even worse when there are tiny children there.

Different societies divide economic activities by gender, except for hunting and milking cows, which is traditionally reserved for males solely (Simon-Burtler & McSherry, 2018). Furthermore, the large domination of males in political leadership demonstrates segregation toward women, making females invisible in many sectors because of hegemony that fosters discrimination based on gender roles. Morison et al. (2007:27) conclude that men cannot get pregnant and cannot adjust to nursing or childcare, displaying significant differences in the duties allocated to men and women. Political leadership, hunting, and some age-related ceremonials are among the areas where gender roles seem most consistent among societies since they appear to be close to or associated with conflict (Burrel & Flood, 2019).

On the other side, children were affected when one or both of their parents were slain in the conflicts. Because of the disagreements, Carlson et al. (2019) identified children are managing families and providing guidance, food, and even security to their siblings. Armed conflicts affected more girls than boys. Congruent with Beres (2020), armed conflicts cause many girls to sell their bodies for survival, while boys become thieves or bandits to support their siblings. This harsh situation transformed children into

responsible young men and women. When these children fail to feed themselves properly, they could become chronically malnourished, harming their brains (Wandera & Mashoo, 2011). In other situations, children were sexually exploited or forced to work for free to survive. In other words, not only armed conflicts damage men and children, but also they blatantly violate human rights. It is clear that Congolese cyclic armed conflicts seriously affected the people in surrounding areas by inflicting gender-based violence.

5.6. Men perpetrators of GBV during armed conflicts

This research confirms that men are the predominant perpetrators of gendered abuse during armed conflicts, but women are sufferers. Men perpetrate gender-based violence in peaceful and combat situations as civilians, combatants or soldiers. Katz (2018:1758) and Ali et al. (2016:22) argue that the situation of war often makes men perpetrate more gender violence and discrimination since they intentionally construct and maintain gender inequalities. Armed conflicts caused more gender inequality in DRC at family and societal levels because men reinforced their authority and made more decisions. One of the interviewees, Joko DBN 2021, stated:

As men, we have the privilege of being our family's leaders, and I personally value the advantages of unequal gender relations. This says gender imbalance is there, and I cannot get rid of it because it is a cultural issue that has always been there and always will be. My brother, you can see now that when we talk about leadership in our country, we do not have anyone who leads a family and is not a man. That is something we all know and have learned. It is like that.

According to this interviewee, male dominance in leadership is not something males actively struggle to maintain but rather a result of long-standing social conventions that men inertly benefit from. The situation of war came to worsen the situation because men's status and privilege inhibited any evolution toward gender equality (Leek, 2019:220). In other words, soliciting these men as supporters is a major step toward successful gender equality, which backs up the theory of constructive masculinities that guided this

research. To achieve meaningful advancement in their community regarding gender, these men must oppose sexual and gender-based violence. These men are in charge of their families, which gives them the power and authority to inspire positive change. Donne et al. (2018:200) emphasise that achieving gender equality requires persuading men in positions of power to support it. Gender inequality empowers men with cultural, economic, and political authority, making them influential in addressing impartial gender relations (Aragbuwa, 2020). Accordingly, interviewees revealed that churches have the authority to transform men into allies who may help advance gender equality. Indeed, the portrayal of men's involvement in advancing gender equality reveals that they are its gatekeepers (Connell, 2005:1805). This is a question of men's readiness to cause churches to intervene to teach boys and men the significance of valuing women and girls to achieve societal gender equality. This means churches must educate Congolese male refugees to remove gender partiality, primarily because these men are the decision-makers in their families and communities. In this vein, Radi DBN 2021, an interviewee, remarked:

> I am confident that educating us as males is critical in helping us and our sons open our eyes and ears. This may also encourage us to see and value the advantages to get from gender equality. This can greatly assist us as men in leading our families and managing our community.

Leading families and communities without being gender prejudiced entail encouraging females to participate in family and community management. Williamson (2020:14) substantiates that women want males to help and collaborate with them because gender bias is a sensitive topic. To have a voice in tackling the core causes of gender-based violence at the family and community levels, women and girls must openly collaborate with males. This can allow women to share what they can bring to the table to dispel some men's beliefs that women's place is in the kitchen and that they are just adept at housework. Men should not stand in the way of gender equality or become champions of anti-change customs and religions. Parratt and Pina (2017:73) believe that most male migrants never advise their women to take contemporary contraception for family planning. This exemplifies how male refugees use their position to oppose gender

equality initiatives. To put it another way, this demonstrates that education can help Congolese male refugees comprehend that certain cultural and religious views are damaging to women.

On the other hand, Stemple et al. (2017:309) and Lowenstein (2020) confirm that most men involved in abusing women because armed conflicts have dislocated people because of the breakdown in law and order. Men who abuse women will gain from conflict tensions, which cause dissatisfaction, powerlessness, and the loss of established gender roles, such as male roles that cause men to lose their manhood (Raltson, 2020:134). The occurrence of an armed conflict exacerbates society's long-standing and tolerated gender inequality and violence against women. Thus, the men who abuse women are delighted because they exploit women as trophies via kidnapping, rape, and other forms of violence.

Many interviewees admitted that most men resort to GBV during armed situations because their communities have become militarised. According to McCanley et al. (2019:1927), infesting a village with male soldiers during an armed conflict means escalating sexual assault since local men will learn from them. Because of the absolute instability in the DRC, all governing mechanisms have become corrupt and inert throughout the country. On the other hand, communities have occasionally identified male rebels, soldiers, and police as perpetrators of gendered violence against their women and girls. Daudi DBN 2021, one of the interviewees, admitted:

> Nothing seemed to be working at that moment. It was a social disaster; there was no rule, no leader, and nothing was standing. We had all given up hope. Soldiers and combatants were everywhere, here and there terrorising us the people. Some of us men took advantage of the situation and started abusing women and girls. I believe that the more rebels and soldiers we had, the more women were brutalised.

Indeed, the presence of male soldiers, police, and rebels created a power gap between service members and the public. Peretz (2017:256) and Peretz (2020) believe that patriarchal attitudes and practices increase power imbalance during armed conflict, focusing on economic power and economic fragility in the affected area. This elucidates the complex relationship between poverty, economic power, and gender-

based violence manifested as sexual violence (Morris & Ratajczak, 2019: 2001). As a result, most interviewees stated that most male sexual violence perpetrators work for individuals in positions of authority and are paid. Interviewee Sala DBN 2021, stated:

> Our society is patriarchal, with men and women having unequal powers. Yes, money is a source of power. Women do not have it. This is why they are impoverished, which puts them at risk when there is war. Men with high positions in society, as well as those who have jobs, have money. During times of war, they assault, exploit and manipulate women sexually. Then you see that this empowers men to stab women or treat them badly.

Due to their low socio-economic standing, most women are subjected to men's gender-based violence during armed conflicts. Furthermore, Messerschmidt (2018) claims that orphaned children and women bereaved in conflict and individuals with mental illnesses are disadvantaged and socially invisible due to hegemonic masculinity. During the DRC armed conflicts, the framework of conventional norms that condone hegemonic dominance deteriorated since it never favoured women and children's freedom of expression or allowed them their rights. Such power disparities are common in warring societies because civilian men and combatants commit widespread GBV by forcing women and girls into sexual violence or sexual enslavement (Jouniles et al., 2018:460). Moreover, lack of support owing to the chaotic backdrop of conflict causes more females to become poorer, allowing males to commit more gendered violence as a sign of power disparity.

Other interviewees indicated that poverty increases militarisation and sexual violence among young females. This has happened in almost all DRC communities because of troops deployment, who, instead of defending inhabitants, participated in sexual harassment of girls. One of the respondents, Nyoka DBN 2021, confirmed that

> We could see many soldiers in our area. They had arrived to protect us from insurgents, as we heard. They used this to trap girls and give them small sums of money in exchange for sex because

they can gain money and other things by robbing people. There is a lot of sexual exploitation here since females are vulnerable.

Male soldiers militarised several villages in the DRC during armed conflicts, a situation that posed a serious threat to populations. According to Blood (2018), militarising communities during armed conflicts inevitably results in the theft of local resources and the murder of men and boys who may fight back to rescue their area from invasion. Furthermore, according to Ford (2018:1313), the lynching of Congolese men has resulted in many orphans and widows in communities, making villages prone to atrocities such as pillage and sexual or physical abuse of women and girls. Concisely, when male fighters rape and kill women, it suggests that the victims endured many physical and moral wounds that have damaged them throughout their lives. One of the interviewees explained:

> Those rebels were very brutal and pitiless. They murdered both men and women, but any woman who agreed to be raped was spared. You realise that killing a parent means murdering a father, and this affected negatively many families. Many women witnessed their husbands being cut into pieces or shot alive by combatants. Many children witnessed their moms being raped or butchered. These images stayed with these women and children for a long time.

Many children suffered trauma from killing their fathers, and often both parents, in armed conflicts since it left them morally and materially stranded. According to Kettrey and Marx (2019a:220), living with no assistance because the parents have been killed is associated with a power disparity, which increases the risk of gender-based violence. In other words, by lynching fathers, male combatants are aware that they are ruining countless families who rely on that man as a protector and breadwinner, leaving orphaned daughters vulnerable. This situation negatively changed these children's way of life and behaviour as some dropped out of school because they failed to pay the required fees. Meyer (2020:229) claims that dropping out of school has led to many girls marrying too soon or engaging in sexual promiscuity at a younger age to survive. Because they are fatherless and poor, these young girls are considering marrying someone they

think will provide for the family and the girl. To this end, Raphael et al. (2019:2033) point out that poverty paired with armed conflict creates a situation that harms young girls in unimaginable ways and can even lead to gendered violence in most societies. This is why interviewee Wata DBN 2021asserted:

> During the war, various injuries were inflicted on us as we were children. The combatants could invade the village and kill all of the men while many others flee. They left orphans after they had killed parents, and I was one of them at the time. The issue now was that these orphans were defenseless to violence within their own community. It was horrible for girls because they could not hassle like us boys. The girls then thought of getting married or starting selling their bodies before they reach the age of marriage.

Women may suffer morally, physically, and financially because of their husband's death. According to Ali et al. (2016), killing a family's patriarch widows the woman and makes her vulnerable to property access in her husband's family. Unfortunately, women in the DRC do not have property rights, and the death of a spouse prompts his family members to expel her from their home with violence. Accordingly, Kim and Santiago (2019:17) establish that, because most African societies are patriarchal, women have no say over their husbands' possessions, whether living or dead. This illustrates how often it is for women living in conflict-affected areas, as it is for DRC, to have their land rights violated.

Schrock et al. (2018) maintain that taking property from a conflict-widowed woman is a common kind of gender-based abuse that has driven many women away from their deceased husband's families. In the context of DRC, some men restrict women's rights to inherit property at home. This often occurs in both the wife and her husband's families in DRC. Furthermore, Venema (2019:2711) features that many bereaved husbands' relatives actively encourage widowed wives to marry one of the deceased husband's siblings or quit the family and possessions. This is common in the DRC when the deceased husband's family physically abuses a widowed woman to force her to leave the family. This becomes more serious amid armed conflicts, importantly in case she resisted the family decision, making it more problematic if the woman had no male child with her husband.

Interviewees admitted that men extended sexual violence in the community and in households during warfare. According to Evans et al. (2019:72) and Donne et al. (2018:199), sexual violence is a form of gendered violence that often happens in armed conflict, and its extension implies further complex flows of gender-based violence in the community and households. In DRC, communities noticed that if combatants raped a woman and her husband learnt of her rape, the husband would also start raping her. In other words, the husband may blame her for the assault and continue to engage in domestic violence. Igo DBN 2021, an interviewee, shared the following:

> …unknown combatants raped her where they were hiding the conflict at the time. She was the wife of my neighbour in our village. The distressing news had reached her spouse in the village. When she returned to the village, she was fortunate that her man did not send her back to her parents, but she began to experience difficult times with him in their home. Men in the village claim that after a woman has been raped and her husband discovers it, whether in the bush or at home, where she has hidden, the husband begins drumming her. He claims that his woman accepted rape, and so, he abuses her.

As a result of the militarisation, women and girls are forced to involve in sex work with male soldiers or police officers. This behaviour is incompatible with DRC culture because it embarrasses parents and husbands. In this vein, Ali et al. (2016) concede that many cultures regard rape as an immoral crime that stains and shames families, disrupting family relations. In the DRC, the person-cause of family disunion often endures domestic moral and physical violence. To that point, interviewee Bede DBN 2021 added:

> Armed conflicts have had a negative impact on families and society. Village men learned how to rape women from combatants and soldiers. Men perceive a raped woman as a malediction to the family and society; so, there was a lot of abuse to women in that period. The woman was also aware of what had occurred. She would not leave her man even if she were abused, because no other man could take her. Her family could not be happy because she was living in an abusive household.

Now you can see how these two families have become adversaries, with some even fighting or verbally abusing each other.

Results of the research show that HIV was another outcome derived from male warriors committing sexual violence. In the same context, Dewis DNB 2021 stated that men combatants might willingly infect girls and women with HIV using a gun on point. As the conflict raged, poverty became rampant, and it was probable that more girls and women contracted HIV through sex work, exposing them to domestic physical violence. Daudi DBN 2021 offered his thoughts on the subject.

Civilian men and male fighters used to rape women in the villages at that time. Some women and girls contracted sexual infections because of that transactional sex. At the end of the day, many rape victims were HIV/AIDS positive. Because HIV is a traumatic condition, families who discover a member of their family has it began to use violence against them.

Most interviewees stated that the perpetrator blaming the victim for contracting HIV was common in many families. Men typically coupled these two variables when addressing domestic physical violence after pondering this relationship. As a result, Wata DBN 2021 explained

Many men blamed their wives for allowing the enemies to rape them. They imposed their wives to take an HIV test, but if the results came back positive, they were told not to return to their husbands' homes. Others warned them that they would be killed. You can now understand that raped women faced severe vengeance from their men. Many others were humiliated and beaten.

During armed conflicts, men took an extra glass of beer to exert violence in the form of humiliation. Similarly, Canan et al. (2018:3515) admit that conditions related to armed conflict may increase the frequency and severity of alcohol use because of anxiety. Trauma exposure and posttraumatic symptoms are often to blame for the high prevalence of substance use among displaced men (Ford & Becker, 2020). Alcohol usage, poverty and patriarchy, and unemployment were all factors that the interviewees mentioned

as having contributed to men's use of GBV during DRC armed conflicts. The empirical basis for civilian alcohol usage in conflict-affected communities is still limited (Dixon et al., 2020:3115; Evans et al., 2019:79). Indeed, many Congolese males in armed conflict zones are unemployed, which causes them to become addicted to alcohol, leading to increased gendered domestic violence. Furthermore, unemployment is high among internally displaced men, making them feel they have failed to fulfil their gender role of provider and may turn to drinking to pass the time (Beres, 2020:235). However, many Congolese males have developed alcoholism due to terrible war occurrences.

The socioecological model's levels presented movement, fluidity, and, perhaps most importantly, interaction. According to Javaid (2018), alcohol intake remains an individual component in domestic physical violence involving resource acquisition or maintenance, such as the wife denying or confronting the husband. As a result, Johnston and Huston (2018:14) and Fehlberg and Pepper (2016:675) confirm that a man can get upset in his home, make social networks and decisions, endure gender role violations, and develop infidelity perceptions. This explains why women and girls are treated as commodities in most DRC communities. However, when a woman betrays her man, he feels frightened and tricked, prompting him to resort to violence to keep her as his resource. Furthermore, patriarchy and its accompanying cultural norms influence violent attitudes since they organise gender roles and power relations in the household (Hlavska, 2017:480). The findings of this research show that culture has a key role in preserving gender and power dynamics as triggers of GBV.

5.7. Men victims of GBV during armed conflicts

Based on the findings of this research, men can perpetrate and/or suffer gender-based violence. Gender-based violence is a global epidemic that can afflict anyone, regardless of age, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic class, or race (Carlson et al., 2019:892). It has affected many Congolese men in their homes, while others have experienced it during violent armed conflicts.

Perhaps the most painful and hidden ordeal Congolese men have gone through in the context of armed conflicts is rape. Despite this, they are unwilling to come out and talk about their abuse. As a result,

Ali et al. (2016:24) emphasise that the perpetrator and victim's unwillingness to break the conspiracy of silence drives them to keep the matter hidden. Likewise, Congolese males who experienced gender-based violence were afraid to come out for fear of being ridiculed and marginalised in their own communities and families. Hardesty and Ogolsky (2020:461) ascertain that in patriarchal countries, a raped man may be viewed like a woman and given stereotyped gender-role definitions since men should not be vulnerable. Bede DBN 2021, one of the interviewees, offered his thoughts:

> War in my country resulted in the rape of children, men, and women. We heard stories about men who were turned into women by other men. What humiliation and disgrace! Even inside families, some women smacked and humiliated their husbands, and children mistreated their fathers. We knew, but these men could not open their mouth and say anything. They were afraid that people would find out they were treated like women. Such men lost their male consideration because they had become powerless and societally cast and strained.

On the other hand, men used gender-based violence to establish power and masculine identity in reaction to threats to masculinity (Messerschmidt, 2018; Parker et al., 2018:49). This also applied to Congolese men who had observed or been victims of violence as children.

The patriarchal idea of males as guardians of their communities puts them at risk during armed conflicts. This is why Borello (2004) mentions that boys and men are perceived as the ones who wield violence and hence the means to protect. During the DRC armed conflicts, men and boys were exposed to armed violence in this setting because they could both perpetrate and protect against it. Alternatively, Er Turk (2017) discusses how girls and women are often exposed to armed violence due to their membership in targeted communities or as members of the armed forces. Still, they are not the primary and particular targets of armed violence. All in all, armed violence against men and boys falls under the notion of gender-based violence. Interviewee Beta DBN 2021 shared

Men and women have been assaulted in our country during armed conflicts. But, in my opinion, the goal of initiating a war was not to damage women, even though they were subjected to shameful violence depending on their tribes and where they lived. When rebels found that men and boys were protecting their territory, it made them grow more enraged. To intimidate the males, combatants then used the strategy of raping, killing, and beating women. Because men and boys might carry guns to protect their neighborhood, rebels attacked them more than women. Then you can see that men were more likely to be subjected to violence than women.

The discourse of the above interviewee confirms that males were targeted more than females during the DRC violent conflicts. This means that a gunman and a bystander cannot be brutalised similarly. According to Raltson (2020), there is a space between the person wielding the weapon and the one facing it. These authors confirm that an in-between is someone confronted with a weapon and forced to choose between death, mutilation, torture, becoming a bearer of arms or engaging in another type of violence. In addition, forced conscription exists in most armed conflicts, which Freedman (2016) regards as a form of violence involving child combatants, albeit it also affects males.

Hust et al. (2019:1720) claim that when men become victims, they revert to the masculine dominance they used to abuse women and other men. Sexual victimisation, domestic violence, and hate crimes are all examples of gendered violence against males, and there is a lot of overlap between these categories (Javaid, 2018). Because raping a man is culturally incompatible with manhood, the Congolese males who were assaulted constructed their persecution. Because of the patriarchal character of their social milieu, most women easily disclose the gender-based violence they face daily, whereas men do not. Therefore, when men are victims and women, and other men are abusers, gender-based violence in the form of domestic violence is underreported (Javaid, 2018; Meyer, 2020; Senkans et al., 2017). As a result, many Congolese men who had been victimised were hesitant to speak out about their ordeal. They took this stance since reporting was incompatible with their manhood, especially because their culture prohibits males from exposing their feelings.

More interviewees revealed how often Congolese men were subjected to domestic violence by their wives. Ohambe et al. (2014) believe that women assaulting men in the home sounds like a tragedy that needs to be addressed, but men rarely speak up about it, even though it is a reality. When speaking with Gege DBN 2021, he stated, "*my wife used to insult me and use filthy comments in front of our children.*" This interviewee attributed his wife's behaviour to a disrespectful woman with lousy manners. He admitted that that had happened because his wife was more educated than him and had a powerful position at work. Straus (1990, 49-73) states that such a situation refers to "psychological aggressiveness and behaviour that is degrading or undermining one partner's self-worth." Sala DBN 2021 also stated how he discovered his wife chatting with other guys through her WhatsApp exchanges and that there was ample evidence of him being cheated on. He went on to say:

> My wife, with whom I have two sons, had been abusing me for eight years. Although we are still married, there is no intimacy between her and me. She was also a highly demanding person.

Most interviewees admitted that many Congolese women who have well-paying occupations or come from financially secure homes abuse their husbands. According to Rolle et al. (2018), most women become disrespectful to their spouses if he is impoverished or earns a low wage that is insufficient to meet their wife's demands regularly. This has led to many Congolese women engaging in misconduct, seeking satisfaction elsewhere, or even dictating to their husbands how the payment should be spent. As a result, many Congolese men live without money throughout the month because their wives have spent it on clothes, leisure and entertainment.

Interviewee Sala DBN 2021 also provided another example where "*I was divorced with my wife, but she refused to let me see my children even if I was paying their support.*" This portrays another suffering that most Congolese males face in the DRC, even though the man can be granted permission by the court. According to Peretz (2020), a man is victimised by domestic abuse when he is denied his natural role as the father of his children and the legal right to contribute to the child's social life for an extended length of time. Dewis DBN 2021, an interviewee, offered his thoughts:

My first marriage ended because I became asphyxiated when my wife became overly demanding. That is the day when my ex-wife began to file a maintenance complaint against me. I had had enough. I had never refused maintenance and was paying it on a monthly basis. But as you understand, I later discovered she wanted extra money through the maintenance tribunal. I was paying everything, including school education, medical charges, transportation costs, clothing, and school pocket money, but I still did not have access to my children. I also noticed that, that woman had already moved in with a new man.

When asked if they had ever reported their wives' abuse, all of the interviewees insisted that no male could disrespect or drown himself. Most of them claimed they could not leak out their experiences of domestic violence because religious leaders counsel couples to seek God's face rather than air their dirty laundry in public. Others stated that they might be terrified of the embarrassment that comes with child abuse as parents. In this line, Olson and DeFrain (2010) state that many men are hesitant to confront their abusive women due to male ego, close friends who seek to minimise the severity of the problem, and a fear of being ashamed. Interviewees raised concerns regarding DRC societies' taboos and the abomination or horror connected with societal traditions. Furthermore, Senkans et al. (2017:400) and Williamson (2020:13) confirm that males cover up their wives' aggression because they fear separation consequences. This explains why many Congolese men who married affluent women or women from wealthy families cannot speak openly about the calvary they face due to their women's abuse. These women behave abusively because they are confident that their men will not expose them for fear of being considered weak men. Ford (2018:1312) contends that violence against men has been undervalued due to social and gender stereotypes that portray men as family leaders. Men's empowerment as breadwinners, powerful protectors of households and other dependents, and hegemonic masculinity contribute to this social benefit. Pablo DBN 2021, one of the interviewees, explained:

In our country DRC, our mothers and fathers can endure gender-based violence. But I believe a man should behave like a sheep. When a sheep is butchered, you know it does not make a lot of

noise. It dies bravely, unlike other animals such as goats that scream and kick their way to death. This is also something a Congolese man must do. When confronted with difficulties, I must act like a sheep. I should always act like a man and never act like a lady.

This rhetoric implies that Congolese men tolerate gender-based abuse as long as they do not cry or display any signals of vulnerability. This confirms men's unwillingness to report the abuse to the appropriate authorities. This condition has been exacerbated since, in most Congolese communities, it is an abomination for a man can to cry or lament just because a woman has abused or beaten him. Brammer (2019) indicates that a crying man would lose prestige because of the cultural obstacles and stigma associated with sobbing. In addition, these men may believe that breaking up with their wives would cause more harm to the children they have. This situation embraces feminist epistemologies and ideologies, according to Kim and Santiago (2019:15) and Thobejane (2012), because they primarily focus their theories on the historically-evolved patriarchal system that has attempted to reduce men to emotionless animals, while women are seen as too emotional and conscientious.

Furthermore, Ford and Becker (2020) and Hust et al. (2019) agree that the community's treatment of male and female rape survivors may be similar. Female victims of sexual assault are shunned and regarded as outcasts in some Congolese communities, while men who are victims of sexual violence are likewise shunned and considered outcasts. The added feature of being shunned by one's family, which some women endure, does not appear to exist in the case of male victims. This appears to be a possibility in many DRC cultures because the male is regarded as the household's head. As a result, Mungela (2016) claims that male victims of sexual assault may also experience emasculation due to homosexualisation. When a man is emasculated, he loses his worth in society since his social status as a man is diminished. It would also indicate that Congolese men who have been victims of sexual assault were then tainted with homosexuality. During the armed conflicts, many Congolese men were raped, subjecting them to the harshest abuse a man can receive in society. The international and local communities have kept a blind eye

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to all the atrocities of sexual violence men have endured in DRC (Mungela, 2011). This frustration also pushed male survivors to remain silent but actively deny being sexually abused.

In addition, interviewees admitted that failing to recognise early emotional abuse can lead to ongoing abuse and more severe physical violence. The dominance of the male perpetrator and female victim paradigm in sexual violence discourse makes it difficult for many people to accept men as survivors (Dixon et al., 2020:3131; Stemple & Meyer, 2017). This is why, in DRC, male rape myths and considerations devoted to masculinity remain profoundly incompatible with victims, as they exacerbate the problem. Cobra DBN 2021, an interviewee, puts it this way

> Take, for example.... ummm you know! One day my wife assaulted me, my heart expanded. I felt enraged and hurt on the inside. That is what occurred to me, and no one knew about it. We, the men, are our family's leaders. Then, I told myself….the reactions of people when they hear I was assaulted in this way could not be positive. So, I decided to keep it hidden, but it was eating away at me on the inside. I could not tell anyone since it would jeopardize my male strength. … Sure, I was scared that if I leaked the information, I would not be seen as a man. I would lose my strength and rot like a leaf. People could tell that I was not a man anymore.

This interviewee's verbatim illustrates how men who admit to being victims of rape or other types of GBV encounter significant obstacles in their families and communities. Indeed, by disclosing their gender, Congolese males may find themselves living a complex life, unable to reconcile their gendered selves with what they have experienced. This is because men's victimisation creates real barriers because the types of network assistance men receive differ from those women receive. Aragbuwa (2020) and Lowenstein-Barkai (2020) agree that men and women avail major explanations for male victimisation through tangible, alleged, or expected harmful responses to institutional actors.

Gender homogeneity in gender-based violence refers to how men's experiences and the degree of their victimisation are homogenised. Morris and Ratajczak (2019) find that homogenizing men's experiences of gender-based violence make male victimisation rates equivalent to female persecution rates.

However, symmetry in gender-based violence is highly ambiguous since evidence suggests that it fails to capture the complexities of dimension or seriousness of context required to effectively compare men's and women's experiences (Gavey, 2019; Stemple, Flores et al., 2017). That being said, female partners inflicting violence on men is often quite severe (Dixon et al., 2020; Evans et al., 2019:77; Johnston & Huston, 2018:12), which in fact, does not empirically support the argument that women commit violence for self-defence.

Results of this research confirm that the truth regarding gender balance probably lies in how men and women leverage the ferocity they experience. Interviewees suggested that the violence women perpetrate against men is complex veracity that is not entirely exposed. Felson and Cares (2005) conclude that while individual women's violence against men is more likely to produce serious damage, men's collective violence against women is more detrimental in various ways. When men are victims of women's violence, it sounds harsher than when men's persecution is discussed in an essential manner that shows how brutality is not linked up with gender balance. Lusha DBN 2021, one of the interviewees, confessed:

> Men and women can both experience and perpetrate violence against each other. I remember there was a time when my wife forced me into sex even if I did not want it. Me too, sometimes I force her in the same way. I know I am violent with her at times. When she pressures me, I feel morally violated, and she too feels offended when I abuse her. In comparison to me, she recovers quickly. When I offend her, she informs her friends, who assist her in her recovery. As to me, I cannot tell a man like me that my wife raped me because I will become the village's song. It is acceptable in our society for a man to use hard power to his woman, but it is unacceptable for a woman to abuse her man.

According to this interviewee, any gender can perpetrate or undergo gendered violence, and both can suffer in the same way but cannot manage it in the same way. In truth, regardless of the offender, men and women have physical and moral bodies that violence can harm in the same manner. In this line, Ford (2018) and Mungela (2011) confirm that when a man has harmed a woman, everyone can see it and

sympathise with her, but no one cares about a male because he hides it so well that no one notices. Garvey (2019), for example, underscores this distinction, even though victimisation is the same for both males and females. Stemple et al. (2017) and Wade (2017) illustrate that in non-consensual sex, men's victimisation proportions are comparable to women's, despite the difficulty of proving it visibly. Congolese men's experiences with unsolicited sex are frequently different from those of women, and how men suffer reflects their trauma. In other words, the way distress controls the minds of male rape victims is the same as it is for male rape victims, and the same is true of the pain they grieve (Ford, 2018; Wade, 2017). In this vein, males may engage in undesired sex as a socially acceptable response to the opportunity (Ford, 2018). Such an encounter damages Congolese men because gender socialisation shapes their experiences in various but significant contexts. According to Javaid (2018) and Messner (2018), alcohol plays a complex role in male sexuality since it fulfils the hegemonic standard of taking risks, which enhances vulnerability.

Furthermore, LGBTQ men are at a higher risk of being sexually victimised. This appears to result from cultural perceptions of gay and queer masculinities, societal humiliation, and well-established sexual scripts (Ford & Becker, 2020). This necessitates a deeper dive into men's multifaceted experiences, such as broad claims of gender equality in sexual victimisation. Gender balance appears to have severe political repercussions, as it may impede attempts to address violence against women while further marginalizing queer men. In a context like this, men's persecution experiences during a GBV inquiry are influenced by masculine standards.

5.8. Renegotiation of masculinity after the outbreak of armed conflicts

Patriarchy is the institution that governed cultural traditions before and after the DRC armed conflicts. This institutionalisation created the continuing and incorrect labelling of a delinquent masculinity category that reinforced male gender cultural roles and identities (Demetriou, 2001:344). Preexisting social order and cultural norms are disrupted in the setting of conflict, a situation that results in political and economic turmoil (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). In the DRC context, the environment of armed conflicts damaged men's masculinities because of conditions men to engage in belittling activities that formerly

belonged to women. Following the conflicts, the same men had to rethink new methods of being men, meaning they had to renegotiate their masculinities.

Shifting roles in social, technical and economic spheres during armed conflicts has provoked changes in masculine identities. By overlapping the significant social transformations outside the control of any group or individual, and the implication of these changes for men, Barrett and Whitehead (2021:9) underscore that these changes mostly affect men in the working class. Accordingly, the current context in the DRC has increased opportunities for some women in what had been largely male-dominated professional, creating huge frustration for most men. Correspondingly, Barrett (2021) confirms that the revolution has increased women's freedom in choice over relationships, divorce, childbearing, contraceptive use and sexual expression, and having dual incomes in the household. This highlights how shared power has caused a shift in the DRC's previously rigid gender roles. Interviewee Igo DBN 2021 concurred

> No male could ever do his wife or mother's job before. It was obvious who did what, and when and how they did it. There is change today, as you can see. Our mothers, wives, and daughters have a lot of freedom and choice. One day, they will march on our heads. Our power has been challenged, and women have taken part of it. That is evolution. That is time.

This interviewee's discourse illustrates how society supported gender norms in the past and how times have changed by allowing women to take control. On the other hand, tackling the masculinity crisis is critical because it limits Congolese men's maleness successes. Men are wealthier than women since they provide the bread and butter for most Congolese families. It is obvious that man earns more money, does less domestic labour, and leads social and community institutions. This prosperity, according to Fehlberg and Pepper (2016:679), makes males more influential in the family, community, and levels of society. Women endure the brunt of society's hardship due to an outmoded understanding of feminity, but no one talks about a feminity crisis. Furthermore, in the contemporary context of renegotiating masculinities in the DRC, "beauty" is a masculine trait that, via dialogue, can influence the tone of masculinity itself. This is

about the qualities connected with beauty, such as weakness, sensitivity, glory, and dignity, rather than a man's outward appearance (Buraway (1980). Even though such traits are corrective to power abuse, they do not appear in portrayals of masculinity. Instead, masculinity often connects with men's desire to dominate, manipulate, and possess women physically and morally. Unlike femininity and beauty, Attractiveness evokes manipulative ownership, preventing masculinity and beauty from speaking. Beauty is not a desirable trait among Congolese males but rather a means of obtaining a social position. Female beauty refers to objectifying and subjugating women, according to Gonzalez (2020), who examines how hegemonic masculinity relates to gender imbalance and men's dominance. The difficulties in discussing beauty with Congolese men stem from the fact that it includes the power values embedded in the term masculine, which can finally reframe and beautify masculinity. In other words, men regard heterosexuality as the norm and patriarchal masculinities as damaging and unattractive because they may only consider the beautification of masculinities. According to Buraway (1980:155), this perspective would provide a more conducive atmosphere for thinking about masculinities in ways that are less incompatible with societal harmony. As a result, most Congolese men appear to be uninformed of the potential benefits of changing gender relations and reject socio-cultural reform. Change is already happening, and Congolese men are under a lot of pressure to maintain their social status. However, the findings of this research support this dynamic and emphasise the need for shifting gender relations. This is why interviewee Jobe DBN 2021 shared:

> All of us are men in need of positive change. We recognise that the benefits of men and women working together and encouraging one another can be enormous. Such change is required of men, and I believe it is possible. It will not take anything from us since we are men. We cannot be against change if it aids our economic and social advancement. Even if many of us dislike it, transformation is occurring, as you and I can see. Many individuals want to keep their social status and power, but let us fight to improve how we interact with women in society.

Furthermore, males who participated in the DRC's armed conflicts but returned to their communities must also change. According to Laney et al. (2016), some soldiers return from the war with emotional scars and serious concerns about reintegrating into civilian life due to problematic memories that would not go away on their own. War-related trauma is naturally discouraging, shattering, and even emasculating because it contributes to the loss of maleness. To this end, interviewee Giza DBN 2021 emphasised:

> ...and before the rebellions, we were those peaceful men. Many males, like women, were raped when the war broke out. Other men humiliated us because they had a gun that gave them authority over us. They appeared to be more men than we were. We were not the men we used to be. These ones were the men, but not us.

During the fighting period, many Congolese men lost their masculinity because the war's effects reduced them to a woman's position. To put it another way, men lamented the degradation of their treasurable manhood in their villages and communities. According to Nancy (2017:867), men always seek tactics to maintain masculine power in their communities and families after the war. As life changed following the cyclic armed conflicts, Congolese men felt obliged to deal with low-level components that damaged their masculinity and contributed to the stereotype of weakness. As a result, these men strove to collaborate with their wives and other women to help their communities and families grow. Most interviewees said that many men today are trying to assist with domestic chores. In his words, interviewee Beta DBN 2021 backed this viewpoint.

> Men went through many hardships. No one could envision a fellow man behaving in this manner. It gave many individuals a better understanding of what life is all about. Our bodies, hearts, and minds had all been harmed. It taught us a valuable lesson, but life must go on. We attempt to share activities at home when we have free time. We did it during the war; why not do it again now that the conflict is over? It is just matter of moving to the next logical step.

Economic poverty and political instability plague the Congolese people, restricting alternatives and undermining gender norms. This has led many men to participate in previously male-only or female-only activities. Such willingness backs up one of the theories that guided this research. According to Cools and Kotsadam (2017:235), constructive masculinity indicates the possibility for men to live a new type of masculinity by embracing new masculine behaviours in contrast to negative and toxic masculinities. In other words, before the onset of armed conflicts, Congolese males enjoyed the traditional gender norms of work distribution. Still, they have opted to take a different approach to contribute to home responsibilities. Such transformation must begin at home to expand and have a wider impact on communities. As a result, a new Congolese man's actions and beliefs must allow him to shatter the symbol of negative manhood. Indeed, through crushing manhood, this new man is renegotiating his masculinities to aspire to male power that can build community cohesion. In line with Hamilton (2019), men who value women are likely to encourage them to join in economic, political, and religious inclusion. Men must consider women by striving for gender equality in all aspects of life. This understands that Congolese men revise their masculinities to eliminate the ambiguities between social realities and idealised masculinities in their societies. According to Evan and Anne (2017), men must choose to resolve the social tension between cultural expectations and their real positions in society. This technique addresses toxic masculinities because they promote harmful gender norms that damage women and society. Men have a significant identity crisis because of negative masculinity attitudes, according to Wintermute (2017:22), since they cannot adjust to the changing landscape of gender norms in which women have gained greater power and equality. Addressing this issue in the DRC setting is critical since these inconsistencies frequently result in domestic violence and other forms of GBV in families and communities, though not as frequently as they did prior to the onset of armed conflicts. Congruent with Valerie (2016:179) and Wintermute (2017:23), revolution happens when men and women work together to change women's gendered social roles and urge them to participate in economic and educational activities. Women can achieve a position that encourages them to demand more rights in the home and society while men maintain their claims to power. Thus, interviewee Wata DBN 2021 exemplified:

A man and a woman cannot be the same, not equal because it is impossible. They can help one another and collaborate. There is no shame when a man goes to cultivate with his wife. It can please the woman to see her man joining her in washing the dishes, cooking and doing many other domestic activities. Man must understand that one finger can never crunch a louse. For example, when a woman has studied and works and both bring home a salary, there will be mutual respect. This can break that tradition that places woman below us men. I want to see a man serving a woman and a woman serving a man.

The above interviewee agrees that gender equality cannot undermine or eliminate manhood. On the contrary, the more men and women join forces, the fewer women can rely on males for support. This implies that Congolese men who seek to subordinate women with the cover of cultural traditions end up perpetrating gender-based violence. For this reason, men must make a big difference by urging other men to avoid enslaving women (Janice, 2020; Nadera, 2017:10). Men's unwillingness to support women in their activities can be distorted if gendered hierarchies are dismantled. Therefore, Congolese men must embrace the popular narrative of women's emancipation.

As highlighted in the preceding discussions, there is a conflict-ridden relationship between idealised masculinities and actual realities in gender issues in DRC. Nadera (2017:15) notes such a clash is normal because societal change intersects with the repercussions of social havoc due to war. Men in Congo have lost their ability to provide for their families and become victims of violence. When a man fails to protect his family, the physical strength and dominance parts of his masculinity become questionable. While some Congolese men are altering or re-attributing their conceptions of masculinity, the majority still adhere to the male dominance ideal, which puts pressure on both men and women. Furthermore, Teitelbaum and Russell (2021:243) confirm that men's views, beliefs, and actions concerning sex roles remain ingrained in their identity and are difficult to abandon.

5.9. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the themes interviewees shared concerning the impact of armed conflicts in DRC on the creation of masculinities and GBV experiences. The interviewees shared in the chapter how the cyclic armed conflicts did not create GBV and gender inequalities because they existed long before. Besides, it discussed how war contributed to militarised masculinities during the war. Moreover, interviewees shared how military institutions played a crucial role in constructing military masculinities. Masculinities infer that most soldiers are males who had learned about gendered roles and masculinities as children, but they also received military training that included military culture. This means that they learned to use violence, a trait of tough masculinities. Therefore, soldiers learn to avoid feminine behaviours in favour of brutal and pitiless masculinities, which are an expression of violence itself.

Furthermore, it explicated the interviewees' opinions regarding the prevalence of GBV in war. War causes more GBV because patriarchy and various other interconnected factors such as culture, hegemony, and masculinity preexisted in society. These features and armed conflicts shaped Congolese men's perceptions of the war setting and masculinity construction. Men who committed violence profited from the country's disarray, expelling their raped wives or abusing them at home because the situation was insecure. The section also discussed men as perpetrators and victims of GBV in war. Finally, the interviewees' opinions about renegotiating masculinities after the war were presented and discussed. This infers that men had to break some toxic masculinities' qualities by becoming new men with new ways of behaving in society. By doing so, men were encouraged to esteem women and participate in domestic tasks at home and society because of these masculinities.

CHAPTER SIX

NEGOTIATION OF MASCULINITIES IN THE TRANSNATIONAL CONTEXT AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the research outcomes regarding how Congolese male refugees renegotiate their masculinities in the transnational setting and gender-based violence (GBV). By renegotiating their masculinities, these male refugees have shared their life experiences in the host country and the use of GBV. This means the interviewees related and interpreted their own life experiences, while the researcher interpreted them using theoretical and analytical constructs (Plummer, 1995).

The analysis has attempted to discuss the prospects and causes of the renegotiation of masculine identity in great depth. The exploration linked these elements to gender-based violence in a transnational context as experienced by research interviewees to gain a better understanding of their situations. The cultural and social transition from their home country to the current transnational location was the focus of these circumstances. This chapter is organised around the primary themes that emerged from the data acquired during the interviews due to this method. It discusses the findings of the research, which are organised into seven sections: South African masculinities; South African masculinities and GBV; Congolese male refugees' experiences of GBV in South Africa; renegotiating masculine identities within a transnational cultural context; challenging gender roles, gendered and social hierarchies in a transnational setting, and accommodating a new life in a new country.

Because this research focuses on the experiences of male refugees in South Africa, it is vital first to look at the country's masculinities.

6.2. South African masculinities

6.2.1. South African history and hegemonic masculinity

South African history has played a significant role in sustaining forms of masculinities and perpetuating violence, particularly gender-based violence. The theory of the masculinity crisis ignores historical links to violence in South Africa during the apartheid system. Violence became normalised during this era because it embedded class oppression through socially constructed forms of aggressive masculinities (Hamber, 2010). In this way, apartheid denigrated black men and injected violence into their gender identities by treating them as subordinates and referring to them as boys (Morell 2002:322). This resulted in most black men becoming involved in the violent struggle against apartheid. Moolman (2017:45) states that young black men had to fight to recover their masculinities that had been stolen by segregation and violence that were acceptable and legitimate during that epoch. During the violent struggle, black men regarded others as comrades, a term that somehow bestowed status and respect on a downgraded black man (Mahadea & Kaseeram, 2018:222). Besides, masculinity also motivated the black male youths who considered themselves liberators to start desiring women (Morell et al., 2013).

Despite all this, the democratic transition rendered this brutal and sexist struggle against masculinity obsolete. During the post-apartheid period, former liberators were belittled and defined as criminals. This occurred because of the noble reasons that had made them heroes during the segregation period (Hamber, 2010:79). For instance, Sibeko (2017) explains how the comrades who had given up their formal education for the sake of the struggle were suddenly excluded from the economic, political, and social arenas. This condition prompted many South African men to reassert their violent masculinities in areas where they still wielded power, most notably intimate relationships with women (Hamber, 2010). Apartheid's influence on the construction of violent masculinities was not limited to the struggle because it frequently used regular brutality to chastise young black boys. Morell (2001) shows that up until 1996, approximately thirty-thousand boys per year were subjected to whippings due to court sentences. This

confirms that subjecting children to brutalities at a young age acquaints them with the normalcy of violence, which encourages ruthless masculinities.

Indeed, the above context exemplifies how hegemony governed South Africa until recently. Hegemonic masculinity entailed that men possessed all powers in the public, political, and social arenas, from the family to the national level. According to Morell (2001), men became powerful because they earned money, held influence, and made decisions in both black and white families. Similarly, Hamber (2010) emphasises that men's compensation for equivalent work was often higher than women's and that both traditional and current regulations discriminated against women. In other words, in today's South Africa, hegemonic masculinity and women's advancement are divisive and sensitive issues. South African society has its own unique ways of expressing, defending, and projecting masculine power over women.

The above interpretations confirm that the current context of aggressive masculinities in South Africa is a continuation of the apartheid epoch's brutal masculinities, a situation that May (2021) agrees clarifies how governmental interventions can condone male violence through the construction and normalisation of violent masculinities. As a result, the next section discusses the various dynamics that propel masculinity in South Africa.

6. 2.2. Prompters of South African masculinities.

6.2.2.1. Family construction and socialisation

The South African family structure appears atypical because most homes do not have a male head but are instead led by women. This demonstrates the absence of fathers in the lives of many South African children, which is linked to extreme poverty in the majority of one-parent families and those governed by women (Moolaman, 2017:44). Violence is horrendous in South Africa as a result of people's sentiments of hopelessness and hostility, which are linked to poverty, as well as hyper-masculinity, which arose as a way to compensate for boys' lack of male education from absent fathers (Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger, 2012). In the context of South Africa, such a circumstance appears unique since fatherless boys lack a male role model in their lives. As a result of the male-female divide in many children's lives, they develop emotional

problems, anger, and brutal manners, as well as being exposed to drug addiction and STDs (Mahadea & Kaseram, 2018:217).

On the other hand, South African socialisation is based on hegemony, beginning at a young age, with children's families, schools, and society in general. This means that South African children are instilled with hegemonic conceptions of masculinity that stick to gender norms and boys' emotionlessness development. Reigeluth and Addis (2021) and Well et al. (2020) acknowledge that such education encourages male children to believe in themselves as future leaders in their families, communities, and private and social lives. In the same way, certain South African schools promote a culture of male privilege and authority over women. In favour of discouraging discipline and control, many schools eschew emotional responsibility by discouraging boys from being sympathetic, compassionate, and loving behaviours (Broqua & Doquet, 2013:39). This attitude wide spreads because initially, society discourages male children from being talkative and for the reason that many fathers are emotionally absent, stern, intolerant, and unreasonable in comparison to mothers.

Furthermore, some parents do not freely converse with their boys about matters such as sexual education, STDs, and a variety of other topics they deem shameful (Levon et al., 2017:522). Many boys find their horizons narrowed regarding dangerous education, introspection, and societal reflection. In this way, South African culture moulds the boys into the kind of men it needs; those men who cannot need to be disciplined for wrongdoing and who rarely accept responsibility for their acts.

6.2.2.2. Shift in gender roles

South Africa is a patriarchal society in which men hold most social positions. However, given the economic, political, and social changes that have occurred over time, the acceptance of leadership that was inherited from hegemony is being challenged because of a new understanding of gender roles (Beres, 2018:188; Casey et al., 2016:241). In other words, this confirms that these new gender roles are empowering more women. At the same time, men who were previously discriminated against for displaying non-hegemonic masculinities can now enjoy their rights.

According to Luyt (2015: 222) and Moolman (2017:45), this situation is perplexing for young male South Africans because they are torn between what they learned from their families and society about man's social roles and the changes in gender relations that are taking place in the country today. Hegemonic masculinity reassures men that they can feel self-esteem and respect if they can find work, earn an income, and support their families. Still, South Africa's high rates of unemployment and low wages continue to impede men from proving their masculinities. Men have developed bitterness when women and men with non-hegemonic masculinities take on the roles of breadwinners over men with hegemonic masculinities. As a result, some men use their masculinities, salaried employment, and wealth to perpetuate female subordination (Ratele, 2008), inevitably leading to excessive violence and toxic masculinity. High unemployment and income imbalances appear to be the main explanations for South Africa's commonly horrifying male violence.

6.2.2.3. Overcompensation through risky behaviour

Many South African men exhibit toxic masculinity because they fear being alleged feminine. To Closson et al. (2020:39) and Geig and Flood (2020), this mindset is influenced by the belief that being gay is stereotypically associated with being feminine, which leads to homophobic behaviour. South African men dislike being labelled gay, which causes them to overcompensate to prove their straightness. In other words, they become brave and violent to shield their dignity or masculinity, which has been violated. As a result, Adegun (2019:75), Burrel (2018: 460) concur that such men rarely turn a blind eye to any misconduct, such as insults directed at their girlfriends or mothers. South African men are eager to adopt compulsory heterosexuality to affirm their masculinity, which has frequently pushed them to have sex more frequently to confirm they are real men (Moosa & Bhana, 2020: 172). This has never gone unnoticed because it made many people vulnerable to STDs, particularly HIV/AIDS. South African men with more traditional views about masculinity have higher rates of unprotected sexual activity, binge drinking, and motor vehicle accidents than their less traditional counterparts (Gibbs, 2016; Pettifor et al., 2015; Gibbs et

al., 2020). However, this is unimportant as long as men believe they are being addressed as men, implying that their masculinities are secure.

6.2.2.4. Poor techniques for addressing conflicts

Masculinity can become dangerous if people do not address misunderstandings peacefully. Adolescent boys in South Africa are traditionally socialised in a context that forces them to conform to traditional masculinity. According to Sikweyiye et al. (2017:140), traditionalism does not equip people with appropriate skills for resolving conflicts at the family and community levels. Gibbs et al. (2018:800) confirm that South African men are proud of displaying their masculine identity through toughness, dominance, and a willingness to use violence to resolve interpersonal conflicts. The description here reflects how South African children internalise masculinity during adolescence, which explains why male children frequently engage in more antisocial and delinquent behaviour than female ones (Gibbs et al., 2017; Treves-Kagan et al., 2019:9). Such socialisation stretches into adulthood, resulting in South African mature men who are tough, autonomous, and unemotional, while also concealing their vulnerabilities. Furthermore, South African men do not seek help or advice for pain symptoms or mental distress because they perceive these factors as signs of weakness in their true men. Accordingly, men are extremely hesitant to seek medical help or visit a therapist for any mental issue they may have (Gibbs et al., 2020; Jewkes et al., 2020). This clarifies why many men choose brutality over conciliation and other peaceful methods of resolving conflicts in families or society.

6.2.2.5. Struggle over scarce resources

Constant fighting over scarce resources is another effect that weakens South African men's masculinity. This demonstrates how South African black men have faced the issue of limited resources from the Apartheid era to modern South Africa, whereas white men's resources were only severely limited after Apartheid (Flood, 2021; Morrell et al., 2012). Furthermore, women and professional black men in offices have been actively contesting white male privilege, power, and other race groups present in the country. Similarly, the challenge has persisted because many South African men blame women for their

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emasculation. In other words, as women change roles and become family breadwinners or are promoted ahead of men at work, there is a frustrating and serious conflict for some men. Such sociocultural changes have posed an inflammatory threat to masculinity because they result from women's empowerment and their steady infiltration into traditional areas that society has designated as a male's domain (Elmien & Kelapile, 2016:518; Zunlone et al., 2019). Furthermore, men desire to amass wealth and gain success to easily dominate women and other men and exert power over them to cement their place in society as true men. Competition expects men to gain ground where they can establish their manhood and avoid becoming social cowards. This has evolved into ideal urban masculinity centred on overt economic power and multiple sexual partners, which are important factors in establishing a man's social standing and living his hegemonic masculinity (Mahandea & Kaseeram, 2018; Sibeko, 2017). Many South African men can only achieve this position of superiority by dehumanising their daughters and women, which they excel at, through femicide and other indescribable forms of violence against their women in their homes and society.

6.2.2.6. Men's power of control and domestic violence

Hegemonic masculinity gives men the power they use in the home to infringe on their partners' rights. Similarly, domestic violence negatively impacts masculinity by portraying it as a destructive force that harms the home and society. According to Sikweyiye et al. (2017), this stems from society teaching men that leadership is their prerogative, which they must protect at all costs to hamper women from having access to it. South African men learned that women are untrustworthy humans and that males should not share any social position with females for fear of empowering them beyond measure. Closson et al. (2020:32) explain in the same context that women's emancipation has left most men dissatisfied because it has isolated and rendered them powerless and speechless regarding household affairs, including sexual intercourse. Men's disempowerment is the result of societal changes, poverty as a result of unemployment, and low self-esteem, which has resulted in dominant masculinities regarding sexual networks and, in extreme cases, a desire to increase power over women (Gibbs, 2016; Kata-Wallace et al., 2019; Mfecane, 2016). Hegemonic masculinity has given men the power to lead their families, including in matters

pertaining to bed; thus, men choose the time, place, and manner in which to engage in sexual intercourse, whether or not women can get pregnant, or to use protected intercourse, and how many children to have. In most societies, many women have indescribably suffered men's desire for sexual control because they cannot oppose their husbands' decisions. This situation has resulted in women failing to protect themselves against STDs, pregnancy, and unwanted sexual acts (Wood & Jewkes, 1997). The power of men to impose their sexual lusts on their female partners through controlling condom use implies that they can also determine safer sexual behaviours and influence HIV/AIDS risks within the couple (Shai, Jewkes, Nduna & Dunkle, 2012). Men resort to coercive and violent methods because they perceive women as incapable of self-regulation. They believe policing protects women's physical safety and reputation from becoming street women or wild sex workers (de Shong, 2015). In most societies, men regard women's adultery as betrayal, an attitude that emasculates the husband and embarrasses the family and community. As a result, men use brutal controlling strategies to deter and punish women who have committed sexual treachery. Because men consider women as their property, any woman who threatens that bond will obligate her husband to use violence by limiting her movement and freedom. According to Elmien and Kelapile (2016:511), South Africa is a patriarchal society with a strong cultural structure that brainwashes children with gender norms and roles about male power control and the use of violence to reaffirm masculinity. This depicts a social system that teaches submission to women to render them eternal victims, while men learn how to dominate and abuse females in families or communities. This life-long process begins at home at a young age, when parents teach their children about girls' reliance on the family and boys' independence from their parents, and continues into adulthood.

6.2.2.7. Sexual violence

Sexual violence is another manifestation of negative masculinity in South Africa. This type of GBV is widespread in society, manifesting as assaults or rapes in most of the country's townships, households, and societal male-female relationships (Malose et al., 2016: 272). The presence of sexual violence in society mirrors unequal power dynamics between men and women. The desire for power, control, dominance and

misogyny drives men to toxic masculinity, which they use to chastise women for emasculating them. On the other hand, Burrel (2018) confirms that toxic masculinity makes people discuss less and ignore male rape because it is an abomination in society. Accordingly, underreporting male rape is due to its vulnerability in gendered notions of femininity. Most men survivors of rape are often uncomfortable talking about their ordeal because they fear being labelled as weak and feminine considering their torment. Raping a man weakens him because it negates his masculinity by imposing on him womanhood, which affirms the perpetrator's manhood. This destroys the survivor's manhood because the shame he has endured is so stigmatising and traumatising that he chooses to remain silent about his pain as a male. Geig and Flood (2020) show that male rape is alive and well in prisons because of homosexuality, a behaviour that represents prisoners' power and competition among themselves. This explains why male-on-male sex is so common in prisons, despite most inmates being homophobic. In short, Fleming et al. (2015) prove that masculinity in prisons connects with the ability to exhibit specific violence together with the power to withstand it. This means that a prisoner who has lost his masculinity can still recover it out of violence. In reality, inmates are viewed as women and can stab other prisoners to reclaim their masculinity. As a result, male victims are more likely to exhibit aggressive behaviour inside and outside of prisons (Malose et al., 2016: 277; Stern et al., 2015: 359); mostly, when most prisoners are released, they are violent to reclaim their manhood. In other words, the strategy of erupting in violence represents them regaining their manhood after enduring sexual assault. Despite all these factors that give masculinity a destructive connotation, there is the hope of having constructive masculinity, which will be discussed in chapter seven.

6.2.3. Forms of masculinities in South Africa

South Africa is a patriarchal society with various forms of masculinities, and hegemonic masculinity is the most important. Hegemonic masculinity refers to some behaviours that justify males' dominance in society by legitimising the subjection of women, certain men, and other marginalised kinds of being a man (Morrell 2001; Pease, 2017). In other words, this masculinity describes how and why men preserve leading social roles over women and other gender identities in a society that people see as

womanlike. Men do not come into the world displaying different forms of masculinities; they learn them as part of the collective and social construction of gender identity. Cornell (2002) divides masculinity into four types: dominant versus submissive and complicit versus oppositional. In other words, South African society has preset manners in which men should behave. Accordingly, those who consider themselves real men consider anyone deviating from those socially predetermined norms as an incomplete man. In this vein, Pulerwitz et al. (2019) define an ideal South African man as any man who is physically fit, with a large penis, and who fiercely protects and defends the honour of his family and peers. Similarly, Malose (2016) adds that a truly South African man dominates over women and other men in his family and the community, has the word in his family, defends and adheres to his strong ideas, and is involved in masculine activities such as sports and drinking, exhibits sexual energy, and succeeds in everything he tries.

The above points depict how South African society engorges several elements that condone violence, but hegemonic masculinity remains its most powerful pillar. This occurs globally because masculinity defines a social man and encourages most of the risky behaviour that men engage in (Pease, 2017). Men as a gender, according to Morrell (1998) and Morrell (2001), do not have a single stable, monolithic, or essential male identity. Otherwise, there are various and variable masculinities, implying the probability of positive change. According to interviewee Wayi DBN 2021:

> You and I are both men who grew up in one culture and now live in another. You see! Both societies safeguard us as men in our various displays of manhood. For example, the way I do it may differ from the way you do it, depending on where you are. But, regardless of which society, we are greenlighted as men to use masculinity. As men, we are very optimist of our descriptions of our masculinities because we can apply them at any level of society.

Society continuously preserves masculinities and defends the men who use them, which means men can break some but later recreate them depending on the locale. Gender activists think this conceptualisation sows hope since it recognises the possibility of intervening in masculine politics to foster more peaceful and harmonious masculinities (Morrell, 2001).

On the other hand, it is important to know that South African society allows a wide range of masculinities, but the most dominant is hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity entails violence because it grants men complete control over women and other men. Congruent with Levon et al. (2017:514), society supports hegemonic masculinity with specific, fixed content and purpose to explain prominent features of society. This form of masculinity leads society by dividing the patriarchal benefits from those available to non-hegemonic masculinities. This exclusion creates a schism between the patriarchal benefits these non-hegemonic masculinities have access to (Broqua & Doquet, 2013:10; Morrell, 1998). This context makes certain groups, such as South African non-whites, non-heterosexuals, and working-class men, feel discriminated against (Hatcher et al., 2019:83; Luyt, 2015). In other words, societal institutions, such as political power, mass media, and corporate culture, reinforce hegemonic masculinity, although they cause misogyny, homophobia, racism, and compulsory heterosexuality (Hong, 2000; Sibeko, 2017).

It is also worth noting that, in some cases, South African men escalate their aggressive and violent behaviour to confirm their masculinity. In other words, men use hyper-masculinity to express their insecurity about their gender identity (Mahandea & Kaseeram, 2018:203; May, 2021). Dominant men value this masculinity because aggression and violence are legitimate means to express themselves, exercise dominance, and resolve contentions. Hyper-masculine men look to be commanders in any circumstance, are brave, never show discomfort, and are constantly ready for a fight (Ratele, 2008; VicHealth, 2019).

South African males also make use of protest masculinity as well. This variety of masculinity prevails, especially among people with low socioeconomic income, such as the poor and working-class men. It includes those people who feel compelled to act hyper-masculine to voice their anxiety and hopelessness because of their status (Mfecane, 2016:209). Another type of masculinity that exists in South Africa is toxic masculinity. This category of masculinity portrays an ideal man as someone who risks tragic repercussions for himself and even those around him. According to Morell (1998), all masculinities that materialise in South Africa aim at dominating women in society, and toxic masculinity remains one of the leading roots of gender-based and sexual violence. According to Sibeko (2017), men carrying arms are linked to toxic masculinity because it destabilises communities by injuring people. South African men have

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carried arms for the liberation battles. They still do so for burglary and assault, law enforcement, protecting privilege and power, hunting and personal protection, and sport or competitiveness. Carrying a gun makes these men more likely to hold unique masculine identities and beliefs, as it was for fighting for freedom or protecting their families.

6.2.4. Poverty and crisis of masculinity in South Africa

The effects of poverty and the masculinity crisis on the formation and preservation of brutal masculinity in South Africa can clarify these issues better. Jewkes (2002) and Wood and Jewkes (2001) link poverty and ruthless maleness in that material deprivation can exacerbate GBV in all social classes worldwide. Furthermore, intimate partner violence (IPV) derives from men's stress because material scarcity often generates anxiety, which prompts men into violent behaviour (Flood, 2021; Geig & Flood, 2020). Despite that, a more nuanced understanding of the poverty-violence relationship asserts that economic imbalance within the context of poverty is more valuable than absolute income level (Jewkes, 2002: 1424). The prevalent poverty among most black South Africans portrays the modern socioeconomic system and the country's severe wealth disparities (Morrell et al., 2012). Most young black South Africans believe that successful maleness associates achievement with wealth and sexual ability (Morrell et al., 2012). This illustrates South African men compete for women, as all women will desert a poor man but flock to a wealthy one (Wood & Jewkes, 2001:323). As a result, men resort to violence to gain control over women and defend their masculinity against other men (Morrell et al., 2012). This translates to how IPV expresses male control in the strict conditions of modern South African material life (Jewkes, 2002). Overall, poverty does not cause GBV; rather, it intensifies it by associating misogyny and sexism with male vulnerability (Morrell et al., 2012:23).

On the other hand, the concept of a masculinities crisis implies that South African men are becoming increasingly confused and insecure. Women have infiltrated men's social power because of their growing social and cultural dissatisfaction with male's traditional displays of masculinity (Moolman, 2017:44). The inconsistency between old masculinity principles and men's actual social roles in relation to

women exemplifies a potent patriarchal hangover (Luyt, 2015:220). This situation causes a masculinity crisis, the origins of which can be traced back to anti-feminist literature written in response to the women's and gay liberation movements in Western industrialised countries (May, 2021; Sibeko, 2017).

On the other hand, it is critical to comprehend the theory of the masculinity crisis' applicability in the South African context. The theory stipulates that men are the primary breadwinners in their families. Still, current social changes are causing them to lose this social role (Hamber, 2010:82). Looking at this theory in a Western context may cause problems when applying it to the South African context because many South African rural women have been feeding and managing their families for a long time until today (Malose, 2016:280). In a word, the concept of masculinity crisis appears to be a failure in the South African context because it reproduces the breakdown of the traditional Western family structure. Furthermore, believing that the problem of South African men's violent behaviour stems from women's empowerment is a myth to dispel by understanding the role of history and poverty in this issue.

6.3. South African masculinities and gender-based violence

Contemporary South Africa experiences high levels of violence in general and GBV in particular because of the crisis of masculinity. Hamber (2010:77) considers masculinity in its complexity since there are various ways to become a man in society. Connell (2005) argues that masculinity considers the impacts of behaviours on bodily experiences, personality, and culture.

The prevalence of sexual violence in South Africa, as well as violence in general, has increased throughout the Apartheid era and continued into the post-apartheid democratic transition period. Congruent with Walker (2005), South Africa's post-apartheid Constitution fueled a dramatic spike in sexual violence and a crisis of masculinity because it granted equal rights to both males and females. Before 1994, masculinity characterised a man's societal function as the household's leader and provider, a role that males have increasingly lost over time. In this context, it is assumed that South African women profit financially from their education, which allows them to work. This implies that women no longer see their husbands as breadwinners or family leaders, which has enraged males who feel emasculated. In truth, South Africa's

democratic transition has brought a strong gender equality agenda by triggering a similar backlash against women's perceived over-empowerment (Dube, 2016:80).

Through male socialisation, South African culture and traditions develop toxic masculinity in males, which links to GBV. Hoffmeester (2017) delimits destructive masculinity in South Africa as a set of social attitudes and beliefs that depict masculine gender as violence, sexual aggression, and a lack of emotional expression. Thus, Dunaiski (2013) confirms that men, women, and other genders are at risk due to such masculinity. South Africa's background reveals high levels of violence because men are both perpetrators and victims.

In contrast, the South African crisis of masculinity appears to be a challenge. This is because the impact of the migrant labour system on black families during Apartheid meant that black women were frequently the major breadwinners and caregivers of families (Hamber, 2010:82), a situation that persisted after democracy. However, the pandemic of HIV/AIDS has crippled the position of South African women as primary caregivers in their families since 1990. This viewpoint dismisses the idea of a new masculinity crisis. Jewkes et al. (2020) believe it is more of a political issue, as a true crisis would have damaged men's psychology. In other words, male-female power dynamics have grown unstable, as masculinity appears to support the Western-influenced objective of defining the South African new man. The new man concept complements positive masculinity because it depicts man as empathetic, monogamous, peaceful, and supportive of power equality at all levels of society (Malose, 2016:267). This connects with the constructive masculinity idea that underpins this research. Therefore, the new man represents a form of masculinity that rejects male dominance and oppression of women. Oppressive forms of masculinity are societal constructs that the same society can still alter. Looking at this new and constructive man, Morell (1998) confirms that he possesses unique qualities, including introspection, care, outspokenness on women's rights, and home responsibility, and he is not appealed to competitive sports, sexist remarks, and dangerous outdoor activities.

South African men also show masculinity by being involved in several sexual engagements. Men in South Africa have several romantic partners. Elmien and Kelapile (2016) believe that having multiple

sexual partners is a form of masculinity widespread among most South African men since it allows them to idealise their male virility and engage in male sexual conquest. Such male behaviour has a history of causing marital strife. According to Zounlome et al. (2019), this style of masculinity emphasises how most South African men are unwilling to use condoms, preferring unprotected sexual contact. Finally, this masculinity makes some men reject going to the doctor or getting HIV tested, an attitude that puts many men's and women's health in jeopardy by increasing the risk of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV infection. Men have relied on tradition and modernity to express their masculinities, which makes South African masculinities sound contradictory, fluid, and adaptable (Elmien & Kelapile, 2016:510). According to these researchers, tradition and modernity are practised in social spaces and the public health sector, where the masculinity process has been reworked. Interrogating South African boys and men about male violence and hegemonic masculinities reproduces a problematic observation of mostly poor, black, and young men (Mahadea & Kaseeram 2018:204). However, the emphasis should be placed on the impact that apartheid's historical legacy and material life conditions have on shaping the prevalence of violent masculinities in contemporary South Africa. For example, Sathiparsad (2008) emphasises that one aspect of addressing GBV could be assisting men in understanding the role of changing gender relations by highlighting that women's empowerment does not always negatively affect men's social power.

6.4. Congolese male refugees' experiences GBV in the South African context.

6.4.1. Triggers of GBV among Congolese

6.4.1.1. Some women feed their men

Naturally, patriarchy places men as leaders of their families. Therefore, they also have an obligation to feed them. However, interviewees articulated that feeding the family has been complicated for Congolese male refugees due to their refugee status. They argued that being refugees makes it difficult for them to obtain certain services and jobs. This condition worsened with the outbreak of the pandemic of Covid-19 as everything was shut down, and people were compelled to stay indoors for three months. According to Radi DBN 2021:

…and also our permits had expired because of this Covid-19 plague's lockdown. Nowhere to renew them. No office is open, and we cannot seek job. Those who have good documents cannot secure any job. Now, our documents are now useless. We cannot feed our families. This is causing us headaches.

Because of the lockdown, the branch of Home Affairs in charge of refugees in Durban had also closed its doors. This situation made refugees whose permits expired during the lockdown period illegal in the country as there was nowhere to renew their documents. The online service set to help renew was not as effective as they expected. Therefore, many refugees suffered stress due to the loss of jobs and expired documents. As their family's breadwinners, the men became vulnerably stressed as they lost employment. A lack of resources causes poverty, making most men fail to provide for their families.

Considering the above context, some women decided to take over the role of family breadwinners. Such women simultaneously played the roles of fathers and mothers in their families, although there was a man. Most male refugees could not tolerate seeing a woman and the entire family feeding them. Such fears caused many male refugees to think that their masculinities would be at risk and that their wives would no longer respect them. Being eaten by such frustration, many resorted to hard power to enforce and restore their authority. Accordingly, Nunu DBN 2021 revealed:

No woman can feed me as a man. You see! And if she does, I am no more her husband. She is now the man, meaning that my manhood is gone, and I will be in danger. Then, I must utilise every power at my disposal to restore my authority.

Most men dislike their wives feeding them because they believe they are enslaved. This is because when a woman is feeding a man and is involved in other relationships, the woman becomes worried and may even mistreat his man. This demonstrates how most women will not tolerate betrayal, which can cause them to abuse their men due to betrayal. Although they are married, some Congolese male refugees often

engage in extramarital romances in secret, but the legal wives discover it, and they battle to keep their husbands.

Interviewee Jobe DBN 2021 stated:

> When your woman feeds you, you become as if you were a baby. She has complete influence over you and all you do. You cannot go out and take more time because this may cause complications when you return. But, being men, we can always find a way to make time for another woman. If my wife becomes too rigid, I will find someone else to keep me for the cold evenings. Yes, and I recognise my wife can figure it out; yet, as a male, I must restore order by disciplining her.

Many males regard women who are families' breadwinners or work while the man is unemployed as emasculating. These societal shifts were unusual in the DRC, but they are common among South Africans, particularly in Durban. Although some Congolese try to adjust to Durban's context, it still breaks their hearts. This can be referred to as gender-based violence emerging from women's empowerment and steady into traditionally masculine areas to jeopardise men's masculinity. The theory of transnationalism stipulates that transnational migration makes immigrants live in spatial progressions positioned in cultural practices that generate new ways of creating masculinities and identities (Ong, 1999; Pessar & Mahler, 2003). The theory connects GBV and masculinity in that it informs about the dynamic identity formations that create new brutal hegemonic masculinities (Snider, 2008). Transnational immigrants experience dissimilarities between their home cultures and those in the host country and the way of bargaining new identities across space, along with an option depicting previous identities. As a result, men must adjust their old masculine ideals as they apply them to their desires, erasing their image as miserable men with low self-esteem, as well as a variety of other undesirable repercussions. Results of research conducted by Reardon and Govender (2011) conclude that men are frequently encouraged to seek authority and power in the South African culture. Congolese refugees appreciate being above their women in everything, a competition that makes them win women and resources, confirming their masculinity and dominating women. Pressure to

contend and win is a typical part of manhood, where Congolese male refugees must defeat their opponents or risk appearing cowardly. As a result, Congolese male refugees wish their dominant masculine ideas to be manifest as financial power and several sexual partners, which leads to their idealisation of urban masculinity. Therefore, interviewee Giri DBN 2021 admitted:

> we men are players who seek money to have women. This is vibrant in every one of us to build up our hegemonic maleness. This helps us men to have a good social positioning.

Unfortunately, this condition will always dehumanise women so that men can acquire this status and keep male superiority.

6.4.1.2. Financial and work stress

The findings of this research confirm that Congolese male refugees commit GBV as a result of financial and occupational stress in their transnational setting of Durban. Financial and employment issues can easily impact men's attitudes and behaviour because the more stressed men are, the more gendered abuse they can commit. Masculinity perpetuates gender-based violence by discriminating against women and girls due to social gender dissimilarities and harmful norms (Beres, 2018:190). Work is fundamental to understanding masculinity and what it means to be a man, and the position of a man as a family provider remains a universal norm. For this reason, interviewee Soya DBN 2021 contended:

> Because I am a refugee, I am under a lot of stress because I am unemployed. My income is very low because I don't have a job. What I do to support my family makes me ashamed. This is very frustrating, and it makes me feel like I'm not a real man. To be honest, I don't trust myself anymore; this is a lack of self-confidence, and I consider myself a failed man because I can't cater for my family.

This interviewee's discourse implies that joblessness is stressful for male refugees because their families rely on them for food. Lack of income for male refugees is extremely traumatic because it puts

them in a condition that makes them develop low self-esteem and a sense of failure in fulfilling their predefined male social role as breadwinners for their families. According to Pettifor et al. (2015), work stress, combined with the difficulty of fulfilling the family provider role, can lead to most refugees resorting to various forms of domestic violence. In other words, male refugees frequently resort to GBV due to a lack of adequate or sufficient income and the associated status, a situation that prevents them from satisfying socially defined adult male gender norms or expectations and the associated power dynamic. Congruent to Flood (2021), economic stress is a major factor for most South African men, but securing employment and income reduces trauma by ensuring people's successful maintenance of their families.

Furthermore, the lack of a job hinders young men from embarking on their journey into adulthood, marriage, fatherhood, and eventually acquiring wealth (Burrel, 2018). This situation speaks to the feelings of inadequacy and how they drive male refugees to abuse alcohol and drugs, develop a sense of hopelessness, and engage in risky sexual behaviour to bury the economic and work stress that has endangered their masculinity (Well et al., 2020). Therefore, such behaviours may encourage male refugees to resort to violence, including gender-based violence, to prove and confirm their power to re-establish their social status and construct their masculinity.

This research also confirmed that Congolese male refugees faced increased financial and worked stress due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The plague traumatised many refugees in various ways because some lost their jobs. In contrast, others simply saw their refugee statuses expire while the lockdown continued, and they could not renew them. This situation is connected to a distressing upsurge in GBV, as interviewee, Bisi DBN 2021 stated:

> The lockdown came for us refugees because it messed up our lives. We lost our jobs, our papers expired, and we became prisoners in our cramped rooms, sometimes without food. You, too, are a man, and you understand the consequences of this mess. You become another woman in the home because of all the problems with the children and the wife, and you earn nothing to support the family. This stress has the potential to kill you. Then you decide to have a glass of alcohol to help

you cope with the trauma. This may result in violence, but there is no other way to sort out the issue and continue living.

In light of the above experience, Covid-19 caused many Congolese refugee men to resort to abuse due to the physical distancing and movement restrictions imposed on people. These measures were put in place around the world to combat the spread of the pandemic, but unfortunately, they became an excuse for many refugee men to abuse their family members, particularly their wives. Some interviewees stated:

staying with the wife and the children in the home the entire day, week, and month day by day makes them see you as their equal, and your authority evaporates. Being a man, you must establish your authority.

This supports the argument of Diallo (2019) that the pandemic has caused so much havoc in people's lives that it has become an excuse for most abusers to escalate violence against family members, intimate partners, or others living in their homes. For many male refugees, the pandemic remains a burning hell that has transformed them into useless men incapable of providing for their families. Because of this condition, they feel hopeless and powerless over their families. Desperation drove many people to take alcohol or become addicted to drugs, eventually resorting to abuse to restore order in the home.

This Covid-19 crisis has been exacerbating household violence because it generated economic and emotional strains, disrupted normal routines and shifted the roles and responsibilities of men in many households (Teitelbaum & Russel, 2021). The combination of these factors has caused GBV and intensified the risks for survivors, and those at risk have become more restricted than ever in terms of their ability to seek safety or other forms of necessary support. In other words, many male refugees experienced trauma and stress due to the South African government's failure to provide adequate services to them during the pandemic. When male refugees were interviewed, their majority agreed with Ndibi DBN 2021, who stated:

This Corona was extremely severe. It is a hell that has ruined our lives. We are unable to obtain government assistance. We are exactly like this, but we also have families to feed. Many of us took

advantage of the stay-at-home situation to abuse their partners. This time period has cut us off from those who could help us. No contact at all. Some of us who are abusers have had no break from partners or family members battering or molesting, raping, or psychologically or verbally abusing them as a result of this.

It was clear that perpetrators of gender-based violence benefited from the South African government's failure to recognise the impact of strict lockdowns right away. According to Muchena (2021), this situation encouraged perpetrators because it tamed the women victims of gender-based violence, who were not informed about public services that could have shown them the way out of their abusive husbands to seek assistance. Men used to seek sex workers before the pandemic, but it forced them to leave their brothels. The men who used to frequent those brothels for sex could no longer do so because they were now confined to their homes with their wives. This infers that the wives had to cover a dual sexual role: their own with the husband and the turn that sex workers could provide. Congolese male refugees with such sexual lust frequently forced their women to have unwilling sex several times a day, which resulted in disagreements and, in some cases, fights. These men appreciated this behaviour because they came with it from the DRC, where women have no right to decisions regarding sexual activity (Kangethe et al., 2014; Musimwa, 2019:55). Forcing a woman into sex often causes her emotional abuse, and it results in unwanted pregnancies. Furthermore, most refugees live in cramped rooms with their children, making it difficult to have decent sex, and many women have been brutalised for refusing to have sex in such an environment. Interviewee Cobra DBN 2021 confides:

> ...you can now see with Corona! It's a mess because you can't eat men's food. We are all locked in the flat, in our room, with the children. You're hungry, and there's food nearby; you're salivating, but there's no way. There are no public services open, and as a Congolese man, you can only try to force her a little bit. It was easier before Corona because one could look for a sex worker to assist.

According to the above interviewee, Covid-19 caused many men to abuse their wives at home because of sex. The scourge, combined with widespread economic insecurity, has also increased the prevalence of gender-based violence in the form of sexual exploitation and abuse. This has happened because male abusers are aware that their victims, who are women and girls, are in desperate need of basic resources, which connect with various forms of sexual abuse in exchange for basic supplies or any help because men are adaptable to run errands amid the lockdown (Closson et al., 2020; Kheswa, 2017). Moreover, several Congolese men reported feeling anxious and depressed due to the pandemic's effects, possibly due to uncertainty and isolation. In other words, GBV incidents linked to this pandemic pose a risk of infection from the scourge, regardless of the influences associated with violence (Gibbs et al., 2020; Moosa & Bhana, 2020). This implies that perpetrators frequently infringe on survivors' rights and daily activities. Such conditions boosted the risk of gender-based violence, and survivors faced an increased risk of pandemic contamination and its layers of potential harm (Closson et al., 2020).

Furthermore, because schools had been shut down due to the pandemic, girls were deprived of the protective elements related to formal education, and without the daily routine of education, out-of-school girls were more likely to face several types of violence at the hands of male relatives, neighbours, or those within their communities (Moosa & Bhana, 2020). Girls were more vulnerable to the harms of male exploitation when they were not in school. Having said that, because of the internet and cell phone accessibility, men also sexually abused girls online because the girls had spent long periods of virtual activity due to movement restrictions caused by the pandemic.

6.4.1.3 South African gender parity

Regardless of the country's efforts to reduce gendered violence in how men treat women, gender equality remains a serious issue in South Africa. Men impose their masculinities and excessive power over women despite the country's progress and attention given to gender equality. This demonstrates how the numbers of cases of gender-based and sexually motivated violence mean progress in addressing gender imbalance is not as significant or evocative as it should be. This is because many boys and men continue to

abuse girls and women to the point of death and horrible domestic violence. Nkanjeni (2019) purports that this condition has prompted numerous anti-femicide campaigns to reflect on how women in the country worry for their safety and how domestic violence is a pervasive societal problem that infiltrates the country's social, public health, and human rights sectors (Boonzaier, 2008:183). Femicide is defined by the World Health Organization as the intentional murder of girls and women based on their gender, which men usually carry out (WHO, 2012). South African women's present or past partners are frequently the perpetrators of femicide. The behaviours leading up to femicide typically include prolonged abuse, threats or intimidation, and even sexual violence.

Gender-based violence against women by men continues to be a problem in South Africa, and it is not getting the attention it deserves. This is because most gender-based crimes are regarded with impunity, and the perpetrators are rarely held accountable for their actions. Accordingly, Machisa et al. (2017) estimate that 500,000 rapes occur each year in the country, with only one man convicted for every 25 men accused of rape. Furthermore, the law is unfair in South Africa because it has failed to harshly punish all rape offenders, which rape survivors regard as negligence (Soraya, 2018). In other words, this reiterates the fear South African women have in the country, based on the high occurrence of gender-related crimes and the criminal justice system's ineffectiveness in preventing such criminalities.

The South African government is still responsible for crime management, and this responsibility necessitates the development of appropriate policies, plans, and programs. Policies must address male GBV throughout the country, from families to top national management, by involving boys and men as active champions in the fight against gender-based violence (RSA, 2019). This can achieve a lot regarding gender balance as long as there is a need to primarily work with males to mobilise change in social norms and gender relations. South Africa is known for having one of the world's most progressive legislation, particularly regarding prohibiting violence against women and children.

While legislation against gender-based violence is progressive, it fails to penetrate South African society at the grassroots level. Machisa et al. (2017:17) show how dominant power relations, such as patriarchy and hetero-cis-normativity, sustain cycles of violence and demonstrate the law's failure to change

dominant relations significantly and qualitatively. Indeed, this supports conceptions like toxic masculinity, in which certain men's views about masculinity maintain gender inequalities and men's sexual entitlement. This is predicated on men and women continuing using traditional gender constructs, where narratives focus upon discourses of male dominance and feminine submission (Boonzaier, 2005). South Africa's statistics reveal that gender-based violence in South Africa is unacceptably high and alarming (SSA, 2019: 395). This has been happening because South African women (51,2% of the population) make up most of the population (SSA, 2019). Regarding gender equality, the country has improved and is now ranked 17th out of 136 countries (World Economic Forum, 2020). Regardless of this development, the annual reports of severe violence against women and the gender pay gap continue to be sources of concern.

While progress has been made to make South Africa a safer and more balanced place for all, the above themes and figures, according to Malose et al. (2016: 277), show that predominant ideologies such as patriarchy and hetero-cis-normativity continue to control applicable laws and judicial structures that prevent violence against women in particular. These concepts are used as reasons for violence against women in South Africa, perpetuating a lack of gender equality. In truth, gender inequality in South Africa is based on the internalisation of governing patriarchal attitudes, which remains a key barrier to attaining gender equality and just and safe society for people of all genders (Susan, 2021). This context also works for Congolese male refugees living in Durban because, in most cases, when a man has a higher educational achievement or is married, he develops more equitable attitudes. This connects with Assoumani (2016), who maintains that the attitudes of single men regarding gender equality remain the least equitable. This dichotomy elucidates why adult and younger Congolese male refugees who hold more rigid views about masculinity are more likely to report using violence against a partner than those who hold more equitable views. The opinion of interviewee Nolo DBN 2021 tolerates such rigid views by endorsing the theory of masculinity

As a man from DRC and living in Durban now, I am still a man. Not because you put water in a glass that it changes its characteristics. No. It does not. I mean that we are men and we must

dominate women no matter where we are. We are the bosses and our women should be in charge of domestic tasks.

This interviewee points to task distribution and how it creates gender imbalance. These factors often lead to women's discrimination and gender-based violence. Most interviewees held opposing views on this point; those with South African women held equal attitudes toward gender, whereas those with Congolese wives held unequal attitudes, which explains why they frequently abused their wives. In other words, some Congolese male refugees have stuck to their home culture regarding gender, but others have managed to immerse into the South African context. Perhaps those who adopted the positive attitude understand or fear local laws that protect women. According to Stamarski et al. (2015), when some men are out of their comfort zone, they often pretend to appreciate local behaviours to avoid local disturbance. The way gender is regarded in a community can either prompt or reduce gender-based violence. In the context of this research, interviewees confirmed that gender equality approaches significantly impact the acceptability of GBV. Interviewee Lusha DBN 2021 revealed that

changing the social norms that we men and our women internalise can strongly help us to change our attitudes and behaviour in order to influence gender balance. If we have that equality, abuse can reduce. Not changing because we are not home can cause us to remain eternal abusers of our women.

The above interviewee explains that men will remain abusers in case they do not change their attitudes regarding gender. In other words, Congolese male refugees abuse their women in South Africa because the environment is conducive for them to do so. On the other hand, the way they apply GBV to local women differs from how they abuse their Congolese women. The latter are obedient to their traditional norms, although they hinder their rights. In South Africa, Congolese male refugees fear because there are laws that protect local women. However, despite these laws protecting women locally, most Congolese women will never take their men to justice because of abuse. This connects with how gendered socialisation

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in the DRC encourages women to remain docile regarding their men's maltreatment. Such teaching is a norm at the household and social levels, and accordingly, it can either cause or prevent gender-based violence (Assoumani, 2016). In the context of this research, interviewees confirmed that gender equality approaches significantly impact the acceptability of GBV. Interviewee Lusha DBN 2021 revealed:

> changing the social norms that we men and our women internalise can strongly help us to change our attitudes and behaviour in order to influence gender balance. If we have that equality, abuse can reduce. Not changing because we are not home can cause us to remain eternal abusers of our women.

The above interviewee explains that men will remain abusers in case they do not change their attitudes regarding gender. This reflection was emitted by the interviewees who were married and more educated. This connects with Susan (2021), who argues that, in most cases, when a man has a higher educational achievement or is married, he develops more equitable attitudes. Assoumani (20160 also indicates that the attitudes of single men regarding gender remain the least equitable. This dichotomy elucidates why adult and younger men who hold more rigid views about masculinity are more likely to report using violence against a partner than those who hold more equitable views. Such rigid views depict the theory of masculinity in that most men believe that men should dominate women and that women should be in charge of domestic tasks. Such task distribution creates a gender imbalance, which leads to discrimination and gender-based violence. Most interviewees held opposing views on this point; those with South African women held equal attitudes toward gender, whereas those with Congolese wives held unequal attitudes, which explains why they frequently abused their wives. In other words, some Congolese male refugees have stuck to their home culture regarding gender, but others have managed to immerse into the South African context. Perhaps those who adopted the positive attitude understand or fear local laws that protect women. According to Stamarski et al. (2015), when some men are out of their comfort zone, they often pretend to appreciate local behaviours to avoid local disturbance.

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6.4.1.4. Male refugees' power and decision-making in families

The interviewees also indicated that men's power and decision taking in the household could also trigger gender-based violence. In most cases, men perpetrate gender violence and discrimination, which describes them as active architects and perpetrators of social gender imbalances. However, Dunkle et al. (2018:12) state that blaming men for gender inequality overlooks their role as power holders and decision-makers in their families and communities. Thus, men are portrayed as being in a privileged position, reaping the benefits of unequal gender relations while not necessarily actively supporting gender dissimilarity. Interviewee Ndibi DBN 2021, for example, stated that *"in our community, everyone knows that community leaders and heads of families are men."* This interviewee's point is that male dominance in leadership is not something Congolese male refugees actively fight to maintain but rather the result of long-standing social norms that any man can passively continue to benefit from. This implies that men's positions of relative power and privilege can either hinder or enable progress toward gender equality and that enlisting men as allies are critical if gender equality reforms are to succeed. This exemplifies the transformative masculinity that underpins this research because men must take a decisive stand against sexual and gender-based violence before any real action can be considered. Men in leadership positions have the power and authority to influence change on gender issues (Jeanes et al., 2014). Accordingly, several interviewees agreed that gender equality is dependent on men, particularly those in positions of power, supporting the entire process of pursuing gender equality as the primary goal. Congruent with interviewee Igo DBN 2021,

> We men are needed to bring about change in gender issues. We must begin with religious leaders because they wield enormous power and influence in our refugees' community. Yes, both boys and men must be involved because they are responsible for violence against women. I mean, our attitudes toward women and girls in our community must shift in a positive direction. That change can only help the mentalities and attitudes of other male refugees get somewhere.

To achieve greater change in existing gender inequalities, men have the cultural, political, and economic power and the overall power required to effect change in these very relations of inequality. In other words, men are needed because they are powerful. Still, if they are persuaded to act as allies in efforts to promote gender equality, they can easily join in impeding the discrimination and the violence. Cornell (2005:1802) confirmed that boys and men are the gatekeepers in promoting gender equality and that their willingness to open the gate can result in significant change. Thus, through educational interventions, Congolese male refugees can help to change their perceptions of gender. Consistent with Stamarski et al. (2015), gender equality education is critical to progress by focusing on men as community decision-makers. Alternatively, men must be educated for them to see the benefits of gender equality in leadership and, in some cases, community management. According to interviewee Beta DBN 2021,

> Men are the leaders in our community. Women wanted to be involved and have a voice, but they also wanted us men to assist them and collaborate with them because women believe leadership is very sensitive. We men frequently think of women as people who take care of the house, so we need to see what they can do and how they can contribute to making things happen.

Beyond the interviewees' perspectives, transformative education may enable Congolese male refugees to be involved in a cultural modernisation process by becoming partners in the fight for gender equality, which supports the theory of constructive masculinity. As a result, Allan (2019) and Borego and Carrasco (2017:5088) confirm that when men are viewed as obstacles to gender equality, they are labelled as defenders of tradition and religion who obstruct change. For example, in terms of distributing female condoms to refugee communities in Durban, interviewee Sera DBN 2021 argued

> …family planning is a good thing, but you can't tell that to my wife out of me as her man. She is not your wife; she is mine. I say this because it is up to me to decide whether or not she can use those items. And, in reality, I cannot encourage such attitude.

Congolese male refugees oppose gender equality and deny their wives' freedom, as stipulated by their culture and religious beliefs. According to Ndushabandi (2017), even if they are in a foreign land, resistance and denial are initially rooted in Congolese culture and religion. Despite such male resistance, there are a few who understand and welcome change. As one interviewee put it, *"we understand because we are intellectual men."* This group of men is needed for transformative masculinities. By recruiting them as partners, they can play a great role in persuading other men to change their toxic masculinities to constructive ones. This is because men are more likely than women to listen to other men for a change. To achieve this, gender equality should be presented as a positive thing for the entire community of refugees rather than as increasing women's power while decreasing men's power. Coleman and Franiuk (2021:318) state unequivocally that "the goal of empowering women is not to give them power over men." This explains the importance of making Congolese male refugees understand that discussing gender equality does not mean that women will take control of them but that males and females can work together to benefit their transnational community. Amani (2019) refers to this as gender equality, which he values in terms of gender complementarity, or a situation where both genders collaborate for the benefit of all.

However, because many descriptions of the problem of sex and GBV exist in policy texts, gender inequality becomes a situation without a source, cause, or agent. Rao (2019) contends that most GBV perpetrators are men who largely disappear from view throughout the GBV guidelines. Therefore, GBV is described as a serious, life-threatening security issue that primarily affects women and children (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2020). That infers that men are mentioned primarily to accentuate their contribution to GBV programs and in the development of culturally applicable materials (Akan & Alanade, 2019). This raises the question of whether men should be involved due to their assumed positions of power in the community or because they are implicitly assumed to be perpetrators of GBV. The language linking gender and power is being removed from the most recent version of humanitarian gender policy, according to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, to ensure that all genders have equal access to their rights (UNHCR, 2011:1). However, there is still a lack of recognition of the existence of unequal power relations based on gender and other dimensions of diversity. Similarly, Boushey (2019) describes how women, men,

children, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, or intersexual people are discussed in relation to their respective groups, each of which has different capacities and vulnerabilities. Despite this, no one knows if all these groups face the same systematic discrimination and structural disadvantage or if some are more concerned than others. On a different note, sexual gender-based violence (SGBV) has captivated many in the sense that women are portrayed as vulnerable to violence, while men are portrayed as key players in preventing and responding to it. This is because encouraging and supporting men and boys' positive participation in a wide range of community issues, including the prevention and response to the scourge of SGBV, is a critical step toward ensuring equal access to protection and equality for all (UNHCR, 2011: 4). Because there is no mention of the motives or perpetrators of SGBV, it takes on diversity, raising questions about whether refugee men commit GBV based on power relations or social imbalance.

6.5. Renegotiating masculine identities within the transnational cultural aspect

Most of those interviewed for this research stated that being refugees forced them to renegotiate their masculine identities in light of the transnational cultural aspect. According to Mcilwaine and Bunge (2016), refugees' cultural and social positioning frequently develops as an irregular extension of the home country's sociocultural situation. This implies that Congolese male refugees were acting as passive agents in Durban, relying on the local realities of their transnational setting. The impact of the home country is exaggerated when we consider the cultural and sociopolitical context within the current transnational setting. Thus, Congolese male refugees decided to conform their masculine identities to the local patriarchal system based on gender discrimination they had witnessed since leaving their home country. This motivated interviewee Soya DBN 2021 to state that

> Men exist in Durban, and they are just like us. I am a man, and I need to be defined consistently wherever I go. I can make a few changes, but it is a continuation. This is due to the fact that the South African context influences and pushes us to modify our masculine behaviours.

According to this interviewee, masculinities do not change completely when people are away from home. Congruent with Wilding (2014:233), masculinities from different contexts are cultural aspects that cannot fully collide but rather complete. In other words, Congolese male refugees see South African masculinities as a continuation and reinforcement of the masculine identities they brought with them.

Renegotiating masculinity identities in a transnational context is a lengthy process that allows male refugees to become acquainted with and accepted by the local community's cultural behaviours. Furthermore, male refugees must adjust their masculine identities in a transnational context to imitate control and demonstrate sexual power over women. In line with Faria (2017), because local forms of masculinities aim to control women, they can be divided into hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities. This condition explains how feminisation and subordination to hegemonic masculinity are viewed as unpredictable moments and positions that can explain why homoerotic habits include the possibility of hegemonic masculinity through marriage and the maintenance of family ties.

Although Congolese male refugees are renegotiating hegemonic masculinity, Ratele (2017) believes studying black masculinities in South Africa is insufficient because they are in subordinated positions with gender as the sole component. These hegemonic varieties coexist within the same subordination, demonstrating how some are dominant and others are subordinate, all of which cause GBV. Finally, the construction of masculinity among Congolese male refugees leaves the notion of hegemonic masculinity in favour of a hybrid bloc, a strategy for integrating their transnational setting to become equipped with GBV strategies in their new location. Therefore to be well equipped, they will need external factors to help them immerse themselves in the new cultural environment.

6.6. External cultural forces and the crisis of masculinity

6.6.1. Interference of external culture

Several different external cultural forces do interfere with the crisis of masculinity in a transnational land. This means that Congolese male refugees may react to the loss of their hegemonic status in a variety of ways, including domestic violence and drug and alcohol abuse (Kabeer, 2017). As a result, the gendered

connection between Congolese male refugees' individual losses and gains can influence the negotiation of respectable forms of masculinity in their transnational setting. Respectability can shift over time and space as it defines social status by shaping interpersonal relationships. To that end, Lugano (2020) agrees that civility extends beyond what the individual desires because it contributes to the collective, family, and wider community's expectations.

In the minds of Congolese male refugees, respectability infers a measure of one's economic and social capital as well as morality and proper norms of gendered behaviour that maintain transnational obligations. Olson and DeFrain (2019) conclude that men in a foreign land have specific strategies for reacting when they feel they are losing their hegemonic masculinity, including withdrawal, accommodation, resistance and endorsement, and subversion.

6.6.2. Employment, language, and cultural challenges shrink masculinities

Most interviewees agreed that they have actively and creatively struggled to reclaim respectability in their local community by confronting unemployment, language, and local culture challenges. Congruent with Baral (2021:177), the problem of learning a new language, unemployment, and culture are major issues that drive most men to work in any domain, provided they reinvent themselves as real men capable of earning a living and providing for their families. These factors have limited the social spheres of Congolese male refugees in South Africa, negatively impacting their sense of masculinity. In a similar vein, interviewee Bisi DBN 2021 adds,

> In the company of other men, a man is well defined. Every man makes friends through his work, language, and culture. After being severed from all of these, a man hangs in the air like a leaf detached from a tree. A true man should form strong bonds by making many friends and being a good husband at home because he works hard to feed and unite the family through culture.

When men are new to a transnational setting, their social lives and networks are often non-existent. According to Evans (2016:1139), men feel obligated to redefine new circles when their ability to socialise

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is limited, a situation that isolates them. Social isolation harms masculinity by disrupting communication and social contact, forcing people to reinvent themselves in their new surroundings. This explains why Congolese male refugees start doing any job, joining any church they can find, and marrying local women to make new connections. Shrinking social circles foreshadows joblessness because it has forced Congolese male refugees in Durban to fall short of their normative expectations of masculinity as defined in the DRC. Research by Mbonye et al. (2021) found that when men are unable to find work, they suffer inadequacy and stress, which leads to feelings of worthlessness. As a result, they turn to alcoholism and drug addiction, which are well-known triggers of GBV.

Furthermore, in the transnational setting of South Africa, these factors are detrimental to men's hegemonic masculinity. Before moving to South Africa, Congolese male refugees might have been familiar with their stereotypes, but once they settled in their transnational community, they became acquainted with everything. Hearing labels about oneself as an unusual man can be morally frustrating, prompting some men to engage in moral, verbal, or physical violence against those who assume Congolese men's masculine traits during encounters. Ali DBN 2021, an interviewee, explains

> In this country, you constantly hear a lot but remain silent. You must learn to deal with the awkward feeling that comes from what you hear around you simply because you are a foreigner. You may go to a party to socialise, but all you will meet are Zulu men. When they're drunk, they call you names like "kwerekwere." A man like you labeling you in such a way reduces you to a subhuman, but you remain silent. Standing there, you will be telling yourself that you need to be more reserved and less talkative because you are a Congolese foreigner.

Many interviewees confirmed the above thought by sharing the moral pain they experienced solely because they were "*makwerekwere*," or foreigners. Such derogatory stereotypes reflect how being a foreigner implies that one's masculinity is meaningless. According to Inhorn and Konstantina (2018), men who are proud of their masculinity cannot tolerate criticism because they can directly confront such humiliation to confirm they are also male despite having relocated to a foreign land. In other cases, Bassey

and Bubu (2019:36) agree that men have always attempted to identify with the local hypermasculine and misogynistic behavioural subculture to carve out an alternative path to assert their otherwise marginalised transnational masculinity. As a result, many Congolese male refugees have attempted to compensate for their insecure gender identity by retaliating against South African women. In the minds of these Congolese, taking someone's woman is more humiliating than slapping him because South Africans better understand the role of masculinity through a woman. Jobe DBN 2021 stated,

> We can show them that we, too, have power, and that we are even more violent than they think they are. This is intended to demonstrate to them that labeling us does not kill us. But we must do so in a clever manner. We take their daughters, sisters, or wives. That is our plan. He who sleeps with your wife has morally, physically, and financially dominated you.

Congolese men use hypermasculinity as a strategy to compensate for the psychological harm they suffer as a result of stereotypes. These men believe that by exacting vengeance on South African women, they have demonstrated to their abusers that they, too, are men like those South African men who label them emasculated foreigners (Hong, 2000).

Concerning misogynistic behaviour, Congolese male refugees forge an alternative path to retain their masculinity in a transnational setting. Velelo (2021) emphasises how South African women have long complained about the high prevalence of GBV in their country and how their male sexual partners constantly victimise them. As a result, Mbonye et al. (2021) argue that misogyny is an ingrained bias against women linked to sexism and frequently manifests as brutality. In other words, Congolese men can start with thoughts and words that express how South African girls are inferior to boys, that they are there to serve and please boys, and that they can be treated demeaningly. Congolese men act in this manner to demonstrate that they are also dominant and capable of retaliating against anyone who disregards their masculinity. According to Ratele (2008), dominant men who see violence and aggression as legitimate ways of expressing themselves, asserting their power, and resolving conflict value masculinity. In other

words, hypermasculine men are always ready to fight because they are fearless and painless and appear to be leaders in all situations (Datta, 2016).

6.6.3. Covid-19 mask wearing and masculinity among Congolese men.

The global pandemic of Corona Virus, Covid-19, has put everyone's life in danger, and Congolese male refugees have never been safe. According to interviewees for this research, the government decided to impose a strict lockdown after this plague appeared in March 2020. Everyone was forced to stay indoors for seven months due to the lockdown. The Covid-19 virus has been circulating in various forms, with mutations affecting communities, including Congolese male refugees in Durban. When the lockdown was lifted, men rushed outdoors, but the government soon imposed a strict national measure requiring them to wear face masks.

Eventually, science came up with vaccinations that work in conjunction with the wearing of masks. Accordingly, most Congolese male refugees believe that forcing them to cover their noses and mouths is not only a violation of their rights but also a strategy to weaken their masculinities. To Caprano and Barcela (2020), this context implies that the pandemic has found another way toxic masculinity can be harmful. Similarly, interviewee Beta DBN 2021 stated,

> Now before we were men, real men, but today someone has imposed on us to cover our mouths and noses. Our rights have been violated because all men in the home are required to wear it with their wives and children. I believe forcing a man to wear a face mask is the same as forcing him to wear a condom. The mask and the condom are the same thing in that they make all of us men feel incomplete, weak, and even inhuman.

Looking at this interviewee's verbatim, it is clear that he was much less likely to wear a face covering, especially in areas where it is not required. This is why Glick (2020) concludes that the inclination was not based on a person's subjective belief about whether they could catch or spread coronavirus, even if they believed they would recover quickly from the virus. Instead, Congolese men strongly believed that

wearing face masks does not depict respect but conveys signals of masculine weakness. Ali DBN 2021, an interviewee, stated

> Wearing a mask is a blatant mockery of people. It's discourteous because people laugh at you and ask you a lot of questions everywhere you go, even if they're wearing one themselves.

The essence is that men wearing outdoor masks are seen as persons who have been sanctioned for some mistake. Many men think this is a mockery because they look ridiculous, one of the reasons why they become more likely to wear face masks outside their flats. Such attitudes clearly confirm that toxic masculinity is still harmful to all men. On the other hand, destructive masculinity promotes strict adherence to men's gender roles, which can be limiting and harmful (Hatcher et al., 2019:82).

Nonetheless, not all forms of maleness are harmful. Some other interviewees admitted that in their culture, there is a toxic masculinity principle. This is what Kata-Wallace et al. (2019:125) have referred to as toxic masculinity, which posits strength and power as ideals of manliness while rejecting anything stereotypically feminine. The wearing of masks can drastically reduce the spread of Covid-19 (Caprano & Barcela, 2020; Kushner et al., 2020), but many Congolese refuse to wear any mask unless the police enforce the law. This is why the interviewee confirmed

> As you can see, many people are dissatisfied with it. The disease is killing a lot of people, and that sounds terrible. It does not consider whether a man is rich or poor, or whether he is a man or a woman. Because of it, you and I are unable to meet in person for this discussion; it has harmed all businesses, and many of us have lost our jobs. This means we must overcome our preconceived notions about who we are as men and cover our noses and mouths.

This interviewee describes how Covid-19 has killed many people, harmed the economy and businesses, and forced many people out of work. This should be the primary motivation for everyone, rich or poor, male or female, to put on a mask to save a human life. The main reason for not wanting to wear masks is toxic masculinity, which discourages any man from appearing weak. According to Glick (2020),

this reasoning is particularly disturbing because statistics show that men, regardless of age, are more likely to die from the coronavirus than women because women follow the instruction in connection to the Covid-19 pandemic, including wearing masks.

Everyone understands that toxic masculinity harms men in various ways, including a higher rate of suicide and self-harming behaviours, as well as the increased crime of gender-based violence and domestic and sexual violence (Okten et al., 2020). Rebelling against mask-wearing for fear of becoming weak or less manly is nothing more than adhering to toxic masculinity, which is extremely unfortunate for these Congolese male refugees.

Some men, on the other hand, do not actively promote this ideal of manhood. Morell et al. (2013) confirm that toxic masculinity has been ingrained in men from a young age, as they learned how to suppress their feelings through norms such as boys never cry or men always show strength but not weakness. As a result, breaking free from a lifetime of cultural conditioning that has taught Congolese men that the only way to be a man is to never show any emotion other than anger and to always project strength and power can be difficult. That being said, Congolese men can overcome this current impossibility by changing and adhering to forms of constructive masculinities, such as mask-wearing. According to Okten et al. (2020), men can always work to ensure that the next generation does not absorb gender norms that instil toxic masculinity in boys. This can express Congolese men's strength in defeating the pandemic and enduring physical discomfort to protect constructive masculinity as a social good.

6.7. Challenging gender roles, gendered and social hierarchies in a transnational setting

6.7.1. Resisting gender roles

Most interviewees identified resistance as an epitome of Congolese male refugees who engage in the crisis of masculinities. By attempting to understand the crisis of masculinity, these men equally refute its challenging principles to preserve traditional cultural practices. In other words, Congolese men are resisting changes in gender relations and roles within their transnational families. According to Bassey and Bubu (2019:33), some men's failure to fulfil their roles as providers and breadwinners for their families

causes them to lose respect, power, and authority. Despite this, these men cannot abandon their marriages or return to their home country but must instead develop an alternative hypermasculinity mechanism. Bede DBN 2021 elaborates,

> We are Congolese, and we have a culture of our own. Our traditions are oppressive to our women, and we know it, but there is nothing I can do about it. But we must also acknowledge that it is the same culture that keeps our marriages together. This country's culture is harmful to both the individual and the marriage. This is now perplexing, but I believe we can follow the law rather than the culture of this country.

The interviewee above describes how some Congolese male refugees behave when they lose power and authority by emphasising patriarchy and aggression. As a result, culture is being used to cover up and legitimise existing oppressive gender relations. Deryl (2020a) confirms that women are regarded as the guardians of cultural and traditional views and the dividing line between refugees and South African aboriginal populations. This has often led some Congolese male refugees to practice hypermasculinity, including domestic violence and binge drinking. Pasura and Christou (2018:540) report that some men drink excessively to protect manners learned in their home countries, cope with the loss of breadwinner status, and thus gain respectability. Violence against women and excessive alcohol consumption are regarded as threats to men's respectability among refugees. Nonetheless, the image of hegemonic masculinity loss resistance reflects long-standing academic theories and media portrayals of African men as patriarchal, violent, and hypersexualised (Cornwall, 2017). The resistance strategy, which results in excessive alcohol consumption and violence by some men, reemphasises patriarchal authority and violence and should thus be regarded as a renewal of hegemonic maleness, demonstrating how hegemonic masculinities become hybridised in the transnational locale.

6.7.2. Challenging gendered and social hierarchies

Male refugees contest gendered and social hierarchies in the transnational host community because the new local conditions force them to rethink their masculine identities within their transnational households and community. Similarly, Mpani and Nsibandi (2015) argue that the South African government is implementing a democratic policy agenda and an egalitarian context for men, effectively reducing men to the status of dependents. This claims that Congolese male refugees live in a space increasingly restructuring social categories and social status and negotiating respectable forms of maleness. Such transnational human geography involves postcolonial and democratic changing aspects, making it resemble a social workshop where Congolese male refugees reconfigure their masculinities and reasons for respectability that overlap with such gendered identities.

Furthermore, most Congolese male refugees, educated or not, fled the DRC because of poverty and armed conflicts. Hugues et al. (2016:158) specify that refugees who adventure in foreign countries while educated and probably have higher status occupations may find themselves unemployed or experiencing useless jobs in their transnational environment. Nyoka DBN 2021 came to South Africa while educated but worked as a car guard, and he shared:

> It is difficult to recount. I got a job as a car guard; it was like becoming a beggar. I then questioned why I was being controlled by a woman, as my manager, who was not as educated as I was. One day, she approached me and told me that I wasn't doing my job well. I told her I was not made for such jobs, but life had other plans for me. I was deeply disappointed that I was unable to obtain a job of my choice that was related to my education.

Most Congolese men who seek refuge across borders hope to find good jobs that will allow them to make a living and fulfil their manly responsibilities. Unfortunately, most of them end up working in low-wage and disrespectful jobs. Security, warehouse jobs, cleaning, barber, car guard, and shelf-stacking in supermarkets are all examples of jobs they could not do at home, but they are doing them in Durban. In

their transnational experience, these men have also accepted demeaning jobs that are unsuitable for a man or not well-matched with hegemonic masculinity. However, those who were given the opportunity to work in other domains were sorry to be involved in women's work in order to fulfil their transnational obligations. Gege DBN 2021, an interviewee, admitted that *"…the job I was doing was women's work, not men's. Such jobs are not respectable. They are not of the caliber of a man. But we don't have a choice; we're not at home."* Looking closely at the above excerpt, one can see a correlation between the jobs labelled feminine and those labelled masculine, considering traditional social roles. Forcing men to do such jobs because of life's hardships shatters the foundations of their identities, which will not keep families together. Researchers such as Berdahl (2018: 439), Meloy and Miller (2012), and Muluneh et al. (2020) have identified this situation as a new form of colonisation because it is no longer possible to chain up people and force them to work on sugar plantations. The chaos in the DRC has sent many Congolese to flee to ostensibly peaceful countries, where they become exploited through jobs that locals will never do because they are humiliating and underpaying. That is a clear insight into how the postcolonial mechanism renders a slave labour opinion. This articulates the South African social imbalances resulting from neocolonial practice disguised as liberal, capitalist labour market relations. In order to produce sites of particular disadvantage and inequalities in South Africa, this condition combines race, gender, and the neoliberal economy (Velelo, 2021). Most Congolese male refugees deliberately put up with limited employment opportunities and the loss of their hegemonic masculinity in the transnational environment, hoping their situation will be reversed when they return to their homelands. This highlights how the presence of Congolese male refugees in a feminised labour system not only challenges and disrupts these men's hegemonic masculinities but also produces them through their social relations, sexualities, masculinities, and even mindfulness.

6.8. Accommodating a new local life

6.8.1. Adapting to new local cultural norms

Most interviewees in this research indicated that accommodation is a strategy male refugees can use to adjust to local cultural norms in their transnational setting. Misra et al. (2021) define accommodation as a way men can intentionally embrace and negotiate transformative masculine identities in their new environment. Interviewee Giri DBN 2021, like many others, describes how he has altered gender relations in his family.

> Every society has its own way of life. Here, too, we men must familiarise with a new way of life and learn to do things differently. Take, for example, the fact that I am now able to do things that I was unable to do in the DRC. I can now cook, do laundry, and clean our room. Those are things I won't be able to do if I return home. It is difficult to imagine a man in the DRC doing things like these for a woman. That is how men live in this country, and we must follow suit.

Similarly, many male refugees forget about their culture due to economic reasons. This means that Congolese culture has fallen into oblivion because people are more concerned with money, as it is what they consider more useful and important. Wayi DBN 2021, who moved to Durban with his wife in search of a better life, explains

> We must choose between culture and money. We came here not for the culture, but for a better future. So, you see how a Congolese woman can leave everything for her husband while we're in the DRC? It's different here; our women become more prudent and responsible. You now understand that the market economy dictates what to do and what not to do in this country. I will always structure myself in a way that allows me to generate more income. Our culture has now been replaced by finance, as you can see. As a man, I cannot stick on the culture when I'm hungry. It's a challenge.

Culturally speaking, most African men do not listen to their wives advice. On the other hand, some Congolese male refugees in Durban admitted to having accommodated their wives' demands. For this reason, these interviewees have labelled such men as effeminate, passive, weak, and comparable to sheep. According to Ammann and Staudarcher (2021:564), such attitudes imply that traditional forms of patriarchy have failed to legitimise men's power and authority in many transnational families, resulting in the breakdown of many households. Moreover, Inhorn and Konstantina (2018:321) propose that churches can involve and encourage Congolese men in Durban to negotiate respectable forms of masculinity to overcome this crisis. Interviewee Seka DBN 2021 reveals that

> When we arrive in South Africa, our wives are capable of performing any task. And you, as a man, you go down to assist her. Something isn't right. This is where I say that men require guidance from the church as soon as they arrive here during the transitional period.

This interviewee believed that the transnational context forces men to climb down, rendering cultural skills obsolete to integrate into the transnational setting. Besides, this condition emphasises the new psychosocial need for emotional support from the church during what is perceived as a difficult transitional period of incorporation into new social modalities. Such are some of the new social modalities that men may obtain in a transnational setting from their wives, whose power and authority grant permission to their husbands to go out and socialise with friends in pubs or social spaces (Pasura & Christou, 2018:322).

6.8.2. Reaching decent masculinity

In a transnational setting, men can attempt to achieve respectable masculinity that emanates from their women, which defies social and cultural norms in their new location. According to Mbonye et al. (2021), there is an involuntary shift of power from men to women and performative intricacies of gender when men begin begging their wives for permission to go out. Such a situation makes respectable men unable to enter pubs or social settings without the permission of their wives. In other words, Congolese male refugees have been walking interactional fields that Hammond and Van Hooff (2020:659) define as

flexible masculinities created, performed, and accepted in this new environment. If Congolese male refugees can return to the DRC, they would appreciate their wives abandoning the cultural behaviours regarding gender roles they may have developed while living in South Africa. On the other hand, if men return to the DRC, they will quickly revert to their home country's hegemonic masculine identities. Interviewee Bede DBN 2021 puts it this way:

> My point is that we act like Romans in Rome. Here in Durban, I can assist my wife with cooking and other household tasks. She must not make it a habit though because when we return home, she must assume her roles while I continue with mine. Back home, for example, I am not allowed to touch children; in fact, she must be on good behaviour because if she misbehaves, I can even slap her, though I am not allowed to do so here.

This story demonstrates the significance of sociocultural contexts in allowing and legitimising certain behaviours in a transnational setting while sanctioning others. This condition assumes that the homeland's sociocultural framework continues to reinforce male refugees' hegemonic masculinity.

6.8.3 Transnational engagements and masculinity

The majority of interviewees admitted to participating in various activities in their transnational setting to confirm their masculinities. Congolese male refugees in South Africa cannot be viewed solely as individuals. Consequently, Hadfield-Hill (2018:176) confirms that refugees are burdened with obligations and expectations from their extended families back home, and this level of intimacy heightens witchcraft fears. Before becoming refugees, some Congolese female and male refugees in their transnational community participated in transnational cross-border politics and development networks to maintain their gendered status and recognition. Assoumani (2016) states that participation in transnational practices is equally gendered and may result in gender-based violence. Besides, even if the woman contributes to the family economy, the man usually brings in more money if they pull up the same rope.

In some cases, both men and women may be investing in their own families, resulting in many families' disintegration. Most Congolese male refugees invest in their home countries, such as in construction or any other business, or engage in car shipping. In other words, participating in transnational activities can be viewed as alternative social spaces of appreciation for these men. An interviewee, Gege DBN 2021, describes how Congolese men's desire to start and manage transnational businesses has caused domestic conflicts in many families, confirming that such projects rarely result in family transformation in the DRC.

> Our fellow Congolese men here send money back home for a business or building a house. This is good if the money can be well used. What happens is that you may send that money, but it will help for nothing. Either they misuse it or tell you someone was sick but then they used it to get them healthy. Now, you understand that it causes conflict in the DRC and even here with your wife. The dream of embarking on such projects is good; but this seems creating a name for ourselves, yet we do not know how to better manage them. This is where it ends in conflicts that can even pull out death.

Following these transnational activities can change the emphasis, albeit briefly, from Congolese refugee men's failure to fulfil their roles as providers and breadwinners in households to assuming an even greater responsibility of rebuilding their homelands from afar. As a result, Bassey and Bubu (2019:25) point out that community reconstruction is symbolic of men's value and worth, vicariously enjoying another hybrid form of respectability. There is a gap between the idealised and hegemonic construction of Congolese men as patriarchal, and the lived masculinities performed within the transnational context, which are numerous, overlapping, and to some extent respectable. In other words, an abstracted universal male subject has silenced and replaced the subjectivity of Congolese male refugees. This male subject is hypersexualised and violent and oppresses women through his essentialised conversations.

6.8.5. Religion and mindset transformation

For most interviewees in this research, religion is a societal system that can encourage refugees to stick to masculinity in their transnational setting by adopting virtues, such as being loyal, humble, hard-working, and praying. However, Congolese masculinity considers religion as one of the factors that allow men to dominate over women. Interviewee Giza DBN 2021 stated that

> We are living in this foreign land, but we have families. We must stick to our norms we came with from home. Our churches help us understand our roles as men; that we must protect and provide food for our families. But because life is complicated here, we can explore another way of being man because we do not want to be very oppressive to our families.

This interviewee implies that Congolese male refugees came with the incarnations of their religious beliefs. Congruent with Brickell and Maddrell (2016:170), in their transnational setting, refugees often create new forms of masculinities by combining what they bring with what they encounter locally. Therefore, their religious beliefs permit male refugees to reintroduce their ideas, practices and identities into their lifestyle within the host country. In other words, male refugees engage in transnational practices which attest to their continued membership in the culture and traditions of their home country. This clearly explains how transnational religious beliefs remain a way through which Congolese male refugees connect to their home culture and traditions of hegemony, gender and gender-based violence because they use churches as a space that fosters their transnational lives.

However, a few interviewees stated that while local religious beliefs influenced them regarding gender and gender-based violence, they remained connected to their home country's religious beliefs, which motivated them to remain loyal men who respect their wives. These interviewees supported the theory of transformative masculinity because they recognised that not all men are abusive and that some men can positively use their masculinity. Although these interviewees are not practically involved, they advocate

for it as a useful means of maintaining man's identity, particularly in a transnational context. Similarly, Ndibi DBN 2021, an interviewee, stated:

> I am no longer able to abuse my wife because I have accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour. That doesn't mean I'm not a man. I am a man, but I try to live God's word. A man, in my opinion, is also someone who obeys God's will. I'm attempting to say that my pastor in the DRC is frequently inspired by missionary teachings and believes in things that contradict our traditional African values.

Interviewee Dewis DBN 2021 added,

> For me, I cannot understand why I can only stick to the norms from my home country, the DRC. But, once again, some may argue that I am relying on an old belief from the DRC and that I appear to be oblivious to what is going on around me. This shame will then drive me to act like everyone else here.

By learning some local religious beliefs from churches, some men reinforce their masculinities and thus open the door to abusing their wives. This justifies the socioecological theory in this research because it confirms how religious norms socialise Congolese men with masculinities, which leads to gender-based violence. To put it differently, Congolese male refugees live in a transnational community with various structures, including churches. On the other hand, interaction and assimilation are not automatic because people must renegotiate the integration of their identities and masculinities (Albert, 2007; Halliday, 2011). This explains how religions can provide Congolese male refugees with the information they require to make their masculine behaviours a reality.

Similarly, some Congolese men will learn more religious attitudes and beliefs to facilitate and normalise gender-based violence. Morell (1998), for example, confirms that churchgoers who witness power and authority among preachers are subjected to discriminatory behaviour because most churches are gendered in their organisation and practice. This illustrates how perpetrators or victims of GBV adopt the

cultural and religious principles and values they are exposed to. According to Richard et al. (2013), teaching people that God is a male and that women are inferior human beings encourages gender-based violence among parishioners. This is a microcosm of how churches give men more freedom than women, eventually leading to abuse. On the other hand, some Congolese men act as if they are forced to do so, as long as they maintain their identities in transnational space, regardless of whether it contradicts their religious principles. To this point, Pablo DBN 2021 argued that

> People are not obligated to guide you simply because you are a Christian. Being a Christian does not preclude you from acting like a man and doing what all men do. You cannot sit and claim that God will restore order to your home or assist your family. No. You must do something for yourself and your family, which entails acting masculinely. God is a man who appreciates order.

According to the above interviewee, social integration is very important for a man because it pushes people to do whatever they can to find a place in their transnational community.

6.8.6. Sexuality and gender diversity

Sexuality embodies gender, yet it remains a space of practices in which power dynamics between males and females are expressed and negotiated. This explains how sexuality influences gender production, particularly masculinity, and can sometimes fuel gender-based violence (Datta, 2016:339). In addition, the processes of economic-sexual exchange in various African countries have demonstrated the strong interconnection between sexuality, gender, and economic status (Faria, 2017:580). In other words, when some Congolese male refugees fail to provide for their families, they may expect poverty. This depicts how men can fail to express their masculinity naturally but then resort to sexual performance and even sexual violence as an alternative. This attitude exemplifies how men's unemployment can cause a shift in masculine norms, resulting in a greater value being placed on having multiple sexual partners (Hunter, 2005). Having multiple sexual partners is a form of masculinity that most Congolese male refugees have learned in their transnational setting because they feel liberated from Congolese traditions that would not

openly allow it. This type of freedom is another way for Congolese men to construct masculinity, though it has caused a lot of chaos in their homes. Boss DBN 2021, like many other interviewees, revealed:

> Like any other man you know, I am a sexually active Congolese man. I've always imagined myself as a monogamous man. But as she moved on to another man, I became unhappy. I wasn't working at all, but I claimed to be a successful husband and father who also has a few extra-marital affairs for fun. Just as everyone else does here. It eventually caused me a double headache at home, as well as a lot of stress.

This interviewee expressed his desperation because he has been out of work for a long time, and his women have abandoned him. According to Broesten (2017) and Niehaus (2006:69), many men suffer the humiliation of having their lovers abandon them for wealthier and more masculine men. Such humiliation drives some men to pursue other women, but this forces them to rely on the financial support of those women. This context exemplifies the crisis of self-representation and the fear of emasculation that has led many Congolese male refugees to resort to violence against women. Congolese people exhibit the same pattern of compensating for power loss by emphasising sexual performance and developing aggressive behaviours.

Similarly, research in Uganda revealed that today's masculinity is expressed through having multiple sexual partners, which increases the risk of HIV transmission, sexual violence, and other forms of GBV (Simpson, 2009). Furthermore, research on African masculinities in the context of sexualities, intimacies, desires, and HIV/Aids shows that heteronormativity, sexual minorities, and queer identities have increased in Africa (Osinubi, 2018). Despite this global increase in these genders, homosexuality is still a major issue for most African governments and societies. Both traditions and western media promote this homophobic attitude in Africa. Traditionalists argue that homosexuality is a Western encroachment, and the Western media focuses on homophobic statements by African political and religious leaders (Baral, 2021:180). As a result, homosexual Congolese men are constantly pressured to conform to local masculinity norms related to heterosexual desires of marrying a woman and having children.

In the same vein, several interviewees linked sexuality and its role in gender construction and sexual virility. In other words, Congolese male refugees who engage in female conquest believe they have super masculine qualities that make them appear more masculine than ordinary men. However, Book and Morgan (2020:27) warn that power expressed through female conquests is always at risk of eroding if certain norms, such as the prohibition of homosexual practices, are ignored. Sexuality issues occasionally enlighten us about gender diversity in conformity to gender norms. This appears to be necessary because, despite these norms not being universal in every society, they affect every man at home or in a transnational setting. The variation in those norms across societies and periods demonstrates how, in some ways, gender categories can be flexible and malleable among Congolese refugees. This denotes how the difficult living conditions of Congolese male refugees force their wives to play the roles of men in the household while the men play the roles of women. Interviewee Beta DBN 2021 confirmed that

> I had lost my job and had no other options. We couldn't die of hunger, so the wife took on the role of the man, and I took on the role of the woman. Although I knew it was periodic, it was still embarrassing and humiliating for a man like me. I had nothing to do, but it was so deeply ingrained in me that it caused contentions.

The above interviewee exemplified the interplay between gender and sexuality, demonstrating that there is no clear match or overlap between perceptions of masculinity and the social roles of a man and a woman. Furthermore, another type of gender diversity manifests in the form of men displaying feminine characteristics that are not typical of a man. According to Sand (2021:25), the relationship between gender and sexuality is specific and not always linked to sexuality because the context differs from gender. Although some men may act in ways associated with homosexuality, Congolese tradition regards this as a form of sexual stigma. Finally, Halberstam (1998) concludes that in Africa, when women develop a form of masculinity known as female masculinity, men take advantage of the situation and abuse them. On this point, interviewee Wata DBN 2021 adds that *"masculinity can become an issue when your wife is now playing the social roles of a man, making her become a female-husband."* A man who lives with such a

woman will be constantly terrified of her masculinity. This is what interviewee Igo DBN 2021 called "*two bulls can never mow on the same hill.*" The implication is that one of those masculinities will dominate and rule over the other. A family containing such people will go through a power struggle, almost always resulting in conflict. This is consistent with history, as some women have been crowned kings in Nigeria (Achebe, 2011; Chieyelumba, 2019; Iwenwanne, 2018), while others have fought against colonialism in Ghana (Obeng, 2003). Another type of female masculinity is associated with social statuses associated with homosexual behaviour or transgender trajectories (Zwissler, 2018). Similarly, Broesten (2017) reveals that professional female footballers are another unusual group of women with masculine attitudes unrelated to sexual behaviour. Without denying the variety of situations, such women have followed the masculine trajectories demonstrated in childhood, particularly through a preference for certain games. Hence, Sand (2021:25) reveals that women's self-images and everyday bodily practices differ, and many are comfortable with it, even if some try to hide the masculine figure that football creates or amplifies in everyday life.

6.8.7. Alteration in gender relations.

The results of this research confirmed that many male refugees in their transnational setting frequently change gender relations. According to Rao (2019), a shift in gender relations in a transnational environment is evident because of family dynamics, divorce, and working conditions that feminise labour. In other words, Jewkes et al. (2020) and Stern et al. (2015:352) describe gender relations as fluid and changeable because cultural contexts and even historical processes influence them. For this research, the transnational environment in which Congolese male refugees have been immersed has become a contested space in which their gender relations and roles are comparable and diametrically opposed to those of the communities from which they fled DRC.

This stipulates the existence of an understanding relating to the public and private domains, as well as social relations. Every society has its own conflicts, but those of Congolese refugees are mostly visible in their families and religious and social gatherings in their transnational setting. Sala DBN 2021, an interviewee, describes the high levels of separation among Durban's Congolese community:

Something strange is going on in our community. Marriages are dissolving, and women are suddenly becoming breadwinners. They seek jobs and start supporting themselves and family like us men. If you talk to her, it becomes a problem. This is a new disturbance that they have acquired from here. This did not exist in our country. Again, the sharing of household chores has caused some issues and has made marriages in Durban a living hell. Our women were good when they came here. Today, they have become uncontrollable as they have gained financial independence. They claim to be just like us men, if not more so.

The preceding excerpt clarifies the transformation of gender relations and roles within Congolese families in Durban, their transnational location. However, according to Geig and Flood (2020), such changes provoke resistance, negotiation, and conflict within the communities in which they occur. More importantly, this demonstrates how Congolese male refugees begin to rebuild their lives in their transnational arena after losing their status as breadwinners and their sense of masculine identity. The entire process is problematic because it calls into question man's respectability. Most interviewees in this research admitted that they had lost their role as breadwinners, but their wives had taken over. Such is the case with interviewee Bede DBN 2021, who added, *"and you see women and girls everywhere now; they have learned how to look for money, invest and help their children. They bring food and drink in the house for everyone, including you, the man."* Although some Congolese women in Durban work and contribute financially to their families, this should be done peacefully and without challenging prevailing gender norms. The preceding discussions show how Congolese women's behaviour has become wild, even out of control, due to the collision of private and public social norms. All of this has caused havoc in families, forcibly prompting some men to restore to their masculinities.

6.8.8. Witchcraft blames and masculinities

6.8.8.1. Patriarchy instrumentalises witchcraft for men to regain masculinity

The results of this research confirm that gendered witchcraft accusations are another way men renegotiate their masculinity, although the practice has resulted in a lot of violence against women in their community. In other words, South Africa and DRC's patriarchy encourages traditional beliefs in witchcraft. Evans-Pritchard (1937:65) confirms that in South Africa, *izangoma* are individuals who can perform indispensable mystical causation of phenomena and events to exclude all-natural causes. As experience has shown, life is full of misfortune, affliction, and adversity, all of which can occur in the physical, social, or psychic dimensions. However, according to Severyns (2021), performing magical acts with *muthi* or medicine resides in the powers of *izangoma* and witches, referred to as *abathakathi* in a traditional context that has regarded the metaphysical world as amoral.

Traditions in the DRC, on the other hand, encourage people to believe in the supernatural powers of *bafumu* (wizards and witches) who serve the people. Besides, Mulungela (2016) asserts that Congolese women are used as scapegoats for many of society's ills, and most blame them for the misfortune that befalls their communities. Due to a lack of strong healthcare infrastructures, some diseases and disabilities are equally attributed to women who use witchcraft. In the fight to protect women from witchcraft accusations, the contributions of these superstitions to regaining masculinity and fueling gender-based violence must also be acknowledged. Interviewee Bisi DBN 2021 argued

> Many men in our country, and even here, enjoy blaming women with bulozi (witchcraft). Most of us have faith in it, and it is the women who are the victims, as they have been in every other situation. They are the shock absorbers of most negative things in our communities. Everything bad that happens to men is put on the back of women. Now, you see! But all of this occurs because we men want to demonstrate to women that we are their men. We want to appear manly at all times.

Accusing women of witchcraft and sorcery stems from male superstitions about remaining masculine in all situations and everywhere. Patriarchy has always tolerated such blames on women. This has always been the source of widespread gender-based violence because some men are eager to reclaim the masculinity that they may have lost in various contexts. Okonkwo et al. (2021) discovered in Nigeria that men have always supported one another by accusing, hunting, torturing, and even killing women found guilty of having bewitched their husbands so that they cannot express their masculine power of living with many wives. This confirms the Congolese male refugees' belief that angry women have always contributed to men's loss of masculinity; otherwise, manhood is natural and must be expressed by every man. In the context of this research, patriarchy has permitted Congolese male refugees to blame witchcraft on women in order to provide these men with a different perspective on gender-based violence in their environment. Accordingly, Teitelbaum and Russel (2021) say that men use complex, multi-layered, and indefinable strategies to reclaim their masculinity, such as witchcraft allegations and female persecution.

Indeed, masculinity is rooted in patriarchal systems that institutionalise gender roles, masculinity, intimacy in human relationships, and human vulnerability, to name a few constituent factors that give accusations of witchcraft content and shape (Atata, 2019:233; Osinubi, 2018:559). Patriarchy allows Congolese men to use these essential elements to limit women's freedom while maintaining complete control over their wives behaviour. This is because patriarchy remains a social phenomenon that motivates societal constructs toward women's status by condoning witchcraft persecutions and their association with gender stereotypes.

In most patriarchal and traditional societies worldwide, women are commodified, controlled, and dominated to serve the cause and interests of men, establishing a culture of men's perpetual self-serving. This men's self-centred structure does not tolerate inconsistency since it accuses women of witchcraft while persecuting others who may question men's masculinities and even shake the same men from their societal privileges (Kgatla, 2019). In an unprecedented manner, overt mechanisms are used against any woman-perceived transgressors of the established societal norms.

6.8.8.2. Men's sexual dysfunction blamed on women

Interviewees indicated that male sexual dysfunction remains another source of men's perceived threat of losing power over their wives. In that way, they may invariably try to regain that power through accusations of witchcraft. This is what Chaudhury (2017) described as male menopause, which threatens men's ability to exercise influence and power over their wives. Interviewee Lusha DBN 2021 affirmed that

> As a man, if I am unable to satisfy my woman in bed, she will regard me as an incomplete man. She will never again respect me. To keep her from accusing me of being sexually weak, I can claim she has bewitched me and that is why I am not sexually performing well. I understand that women dislike this label, which is why it is a good strategy to use to silence her. Yes, it is an accusation, to be sure, but I know it can help her respect me.

Sexual impotence has been one of the main causes of Congolese men's persecution in their marital relationships in Durban. This explains how societal traits associated with patriarchy are conducive to the formation of accusations of witchcraft in many patriarchal societies. Moreover, men's sexual dysfunction is an alarming issue in conflictual relationships between women and men, and it has been a critical aspect of explaining the phenomenon of witchcraft accusations. Man's sexual dysfunction may be due to extreme fatigue and the stress caused by men's hard and tiring jobs in Durban to confirm their masculine trait of the family bread earner. Coming back home with such stress can cause a man not to perform well in bed with his wife. In this respect, the common symptom of impotence can be low energy, depression or sadness, lowered self-confidence and erectile dysfunction (Kgatla, 2020). Accordingly, Chaudhury (2017) researched masculine honour, witch hunts and women stealing men's penises through witchcraft in Namibia. His research confirmed that women often resort to emasculating men using witchcraft to steal, transform or conceal a man's manhood and use it for their own purposes. Besides, when women have been excessively abused in their homes, they may decide to use witchcraft if they notice their men will never stop.

A society where misogyny and masculinity are prevalent has a high rate of brutality against women, expressed as domestic violence and rape (Mace, 2018; Ortiz, 2018). The root cause of gender-based violence is the prevalence of misogyny and machismo. Sometimes, the misogynist misuse of power may be demonstrated when a man forces himself on his wife, forcing her to perform sexual acts she is not comfortable with and belittling and degrading her (Twerski, 2016). Interviewee Dewis DBN 2021 shared that

> Sometimes I can force her to give me sex the way I like. I am the man, and she cannot oppose me because I know she respects our culture that says no woman can refuse sex to her man. Now, you understand that she must accept, otherwise she will be called a witch. I know this is intimidation to which women abide avoid being the problem. Although this is sexual abuse, most women will abide to it to avoid conflicts in their homes.

The above interviewee's account depicts the circumstances in which a woman is forced to accept that she is a problem and should allow sexual abuse for fear of being labelled a witch. This condition highlights how misogyny may also employ sexual abuse to conceal the man's weaknesses, such as impotence. Campbell (1981:67) and Kounine (2013) have argued that a sexually incapable man is likely to accuse his wife of taking his virility out of jealousy to prevent him from being with other women. Interviewees admitted that the accusations of stolen manhood are more common between couples where the husband has many South African side chicks. Thus, he does so to silence her Congolese woman for fear she may discover the sexual adventures in which her man is implicated.

The primary claim here remains that most men accuse women of using witchcraft to cause their men's sexual dysfunction. This often occurs because men have the entitlement to craft stereotypical language that they can easily manipulate against women. In the same context, men also project their sexual weaknesses on women to easily exonerate themselves from any blame. Interviewee Gege DBN 2021 shared that

That is true that sometimes we are sexually feeble. Many of us advance this as a sound reason for our promiscuous and polygamous lifestyle we are involved in here in Durban. This is how we make the excuse that our wives are bewitching us by stealing our sexual energy. We men often behave this way because we are armed with a patriarchal arsenal that allows us to lead a life that our wives have no access to, and cannot even control. To protect our masculinity, we blame our wives and even abuse any woman who can hinder us from tasting other women. That is our traditional right.

This describes verbatim how most men silence women intervening in their private lives by accusing them of witchcraft. Most Congolese male refugees may go to the extent of protecting their manhood, their status and their esteem in their transnational community by projecting their weaknesses onto their wives through slanderous disinformation. If men find their masculinity in danger by showing signs of sexual dysfunction, they seek ways to protect their dignity against a bad reputation (Kounine, 2013; Manne, 2016) by accusing their wives of sorcery and witchcraft. In other words, Congolese male refugees appreciate their vital identity through their masculine honour because they are in a patriarchal society. This honour seems to be the privileged public affair they must defend by all means because if they lose it, they can become socially isolated and be stigmatised, which may permanently alienate them from society. Blaming their counterparts is the only strategy they can resort to protect themselves from fear and related shame.

6.9. Conclusion

This chapter discussed how Congolese male refugees navigate their masculinities in the transnational milieu of Durban and GBV. The interviewees linked and inferred their daily life perceptions, whereas the researcher interpreted them using conjectural and investigative notions. The chapter has attempted to connect the country's history to hegemonic masculinity and its primary prompters by presenting South African masculinities. The various types of masculinities in South Africa, the crisis of masculinity, poverty, and the crisis of masculinity were also examined. This has contributed to a better understanding of how South African masculinities contribute to gender-based violence.

It was also crucial to address the experiences of Congolese male refugees with GBV in the context of South Africa. To do so, there was a need to uncover the causes of GBV among Congolese men, as well as how they renegotiate their masculine identities in a patriarchal and transnational context. Because these men live in a foreign country, their encounters with external cultural influences and masculinity crises were paramount in comprehending their gendered violence experiences. Furthermore, they encounter numerous problems regarding gender roles, gender, and social hierarchies within the transnational structure that accommodates them.

Finally, by confronting all of these factors, Congolese male refugees hoped to find a better method to integrate into their new community and achieve good masculinity. Gender relations, religion, sexuality, and witchcraft accusations against women were just a few ways their patriarchal society allowed males to reclaim their masculinity.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS TO ADDRESS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN A TRANSNATIONAL CONTEXT

7.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses potential interventions that interviewees anticipated to address gender-based violence (GBV) in a transnational setting, enlightening this research's third goal. To achieve this goal, the researcher asked interviewees to share their thoughts on what they believed were the best ways to curtail GBV in a transnational setting.

In the context of this research, interventions refer to the strategies that have the greatest possibility of making a difference in addressing GBV in the transnational context. Men perpetrate GBV against girls and women because of women's subordinate status in society, patriarchy, poverty, and the perpetuation of male power and control over women.

Evidence shows that gender inequality and the resulting economic deprivation and dependency are fueling GBV and abuse in the transnational setting of male refugees. Men community members and those who condone negative and toxic masculine practices in the transnational community cause the scourge. Therefore, interventions to address it must involve the entire transnational community, and men and boys must be active participants and promoters of change to end the status quo. Combating the situation necessitates addressing both individual acts and systemic forms of GBV. This is significant because violence does not occur in a vacuum but in a society that tolerates and promotes it through its traditional norms.

Interviewees insisted that a multifaceted collaboration might pave the way for educating those male refugees. The process can make them participate in activities that contribute to the negotiation of their identities and masculinities in preparation for integration into the transnational community. They also require access to essential social services that can assist them in avoiding trauma or stress caused by their refugee status. Furthermore, because the actors have gathered reliable information from the male abusers

and how the culture sustains it through the socio-cultural norms of masculinity, effectively channelling these coping mechanisms can curtail GBV. Such information can help understand how and why male refugees commit GBV and, as a result, help shape interventions to address it in a transnational context.

Finally, this research revealed that law enforcement is another intervention that might help male refugees in transnational settings reduce gendered violence. Male migrants must obtain information about local legislation, in case one exists. If there is no one already, local governments and male refugees should work together to produce one that depicts how male offenders of GBV can face justice. Legislation alone cannot eradicate men's gendered violence in communities unless all social structures join hands and minds to solve the problem. Impunity must end in communities so that men who like hurting women get dissatisfied and abandon gender-based violence.

7. 2. Proposed interventions

7.2.1. *Male refugees to intervene as fathers.*

During the in-depth interviews, many interviewees expressed concern about the contribution of men to changing their children's attitudes and behaviours that can lead to GBV. According to Book and Morgan (2020:20), parents need their children to be culturally informed, which the same children will pass on to their children. In other words, the traditional education parents instil in their children shapes their good or bad behaviours. On the other hand, this is an important concern because it allows men to decide whether to pass it down to the next generation. Jobe DBN 2021, an interviewee, stated:

> the environment in which we raise our children is extremely important. Every man should educate his children in a culturally positive manner in his family. You are correct in that if you ask me about this, I can tell you whether I was educated well or poorly about gender and violence. There are social challenges of course, but I want to teach my children about our culture in the same way they taught it to me. We appreciated it.

The above interviewee emphasises how important it is for male refugees to provide traditional education to their children. This process builds on the quality of traditional education provided to their children in a family setting. In other words, through their participation, men can identify positive cultural traits to pass on to their children. Indeed, this technique allows male refugees to reflect on the positivity or negativity of their experiences and gives them peace of mind. Therefore, they can learn how to raise their children in a nonviolent community in their transnational environment. Interviewee Bisi DBN 2021 substantiated:

> Like I was saying…showing brutality and unfair opinions can affect our children. As a father, we must be harmonious. Shunning violence means I can listen to other people's ideas. I can communicate openly with them, and value what they share as ideas. So, as a good father, I should develop non-violent attitudes and behaviours with my children and my wife. In this way, they can open up to me and learn good characters from me.

This interviewee depicts the main reasons why male refugees can commit to offering constructive traditional education to their children. He believes that parents should not expose their children to acts of violence or misunderstandings since they may impact their daily and future opinions regarding GBV. To put it differently, parents can discourage factors that nurture violence against women by teaching their children constructive values. This refers to how it is acceptable for parents to communicate with their children to develop positive values in their heads. In reality, immigrant fathers must discuss and share their opinions with members of their families, namely their children and wives, a tactic that helps youngsters to be less secretive, which might encourage communication.

Most interviewees admitted that when there is a communication breakdown, there is a danger of adopting violent behaviours, which is an attitude that parents should address with their children. Children benefit from parents who are open and honest with them about gender issues. In his remarks, interviewee Sera DBN 2021 confirmed that parents could impart healthy gender ideas to their children.

I grew up in a household where my father and mother acted as if they were one person. Dad could go out and get food, and mum prepares it. My father used to tell me that when I grow up, I should engage my children in conversations. He stated that the father serves as a role model for his sons and that he must communicate with them in an open and constructive manner. Today, I have realised that discussing positive gender roles with our girls and sons might implant in them the belief that everyone in the house can do any job and bring food in the home. I recall my father asking me to choose when he could take me out or what kind of shoes I wanted him to buy me. It appealed to me because he demonstrated that I, too, could make decisions. But, when I made mistakes, he could beat me, and I cried a lot; he never cared but kept beating me.

This interviewee's verbatim suggests that fathers should talk openly about gender and positive masculinity with their children. He confirms that when fathers address gender issues with their sons, they should think about how to assist them in developing into real men. Such real men commit to valuing gender and gendered harmony. In other words, fathers should assist their sons in becoming responsible men who can share household responsibilities, understand that both males and females can contribute to the family's financial well-being, agree that males and females can make decisions and that neither can be emotional or weak. This is in line with the constructive masculinity theory that guided this research. According to the theory, men can positively explore all of the social qualities, behaviours, and roles that come with them (Broqua & Doquet, 2013:38). In this scenario, fathers can teach their sons that these features are never innate in men, but rather boys socialise with them in their environment.

On the other hand, fathers must talk to their sons about the dangers of toxic masculinity and demonstrate that such maleness causes men to follow social standards even when they are destructive. Indeed, fathers can start conversations with their children about constructive masculinity, which requires males to recognise and unlearn detrimental social norms due to their negative impact. According to Levon et al. (2017:519), fathers may instil positive masculinity in their boys to use their physical and emotional strength to advocate healthy behaviours and communities. As a result, young boys will grow up believing

that gendered violence denotes misbehaviour and abuse of women, which men must combat at family and community levels.

Several interviewees stated that most males follow GBV norms because of societal gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes are generalised beliefs or perceptions about the qualities or roles that men and women must play in society (Wintermute, 2017:25). Gender stereotypes depict those social constructions that build on an individual's femininity or masculinity in all aspects of their life, including personality, occupation, appearance, and behaviour in domestic and intimate contexts (UNHCR, 2017). In this context, Ndibi DBN 2021, an interviewee, shared

> As fathers, we have the ability to teach our children that our sons and daughters can both become directors, managers, and pastors. Our sons should understand that they, too, are capable of caring for their families, and that they are no better at physics than their sisters. We must inform them that both boys and girls can play soccer and that girls can work independently without the assistance of boys. To me, all of the things we learn in society in order to discriminate against women should end. We, as parents, play a critical role in this.

This interviewee highlights how important it is for parents to talk to their children about gender roles. The issues he has identified are similar to those raised by Basile et al. (2016:23) in relation to gendered stereotypes. These researchers describe how traditional gender roles stipulate that women are better caregivers; women are not fit for difficult subjects like math and science; women are weak and need the assistance of a man to do physical tasks, such as opening jars; men are aggressive by nature, and women should be accommodating to men in relationships. These variables are social constructs whose sole purpose is to maintain women's subjugation to men's dominance, which has frequently resulted in GBV. To change males, parents must begin talking to their sons as early as childhood, and the process should continue into adulthood through proper programs. According to Jina and Thomas (2013:25), such programs must consider that men are different, not a monolithic group, and must be tailored to the specific situation, which in this case is the international context.

Other respondents discussed how parents should talk to their children about gender roles in their transnational environment. They stated that discussing gender roles should be important because those gender roles vary over time, especially in migration situations. According to the Women Refugee Commission (WRC), people undergo various changes during displacement, which can be dangerous because men may feel they have lost their customary positions, privileges, and even authority. Similarly, when males migrate, they may lose some of their existing opportunities, leading to women taking on those tasks previously held by men (Peggy, 2001). For men, losing such possibilities is upsetting and may lead to gendered abuse.

7.2.2. Listening to male refugees and trusting them

Most interviewees stated that listening to male refugees and trusting them can help combat GBV. This is understandable in the context of this research because male refugees commit most gender-based violence in their communities. However, male refugees can also significantly reduce the scourge in their transnational setting. Similarly, Luyt (2015:209) suggests that the plague of gender-based violence is linked to traditional norms and that it cannot be defeated by considering only the victims' perspectives but also those of the abusers. Gege DBN 2021, an interviewee, explained this in these words:

> Because we men make up the majority of those who commit violence, we must also show up in
>
> large numbers to put an end to it. We are the true source of abuse for our wives because patriarchy
>
> operates through us. We are the cause of our women's abuse, but we can also be the solution. It is
>
> like having a fever. When you have it, look for and attack its symptoms. So, speaking and listening
>
> to us, as well as believing in us, is one way to detect the true causes of that fever.

Paying close attention to male perpetrators who have had the courage to share their strategy for committing GBV is an important step toward understanding its root causes. By sharing their stories, male perpetrators can reveal how patriarchy within their culture excuses gendered violence, which can open the

door to breaking the cycle of abuse. In other words, to eradicate evil from society, its real causal agents must be identified and addressed.

The perpetrators who are manipulated by patriarchy and traditional norms are the real cause of GBV, not the victims. According to Davis and Edna (1996), perpetrators willing to share their experiences should be given the ample and safe space they require to speak up and be heard because they can also provide constructive solutions for reducing gender-based violence. Many years have passed with women protesting, daring, and imploring to end gender-based violence because it has humiliated them, but putting men in the spotlight can be extremely beneficial. This lends credence to the masculinity theory, as men have been placed at the forefront of the fight. Furthermore, joining gender-based violence combatants demonstrates that male refugees have been educated about global change. Therefore, it becomes critical for them to play a role in the South African transnational setting, given the increased intensity of gender-based violence.

7.2.3. Educating boys to respect girls and women

The findings of this research show that socialising young boys about gender roles can help boost respect for girls and women in society. Pease (2018) says that society's examples for the next generation shape how they think about gender, respect, and human rights. This viewpoint is supported by interviewee Dewis DBN 2021, who says:

> As children, we used to hear in our village that men and women always fight. That the women were always beaten, but they never quit their men. That is how women's lives are. I've discovered that this is still true today. Many women in the area are abused in various ways, but they smile when they see you. This can change if we as parents decide to teach our male children that we all have equal rights. It is possible to change this if we encourage them to value their sisters and mothers. We, as men, should teach our sons to value women and serve as role models for them. Leading by example can also assist our children in changing. It has the potential to make society a more welcoming place for women.

Indeed, suppose parents can socialise their boys through open conversations about gender roles at a young age and challenge the traditional structures that foster abuse of women. In that case, they can destroy the socially preset traits of gender norms that are assigned to men and women. According to Zounlome et al. (2019), while children are constantly exposed to gendered stereotypes in the church, family, media, school, or on the street, they should understand that they are not required to behave similarly. Positive socialisation can encourage male children and instil in them that there is nothing wrong with making a difference and acting differently. Reaching a boy audience is critical because the intervention requires men to present and live values that contribute to reducing gender-based violence in the transnational setting in which those boys live. To create gendered violence-free future transnational communities in mind, men must consider specific demographics that will allow many boys to participate in eradicating GBV in their transnational milieu. This becomes a process in which all societal structures, such as churches, schools, and other social institutions and groups, are involved. As Fox et al. (2017) believe, such a vision can be successful if it is well planned and presented to young boys as potential future leaders. In other words, how men socialise boys to respect girls and women in the context of gendered violence and how it is done can ensure that it reaches the right young boys in every corner of the transnational community.

Through socialization, interviewees admitted that parents should encourage their sons to adopt a culture of acceptance and learn about consent, bodily autonomy, and accountability to all genders, particularly females and males. Elizabeth (2019:14) agrees that envisioning a different society can influence boys' attitudes toward gendered violence, ensuring that more emphasis is placed on changing the perpetrators rather than the victims. Because perpetrators' experiences can help understand how they perceive GBV, male refugees' proposals to address it can lead to community change. Therefore, empowering boys with positive notions of social norms and masculinity, as well as women's rights, can reduce gender-based violence in families and communities, thereby creating a culture for a better future for all. Educating boys to respect girls and women is aimed at the future of society, as these boys will be the leaders of tomorrow, addressing inequitable gender norms related to GBV, power dynamics, power

imbalance, and GBV in their communities (Hamilton, 2019; Valerie, 2016). Once the boys have fully engaged, they may begin to speak with their friends and family about gender-based violence. In this way, they can discuss how it affects their community and what they can do to address it in their transnational community. This can evidence that each boy has been endowed with knowledge that he can use to make everyone in his transnational setting realise that a better community is possible. Such indicates how addressing GBV is practicable with the boys who have been socialised toward ending GBV in their transnational locale.

Many researchers (Fry et al., 2020; Mollard, 2016; Shetty, 2017; UNHCR, 2017) have backed up these findings, indicating that the education boys receive about female esteem is often linked to engaging boys in discussions about female esteem. Such education can build community hope because it encourages young boys and other men to become challengers of abuse to women in their transnational locale. According to Hustler (2020) and Rakoczy (2021), the mentoring that boys receive from men is a learning process that can give meaning to masculinity and shape actions to address gender imbalances. Furthermore, this education should consider how to help boys to tackle concerns linked to GBV perpetration in a transnational context. This is significant because those aspects strongly match popular masculinity narratives that men use to explain and laud toughness, heterosexual performance, men's power over women, and a willingness to use violence.

Men can instil hope in boys and themselves, optimism to defend women and become defenders of an equal society. Involving boys in conversations is a good strategy for encouraging them to respect girls and women, as it is difficult to persuade adults to change their minds. Similarly, Lugano (2020) encourages men to talk to their sons about discriminatory norms and GBV, power inequity, and power shifts in their environment when they are young because it will benefit the community in the future. Soya DBN 2021, an interviewee, stated

> Respecting our sisters, mothers, and daughters is critical in addressing women's abuse. This should
> be taught to boys as soon as they reach the age of understanding. Discussions between fathers and

sons can be extremely beneficial. We will be able to see the impact in the coming years. This can happen because we have encouraged our boys to speak up more, gain confidence in their answers. Also with discussions, the boys can learn how to use their voices more effectively. The way I can speak to my sons should not be different from the manner in which I address my daughters. This is how our sons can grow respecting girls and women.

This interviewee's discourse demonstrates how fathers, like any other man, can provide young boys with a voice for addressing gender-related abuse in their transnational setting. To Closson et al. (2020), the fight against gender-based violence must be considered a societal issue. Through this lens, all men can act, beginning with encouraging the boys to take an active role and behave constructively. To reach out to many boys, male refugees' commitment to addressing GBV can encompass participating in campaigns, fostering conversations, encouraging safe spaces, and establishing discussions no matter where those men are located in society. Similarly, Radi DBN 2021 confirmed that *"men acting in speaking to boys and leading by example at their workplaces, homes, churches, and schools can positively affect the boys."* This obligation can undeniably produce satisfactory results because children trace their lives to the people they live with and those they permanently see around them. This backs up the socioecological theory since an individual is a part of a larger community system and can interact with its structures at many levels. At the family level, male children's exposure to domestic violence can influence their adult gendered behaviour (Chetty & Agee, 2009). To illustrate this Morell (1998) indicates that children who experience power and authority between parents are subjected to discriminatory behaviour since their families' organisation and practices are gendered. Men's experiences of violence, especially as children, are closely linked to their perpetration of violence against women, suggesting that addressing men's own experiences of violence is one option for breaking the cycle.

A society with a positive vision always plans to prepare for successful leadership. One such achievement can be to construct and develop ways of scaling down any form of abuse. In this way, leading by example has a strong impact on influencing young boys to shape a different society, a society with less

gender-based violence. Interviewee Igo DBN 2021 says, *"We can learn, yes. But, we must also make certain that we establish some ground rules that we ourselves begin to follow. Let us know that those boys consider us as their role models."* The implication is that the boys can learn the attitudes and behaviours of the men in their society. For example, Goldman (2014:388) advises men to show respect, use appropriate language, and be aware of others' feelings when living with young people. In this way, the boys will learn to deal with their own lives rather than make assumptions about the lives of those around them. Being a social model is important because it mirrors the change that the learners want to see.

7.2.4. Training male refugees in anti-GBV skills.

This research confirms that equipping male refugees with appropriate skills is another way of empowering them to challenge the causes and effects of GBV. According to Davis and Edna (1996), men can better address violence against women if they are equipped with knowledge and attitudes that can reduce the spread of violence. Gender-based violence can be reduced if male refugees are trained in prevention programs that directly address harmful practices and teach boys and men how to dismantle those practices while also advocating for women's rights. Nolo DBN 2021, an interviewee, stated

> To reduce violence against women, men in our community must be empowered. We have some truly terrible manners and practices. These deprived behaviours must be eradicated. So, I believe we can learn to resist harmful norms. We can eliminate the threat of violence against our mothers and women if we understand how to protect women's dignity. But, we require education about gendered abuse through some programmes that can be initiated in our community.

Anti-GBV skills can be learned through programs that aim to understand the various toxic norms that trigger violence in transnational communities. These norms include the various cultural definitions of the concept of a man or masculinities, as well as how these explanations may contribute to gender inequality, discrimination, and violence against women and girls (Simister & Kowalewska, 2020). On the other hand, considering masculinities in a transnational context explains how socially constructed ideals of

manhood influence male refugees' attitudes and perceptions of gendered violence. Lugano (2020) has linked these factors to harmful behaviours and how they all relate to the dynamics of men and women in a community and the use of violence. GBV appears to be more common among males who are less socially strong or experiencing social stress; violence against women may be utilised as a way for men to reassert some amount of power and control in areas where they feel weak in other areas their lives. This is essential for developing programmes and achieving better outcomes for male refugees in identity formation and nonviolent relationships. This relates to this research because these factors influence the formation of values and norms surrounding male and female roles, identities, and behaviours in a transnational context.

In addition to the aforementioned benefits, the skills men require to address GBV are beneficial because they resist social norms that condone gender inequality, child neglect and lack of protection and discourage negative parenting. In line with Writer (2017), identifying and mobilising men and boys in fathers' groups can open learning about ways to raise gender equality awareness. Indeed, allowing men and boys to address GBV sounds like a good strategy, as does advocating for good fatherhood through training, both of which aim to help them understand the underlying values of children and human rights.

7.2.5. Education in conflict resolution strategies

During the in-depth telephonic interviews, many interviewees expressed a desire to learn about positive ways to deal with domestic conflicts. Similarly, Borrego and Carrasco (2017:5088) and Rao (2019) opine that mishandled conflicts can cause more harm than expected, but equipping men with appropriate conflict resolution strategies can help them avoid mishandling disputes in their families and communities. This implies that male refugees should learn conflict resolution techniques because boys and men frequently use gender and power imbalances to perpetrate gender-based violence in their transnational families and communities.

When domestic violence breaks out, children and women are usually the ones who suffer the most. Research conducted in Tanzania by Muunguja (2021) confirmed that boys and men stated that familiarising themselves with conflict management tactics helped them acquaint themselves with good ways of settling

their disagreements. Conversely, male refugees can benefit from understanding how violence against women and children influences their families' well-being. This demonstrates how male refugees might be committed to intervening in their communities by addressing gender-based violence since they have been perpetrators or victims in some way. In the same line, interviewee Nolo described how he dealt with a quarrel that was not resolved favourably.

> We used to graze cows in marshes in the village where I grew up. I had taken our cows to a brook to drink water on a hot day. There, I met another herd, and our bull began fighting with one bull of the other herd. Our bull had broken one of its own horns, so it was not easy. My father bludgeoned me mercilessly like a python snake when I arrived home at sunset, and he chased me away from home. That night, he never permitted me to sleep at home. I ran to my uncle's house that night because I not have any other options. When I arrived, I greeted but no one opened the door for me because it was late at night. I chose to spend the night in his barn, which was located outside of his compound. It was a big risk, but I did not have an option.

This quote exemplifies how a lack of understanding may be quite dangerous when faced with a problem to resolve. Handling confrontations in a peaceful manner makes the other party feel appreciated, which may be a valuable lesson for them in terms of changing their minds and, as a result, resolving disagreements amicably. As a result, inflexibility prior to a conflict indicates that the person does not see the need to resolve problems peacefully, an attitude that has led many male refugees to resort to violence in their families and communities.

7.2.6. Learning about sexual and reproductive health

The men who participated in the in-depth telephonic interviews did not disregard the importance of sexual and reproductive information in combating gender-based violence in transnational communities. Minerson et al. (2021) endorse that a variety of sexual and reproductive health issues exist in many migrant communities around the world, including maternal mortality, adolescent births, HIV transmission from

mother to child, intimate partner violence, child and teenage marriages persisting, girls forced to drop out of school due to pregnancy, and low contraceptive use.

Because sexuality appears to be a taboo topic in most traditional societies, many of the above concerns are prevalent, even in transnational societies. Nancy et al. (2019) emphasise that sexuality and sexual relationships are occasionally discussed among nuclear family members and in community settings, except for individuals who desire to marry since they can be given instructions on how to behave in their marriages. Thus, most men will decide to learn about sexual and reproductive health from peers, public health educators, and friends rather than from relatives. Congruently, men in bisexual relationships are more likely to be interested in such learning; otherwise, same-gender partners will never expose themselves (Verhoeve, 2004). Subsequently, with the proliferation of diverse information platforms across traditional and new media, all content related to sexual and reproductive health material has proliferated.

Male refugees, in particular, are eager to learn about proper approaches to sexuality and reproductive health because these issues are prevalent in their communities. This implies that refugee families, host governments, churches, and other social organisations in transnational communities must agree on how to include them in learning how to handle these difficulties. To this end, James (2014) and Lemarchand (2009) agree that while learning GBV prevention measures, men should keep in mind traditional norms that are impediments to progress. In other words, many traditional customs increase the vulnerability of boys, girls, men, and women to access adequate sexuality and reproductive health services in their transnational environment. For example, Weiss (2003) discovered that many females have undesired pregnancies due to a lack of understanding of how their sexual cycle works. Indeed, this ties in with the reality that many refugees adhere to the norms they brought with them from their home countries, even if they cannot assist them in any way.

Furthermore, male refugees must be empowered regarding sex and reproduction so that transnational boys and men may make educated decisions about accessing associated services, including family planning options. Chacham et al. (2016) conducted research in Brazil and found that men and boys

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changed their attitudes after noticing the value of family planning to their families well-being. Interviewee Wayi DBN 2021 also shared:

> Life was better when we were younger than it is now. Today, everything is difficult, including having a large family. For many of us parents, our children are a financial and psychological burden. We must feed, educate, and clothe them, as well as give them proper care. We realise we are dead if we have many kids. This is why I suggest figuring out how many kids we will have and when we will need them. Each male in our community must understand that using contraceptives or other family planning methods is quite beneficial in achieving the desired number of children. We are our community's members; we must dispel any misconceptions we may have concerning family planning and sexuality matters.

As a technique of combating GBV, this interviewee presents his views on sexuality and reproductive health. In this particular case, gendered violence would imply that a father has failed to supply fundamental needs to his children due to their large number. This is why Sarah and True (2015: 496) underscore that having fewer children to support is a strategy that all parents should be aware of, regardless of their location.

Many interviewees, on the other hand, reported a desire to have open conversations with their children after learning about sexuality and reproductive health. Men can also address gender-based violence by organising dialogues about sexual and reproductive health with their adolescents (Elizabeth, 2019:14). It is critical for father refugees to form strong bonds with their children to improve open communication between the two parties. This approach is not simple since it may be confronted with various unforeseen life difficulties that may prompt community members to set up platforms where they will be discussing their agendas. In line with Minerson et al. (2011:247), life features are constantly changing worldwide, causing many cultural norms to vanish. Interviewee Beta DBN 2021 backed up this view as he indicated that:

We are currently in Durban. Life leads us far away and forces us to modify our manners of living and thinking. So, residents in this city have their own set of social conventions. I say this because we must adapt to our current situation. People in this town are quite open about their romantic connections. They advise their children without fear or shame how to behave in life when it comes to sexuality. We also can learn from them and apply to better educate our children too.

In a multinational situation, metamorphosis can be beneficial for some fathers to teach their children about sexuality and life skills. This is a technique for male migrants to raise their sons' awareness of life decisions and sexual attitudes. For example, Severyns (2021) did a similar study in Gambia, which found that a shift in thinking has aided youngsters in learning how and when to have safe sex with their female partners. Indeed, this illustrates how encouraging children to engage in safe and healthy sexual behaviours can protect their future. Furthermore, male immigrants should take advantage of cultural change to teach their sons about gender-based violence in the areas of sexuality and reproductive health in their homes (Geig & Flood, 2020). In other words, in a transnational setting, the attempt to engage boys and men in sexual education should become a social habit at the family level, resulting in a total shift in behaviour and beliefs.

7.2.7. *Combatting gender-based violence and xenophobia*

This research suggests that a multi-pronged strategy can reduce gender-based violence among male refugees in their international settings since it is a feasible intervention.

7.2.7.1. *Support through gendered service programmes.*

Most interviewees claimed that they could effectively deal with the scourge if trained in GBV-related programs. To Davis and Edna (1996), migrants in their host countries experience socioeconomic hardships, which has been identified as one of the main reasons why they turn to gender-based violence. Accordingly, private and public efforts are vital because male refugees can benefit from more gender-specific training approaches to combat violence in their surroundings. According to Elmien and Kelapile

(2016: 518), this means that male refugees require support services and skills, including resources and support programs for counselling and educational services for refugee families. This support is significant because it equips male refugees and anybody else in their transnational community with effective techniques for combating gender-based violence. Interviewees urged that governments in host countries should enable refugee communities and families to provide educational skills on gender-based violence. To illustrate this, Ndibi DBN 2021 maintained:

> See, for example, the leaders here can stop abusing women by making it a mandatory support for male refugees. The government can then ensure that the refugees' families and communities do not contribute to the violence.

This is why refugee community protection through support services should focus on refugee families, assisting them in obtaining necessities of life or empowering them to obtain such necessities for themselves. In line with Lecher, Bos and Vliegenthart (2015:833), governments hosting refugees should provide them with suitable documentation and male refugees, in particular, to help them have simple access to education and skills learning, which will eventually allow them access to local services and life skills learning. According to the information interviewees shared, male refugees' greatest source of dissatisfaction is the difficulty in getting legal and long-term refugee documentation, which often causes them stress and trauma, leading to gendered violence. Therefore, not having access to public and private services, such as opening bank accounts or obtaining a location to conduct commercial activities, gives them the impression that their masculinity is in jeopardy. Connor (2016) underscores that a man living in a foreign land without formal documents may become brutal because he feels incomplete, dishonourable and unvalued. This situation is extremely frustrating for these men since it prevents them from earning enough money to support their families, either back home or in their host land. Indeed, this situation causes male refugees to believe they have lost their manhood as family caregivers, which is one of the key reasons why they turn to gender-based violence in their communities and families. Musolf (2015:55) confirms that such a mindset persists among migrant communities and families, having a negative impact on the lives of refugees and

their connections in their surroundings. That said, long-term interventions to any violence men cause in their transnational settings require policies that meet the basic needs of everyone in the communities, regardless of their status, origin, or current location.

7.2.7.2. Finding refugee-friendly towns

The government should intervene in halting hatred toward refugees in particular and migrants in general. Living in hostile communities is stressful, and its consequences often lead to gender-based violence. Since this research deals with male refugees, they must understand that they left their home countries against their will because of war atrocities, violence and other sound reasons. In other words, male refugees embarking on transnational migration decide to take risks to reach their destination they deem safer for them. However, according to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR, 2017), refugees' presence in a host country is not always welcomed because they encounter local challenges, such as societal rejection. As a result, several interviewees stated that combatting discrimination against all refugees, particularly male refugees, can assist them in addressing violence against women. Rakoczy (2021:30) acknowledges that discriminating against foreigners is harmful to them financially, morally, and physically and that the government should punish any arrangement of discrimination and violence against refugees in general, particularly against men. Male refugees are often attacked and absorb hate speeches when discrimination turns into xenophobia. To Women Refugee Commission (WRC, 2016), such hostility is traumatic because it destabilises and dehumanises foreigners, prompting them to engage in gender-based violence inside their own families. Malose (2016) and Sibeko (2017) researched South Africa. They found that South Africans developed anti-migrant views and frequently attacked them, accusing them of overcrowding their land and stealing their jobs and wives. Countries that accept refugees should demonstrate that they value tolerance, diversity, and openness toward them. This could indicate that the host country has taken a firm stance against all types of prejudice and hatred, potentially discouraging male refugees from engaging in gender-based violence (Haal & Haal, 2017; Sheedy, 2017). Vaiou (2012:257) agrees that the government can solve this problem by investing in refugee integration programs, which will

give them hope for the future and assist them in finding their position in their community. Conversely, male refugees require support in reducing the gender-based violence they perpetrate in their transnational host communities. Interviewee Igo DBN 2021 averred:

> Sometimes, we are humiliated, beaten, and killed. Our businesses have been set on fire several times. All of this indicates that we should leave their territory. We are not welcome here. This is both alarming and distressing. We need the leaders to assist us in overcoming this since it leads to many of us abusing our women. The leaders may include us in their anti-violence strategy because we are already here and under their authority.

Furthermore, male refugees' treatment should be tailored to help them overcome the trauma they have endured in their transnational setting, as well as the hardship they went through in their home or transit countries before arriving in their host country. Congruent with Jina and Thomas (2013:20), assistance should be given to gender-related protection claims that encourage gender-sensitive refugee policies.

Similarly, the results of the interviews demonstrate that the attitudes and behaviours of refugees' congregants in their transnational community are greatly influenced by their churches. As a result, churches influence community perceptions of social concerns such as masculinities and attitudes toward gender-based violence. This means that these churches have a significant role in influencing Congolese male refugees' emotional and spiritual lives and the wider community (Basile et al., 2016; Peggy, 2001). Nonetheless, the churches cannot help these male refugees with financial, educational, or other forms of assistance because they are themselves refugees who face the same obstacles and restrictions as those they could assist with social integration in their transnational context. Overall, the transnational environment remains unfriendly to most refugees, necessitating their relocation to non-toxic areas where they can develop peacefully.

7.2.7.3. Implication into national anti-GBV programs

This research revealed that male refugees should be permitted to participate in national programs administering certain cases and refugee policies. According to Danziger (2019), men refugees can be implicated in welcoming asylum seekers and other refugees since it assures them being safe from discrimination and that they would be approached to integrate into local communities. In this vein, interviewee Ndibi DBN 2021 specified:

> Wait… If they can persuade us to join their efforts in aiding refugees, that may be a fantastic opportunity. We can clap our hands together. We may rejoice since it demonstrates that they like us and want us to be a part of their communities, as well as making us their brothers. They can also pay us a visit in our neighborhood, giving us hope for the future.

According to the aforementioned interviewee, participating in local community activities might help male refugees feel more comfortable and incorporated into local populations, implying that they are not discriminated against. In the same way, Okten et al. (2020) approve that private service providers who deliver services and accommodation to male refugees can ensure approval and adherence to protection criteria for those men if they are on the agenda. In other words, male refugees would welcome being involved in overseeing processes that anticipate regular visits by immigration officials to their communities.

7.2.7.4. Economic and social integration

Another method mentioned by the interviewees for reducing GBV is social and economic integration. In line with Fry et al. (2020), providing more economic and educational options for men can assist them in lowering violence against women in their communities and even across the country. In this line, male refugees expressed their belief that if they could obtain an education in their transnational context, their chances of achieving economic and social integration in local communities would improve because most of them would remain jobless without an education. Education, in reality, is a powerful weapon for transforming people and communities because it opens the door to the opportunities available to them. Male

refugees may be able to find work in their transnational environment if they possess the necessary abilities to integrate into the local labour market. Gladden (2012) claims that education can be a coping mechanism for migrants, providing them hope for a better life after graduation. Because some of these male refugees are from DRC, where they received and completed their basic and secondary education, many more had no access to education. In either case, these male refugees voiced their belief that providing a high-quality education to a refugee, regardless of where they are based or where they came from, would be a powerful weapon any man can utilise to reduce GBV in any transnational locale. The interviewees in this research considered the transnational space as a suitable setting in which their children could receive an education that would equip them to solve future gender imbalance issues. Basile (2016), Vaiou (2012:257), and UNHCR (2017) confirm that the sacrifices made by providing education to migrants and their children aim to provide them with access to relatively decent jobs and good status in the future.

Similarly, Mollard (2016) and Peggy (2001) argue that learning languages can help people integrate economically and socially into a community. For instance, involving male refugees based in South Africa in learning English and IsiZulu language skills can help them find or create jobs because they will constantly need to speak with people around them. In addition, languages are a valuable asset that can help people integrate into society by facilitating the exchange of ideas and general communication in various institutions such as the market, hospitals, and churches. Overall, studying local languages and recognising the diplomas and degrees refugees possess can help them integrate into the local population.

In this way, the skills that men can gain help them to find work in their transnational space, which is another kind of social integration, and therefore become morally and socially stable (Castles & Miller, 2013; Cerwyn, 2015:407). Being employed might relieve stress on those men since they know the jobs will help them remain breadwinners for their families. One of the main grounds for male refugees perpetrating gender-based violence has long been cited as not being able to provide for their families. Furthermore, being familiarised with the social and moral rules followed in their receiving country, particularly regarding gender equality, is another approach to socially integrating the society.

Other interviewees expressed a desire for the government to build receiving centres and enlist male refugees in welcoming new arrivals. In this way, the government is breaking the barrier to refugees' assimilation into society, implying that they have faith in refugees in general and male refugees in particular (Jongwilaiwan & Thompson, 2013:378). Similarly, refugees who may come to visit other male refugees in their housing facilities may be perpetrators of GBV and may have come to hide in the housing of other male refugees if they are located far away (Peggy, 2001; UNHCR, 2017). Male refugees are considered members of that community if they are involved in the welcoming process. Since they are all male refugees, this provides them with the right and bravery to work in detecting refugee abusers of women when they are conversing. On this point, interviewee Boss DBN 2021 stated:

> They should hire us to assist them in reaching out to other refugees and in other activities to help those men. We can tell who is an abuser and who is not when we are talking as males from the same country or as immigrants. This can aid in the planning of how to instruct them.

Some male migrants, according to this interviewee, maybe gender-based abusers who can come as visitors but have come to hide in the homes of other male refugees in case they are accommodated in a faraway place. In addition to training male refugees on how to detect gender-based perpetrators, the International Migration Office (IOM, 2018) acknowledges that social workers, refugee offices, guards, and police officers should also have been trained on how to detect gender-based perpetrators, how to react in such situations, and how to provide appropriate assistance. To put it another way, all personnel working in receiving centres and male refugees should be taught to prevent and detect GBV perpetrators (Aaron, 2012; Kushner et al., 2020). This research simply emphasises how such a partnership can ensure male refugees' incorporation into the transnational community, a tactic the government might employ to track and prosecute male refugees who commit GBV.

7.2.7.5. Local organisations to work with male refugees

According to interviewees, if local non-governmental organisations working in the domain of gender can involve men in their planned activities to combat gender-based violence in transnational settings, the results can be astounding. Similarly, Lugano (2020:253) and Rakoczy (2021:33) have established that local associations and organisations can play a great role by working with men in addressing gender-based violence. In other words, men need to be involved because they have the authority to make decisions in their communities, and they can share ideas about the strategies they use to abuse women. This is why Giri DBN 2021, an interviewee, stated:

> We want to be involved as men because we have the ability to instill ideas in our families. We can also advise to men and our families what to do and what not to do. It is we men who cause our wives suffer because we believe they are inferior to us, and we want to remain men. Organisations can assist us in destroying traditional norms that perpetuate manhood because we cause women pain and refuse to change.

According to this interviewee, it can be highly advantageous for organisations working on the subject of gender to interact with males by incorporating them into their plans because men have the ability and the power to persuade the community, especially other males. Such engagement can greatly empower men in terms of swaying men's opinions on GBV. In reality, this man recognises patriarchy and hegemony's involvement in maintaining the social norm of gendered abuse at the household and community levels. Mandy (2021:109) contends that men are the initiators and protectors of norms and related beliefs that the patriarchal structure maintains among refugee communities, so local organisations must focus on male refugees. To put it another way, if men can invent and protect those standards, it follows that they also have the potential to convince people around them to follow constructive norms that will lessen female abuse in society.

Furthermore, interviewees acknowledged that interventions by local organisations could inspire male refugees to become involved in responsible fatherhood and to dismantle toxic behaviours that increase abuse of women in transnational settings. Reigeluth and Addis (2021) acknowledge that organisations can increase the use of GBV-related services and confront gender inequalities, as imbalance triggers violence. In this vein, according to Gibbs et al. (2018), local organisations can open up dialogues about sexual orientation, mostly the feelings men have about homosexuality. In other words, male refugees would be free to say whether they are comfortable talking about it and dealing with it in their daily lives. Homosexuality makes people feel uncomfortable or unclear about how to deal with it, posing various challenges for refugee populations. As a result, local organisations should consider measures to engage many male immigrants in discussions about sexual orientations, such as homosexuality, to prevent GBV. Interviewee Daudi DBN 2021, indicated:

> I believe it is difficult to discuss it honestly. It is a disgrace to see a man like that. As you can see, ummm... Okay, this is a difficult statement to make, but homosexuality has the potential to harm many people in our community. The blames it brings traumatic and stressful to the victim, it is shameful and unacceptable. So, I believe that organisations in our community can plan how to deal with this in order to decrease mistreatment of such persons.

The preceding speech implies that refugees do not appreciate homosexuality, and sometimes they may abuse men and boys with such sexual orientation. This goes with their home traditions that discourage men from presenting homosexual attitudes. Research undertaken in the DRC on this topic shows that a man who can behave as a woman is no longer a man and requires treatment to regain manhood (Burnell, 2018). Furthermore, according to Beres (2018), some African cultures view homosexuality as a curse imposed by the ancestors for people's transgressions, necessitating the isolation and exclusion of the men affected. According to Bamidele (2016:40), some males become victims of homosexuality because of rumours in their communities. This syndrome is characterised by social bias, which results in the exclusion of some members of society and, in some circumstances, physical assault. Oparinde and Matsha (2021) recommend

that organisations organise discussions about the role men and male change makers should play in tackling homophobia as part of GBV. Establishing local and national plans can help address this social issue and improve the situation.

This depicts how local organisations can work to change men's attitudes and behaviours to reduce the effects of social norms, patriarchy, and other factors that fuel GBV to create more harmonious transnational communities. Efforts to address triggers of violence against women, such as unequal gender power relations, can empower men refugees to create safer communities for women. To succeed, Muunguja (2021) submits that organisations establish programs with well-structured participatory activities that can guide men to challenge gender norms and their relationship with power inequities, violence, and other common harmful behaviours in their communities. Therefore, organisations must work with all male refugees and various stakeholders across the socio-ecological field and within multiple areas. However, Nancy et al. (2019) conclude that these programmes' evaluations can help transition from family pilots to community change initiatives. Similarly, interviewee Bede DBN 2021 asserted:

> I believe we need support from organisations in the area. We must address the root causes of violence against women. Our hope is that all of us, boys and men, can be equipped with anti-violence against women strategies that can encourage us to transform our minds, families, and society. Organisations must teamwork with us male refugees everywhere we are in society.

The point made by this interviewee is that men are willing to work with local organisations that deal with gender issues. The partnership strategy between male refugees and local organisations can influence men's attitudes toward GBV, which can help families and society as a whole. In reality, this interviewee confirms that the primary goal of such involvement is to identify the key root causes of GBV in a transnational context so that they may be addressed to transform minds.

Finally, Banwell and Uzodike (2012) encourage local organisations to address GBV by strengthening advocacy and policy agendas for engaging men and boys in promoting gender equality. Similarly, Olson and DeFrain (2019) confirm that local organisations can play a role in combating gender-

based violence by preventing and responding to violence, advocating for reproductive health and rights, and gender equality. The organisation's effective agenda stems from the goal of expressing unspoken concerns about gender norms while also strengthening the capacity of grassroots-based youth formations to implement evidence-based male involvement and youth participation programs to reduce gender-based violence and create transnational communities where harmony abounds. Minerson et al. (2011) corroborate that harmony among refugee communities requires setting measures that hinder the perpetration of gendered violence. Such actions must be generalised to all male refugees regardless of their marital status or having committed GBV or not. These methods should be the main concern to endorse immediately in families and communities. Accordingly, Well et al. (2020) agree that involving more male social workers, interpreters, police officers, and guards should instruct men and refugees to overcome the perpetration of violence against women in their communities. For instance, Pettifor et al. (2015:52) recommend that organisations supporting refugees to overcome GBV should consider accommodating single men and women separately. This is, in fact, a process in which there must be a provision of separate and safe sleeping spaces for married and unmarried male refugees and making sure that shared bathrooms and toilets are well lighted. Interviewee Gege DBN 2021 shared:

> If you are not married and you are sharing the same toilets, you know how our sisters and mothers dress while at home. As a man, I am not a cypress, and when I see I can become psychologically affected and then react. The way the bathrooms are made can also cause men jump on women.

This interviewee confirms what the majority of the interviewees revealed. Casey et al. (2016: 244) think a woman can be abused because of the conditions of the accommodation in which she lives, the room in which she sleeps and the bathroom she uses.

Overall, by implementing all the above GBV interventions, organisations have also planned to follow up with monitoring and evaluation. In other words, interventions are a crucial objective process involving male refugees' actions and ideas that can help determine the components to maintain or improve when empowering them to address violence against women. Equally, the method can permit organisations

to assess whether the interventions have achieved the targeted outcomes (Simon-Buttler and McSherry, 2018). Additionally, monitoring can also facilitate the tracking of the progress male refugees have made in implementing programmes or policies organisations have shared with them and establish the level to which the goals set to address violence against women have been attained. Besides, monitoring should apply for both intended and unintended results in addressing GBV in a transnational setting. In other words, assumptions on which the GBV interventions in a transnational setting must be tested and revised if necessary. Fox et al. (2017) underscore that in the bid to improve the effectiveness of involvements continuously, evaluations are systematically conducted to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the strategies the organisation has used. Furthermore, such evaluations are an important source of evidence of the performance of the organisation's programme or policies because they serve as a reference point for new interventions (Luyt, 2015:200).

Furthermore, the lack of systematic and reliable data and information on GBV limits efforts to assess the extent of violence, the effectiveness of measures taken to address it, and decision-making regarding the GBV response. According to Todd et al. (2011:218), the strategy organisations use often aim to support the generation and management of timely, reliable and quality information and strategic information on the issue under study. This implies that the information structure regarding how male refugees can address the violence in their transnational setting and its disaggregation will be emphasised and harmonised. As per Morgan (2020), monitoring and evaluating strategies to establish progress towards achieving results is imperative. In general, male refugees will be shared some documentation, packaging and results, lessons, and good practices will be promoted among male refugees as well. To better help male refugees to address the issue of gendered abuse of women in the transnational locale, Elizabeth (2019:19) encourages innovation and creativity in the transnational response, such as effective ways to engage local communities in addressing the local social evil. Generally, regional and national partnerships with organisations dealing with gendered violence can also help identify more harmful cultural practices that perpetuate GBV. Appropriate strategies for addressing sociocultural determinants of GBV will be encouraged. In this way, there must be a deep understanding of the structural and underlying causes of

gendered violence and its cost and risk factors, including its types and prevalence. Mndende (2021) admits that reassuring men in sharing about the incidents of GBV with the police, for instance, can be very helpful in discovering its causes and effects. Perrin et al. (2019) conclude that sharing about the incidents can encourage prevention and response strategies in both public and private spheres. Besides, information regarding gender-based violence can be classified by sex and age by location, such as family, community and national levels. Finally, Chacham et al. (2016:149) underscore that sharing ideas is an interesting way of endorsing best practices and experiences, as well as the feasibility, practicality and success of the strategies men can use to intervene against social ills in their communities. Therefore, male refugees can share the strategies they use to abuse women in their transnational setting, which becomes a big step toward addressing the issue because the root causes are already known.

7.2.8. Severe law enforcement

Interviewees in this research confirmed that severe law enforcement is a crucial intervention that can address gender-based violence in transnational settings. This is an important technique local authorities can employ against male migrants to reduce the number of GBV cases in their communities. Gonzalez (2020) highlights that if gender-based violence legislation is ineffective, the institutional frameworks that implement it will never achieve any change. This implies that men will continue to perpetrate gendered violence against children, girls, and women in the same way they have done in the past because no one cares. The focus of gendered violence legislation should be on regulating the procedures required to implement the concept of gender equality successfully, suppress and hold criminals accountable, and provide support to victims (Lawdor, 2015:333).

To put it another way, male immigrants should know the link between criminality and the perpetration of violence against women prior to any law enforcement. According to Naidoo (2017) and Lundula (2018), men continue to perpetrate crimes because they are not penalised or because they have a long history of abusing women (Shumow, 2012:825). For instance, interviewee Nyoka shared that

In the home, you can see the man who never warns his wife about a mistake. When she makes a mistake, he beats her severely. This because our children or wives will not be able to bring us to justice. And even if they do, nothing will happen to us. Some of us are behaving in such a way that women are suffering greatly. It also causes the kids to flee the house. Additionally, it teaches children to be more aggressive in the future.

In the context of this research, this interviewee's verbatim suggests that some males mistreat their family members because they know that, according to their family traditions, no child or woman may prosecute their father or spouse in court. Seate and Mastro (2016:200) admit that perpetrating gendered violence against children and women is the result of having grown up in an environment marred with violence, which familiarises them with being violent against their own children in the future. Moreover, impunity often exacerbates men's aggression against women since they know they will never be held accountable for their actions. Research conducted in the DRC by Lubunga (2016) confirms that when a woman reports her man to the police, they send her back because "it is a domestic issue to settle with your man." In a similar vein, Levon et al. (2017) discovered that children in Tanzania were afraid to report their abusive fathers to the authorities for fear they may be arrested, which can destabilise the entire family. This highlights how men are the sole breadwinners in their households, a position that makes them more influential over family members, including the ability to abuse them.

In the context of this research, male immigrants frequently break the law for a variety of reasons. May (2021) emphasises that some men break the law because of the hardships of life as they attempt to overcome life challenges in society. They act this way because no one threatens them; otherwise, their refugee status would be revoked, and they would be deported (Buraway, 1980: 154; Jeronimo et al., 2014). Some male migrants engage in criminal activities to provide for their families. In contrast, others simply mistreat them and do not pay child support, leaving everything to their wives, who may be unemployed. Similarly, some male refugees illegally smuggle asylum seekers to their host countries. According to Levon et al. (2017), human trafficking is a process in which some males bring women asylum seekers into the

countries where they live but involve them in the sex and marriage industries by physically or psychologically coercing them. These male refugees promise these women better jobs and lives, presenting them with a new land as a paradise on earth. The actions of these male refugees violate transnational refugee laws, labelling them as international criminals. These men have familiarised themselves with exploiting and raping women and constraining violence against their family members and intimate partners, but they have never been answerable for their behaviours (Buraway, 1980:144; Jeronimo et al., 2014). To counteract women's smuggling in the context of transnational crime, it is necessary to address the factors that encourage males to commit it. Akira (2013) endorses that males commit this crime because they feel the victims will not report it and gain a lot of money from it.

The increasing involvement of male refugees in this type of criminality reflects the high incidence, prevalence, and severity of female and girl victimisation. As the rate of occurrence rises, women victims consider novel ways to combat crime, such as reporting it to the appropriate authorities. Dashingkar (2015) specifies that reporting criminality may lead to underreporting if the victims do not receive proper justice. Indeed, unequal justice means that victims observe male refugees they reported receiving no punishment and continuing to do so, a situation that discourages new victims from reporting. Furthermore, men involved in women smuggling have a lot of money they can use to bribe people seeking to track them down. Furthermore, they have also established networks that strongly support one another and can use them to channel corruption with people who wish to track them down in any place they hide. This situation exemplifies the weaknesses of international legislative action in the fight against GBV.

As a result, teaching and integrating male refugees in how international and national laws work and interact with norms in ways that help reduce the likelihood of transnational gendered violence is important. Thus, Perez et al. (2014) contend that men should play a significant role in establishing the right of women to live in a world free of violence in both international and domestic law. To Bastia (2013:173), to play a crucial role, civil society movements at both the local and global levels can be included in the process. In this sense, there may be a means to address the underlying norms and behaviours contributing to gender-based violence in transnational families and communities.

Gender-based violence is prevalent worldwide, and it is no different in international situations. Making the elimination of such violence a key focus has been a priority for the international community. The Sustainable Development Goals aim to "eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres." (UNHCR, 2017).

In most transnational locations, addressing men's violence against women gives an outstanding review of the available findings. Indeed, while increased worldwide recognition provides prospects for renewed government engagement, solutions will not be simple or quick (UN, 2020). In other words, if the law can make abuse of women criminality in any setting, including transnational settings, it could codify women's rights to live free of violence. In this case, the South African Migration Project explains that the role of laws is critical because they can serve as a powerful tool through which behaviours can be socially acceptable and or not (SAMP, 2006). In other words, the law can decide the associated punishments for violence, which can serve as a deterrent in this context. In practice, any or both levers may effectively reduce the prevalence of gender-based violence perpetrated by men against women in transnational locales. Of course, determining which is more effective is challenging, though there can be indirect evidence on both fronts. For example, laws can apply as a redresser of male perpetrators and a response to victims. In this vein, Vargas-Silva and Markaki (2016) acknowledge that the law can establish appropriate sanctions for criminals and provide victim protection and access to necessary support services.

Furthermore, some of the interviewees in this research believed that international agreements and conventions are ineffectual, while others thought they could help mobilise women's groups against male GBV abusers. According to Belvedere (2017:65), many countries consider international rules to be adequate norms and standards for dealing with gender-based violence. Such norms can influence domestic policies regarding GBV in various ways. This, in turn, includes criteria for domestic legislation targeting gendered abuse and advocacy and monitoring standards for global civil society (Jaime, 2016). Finally, the same researcher admits that this context can open the door to domestic civil society mobilisation around new common expectations of individual and governmental behaviour.

Partial justice, on the other hand, connects with the spread of cultural attitudes and practices that condone GBV since it leaves perpetrators unpunished (Bamidele, 2016:27; Carlson, 2018; Kim, 2018; Kim, 2020). Interviewee Sathu DBN 2021 confirmed:

Even you too! Chaos is always the result of a lack of law. As you can see, knowing I will not be prosecuted can gives me the freedom to do whatever I want. We need to be held accountable. That can reassure us that the legislation exists and it is not dormant. The law needs to wake up and takes action against those behaviours that incite brutality.

This interviewee confirmed that male perpetrators of gender-based violence gain the latitude of becoming more aggressive toward women without severe penalty. This frequently occurs because the law has failed to address those cultural attitudes that encourage men to engage in GBV. According to Kabaseke and Kitui (2022), Toothless justice causes patriarchy to produce more values that promote abuse, authority over family, and expectations for males to display active control in the face of GBV.

This explains why GBV is so common: justice and society are ignorant of the social norms that generate it (Kim, 2018:219). As a result, partial justice creates power asymmetries between abusers and victims, pushing male refugees to engage in gendered abuse and discrimination. According to research conducted in the United States among African migrants, when justice is alive in a country, male migrants are less likely to perpetrate abuse because they are aware of the consequences, which include incarceration or deportation (GenerationFive, 2017). In other words, an active law can deter criminals from engaging in abusive behaviour because they fear confronting justice, which may decide to sanction them based on the law's application. Other interviewees, such as Bede DBN 2021, indicated that they would like to see the strength of more progressive legal norms involved in changing social norms surrounding gender-based violence.

I believe that laws can assist us in changing as men. We need rules that can help us modify our perceptions of women. This can assist us in reaffirming our autonomy as males. We can only

achieve sovereignty in our society if we help one another comprehend the law's contents. I say this to imply that there can be no independence for us men refugees without cooperation. If the government can provide us with laws to support us in this, we will be able to create anti-violence standards. This is how the collective revolution against women's violence must proceed.

The above interviewee's discourse confirms that the law can assist men in adapting and becoming more supportive of one another and collaborating with the government. Sunstein (1996:962) asserts that when males and the government work together to create legislation against the abuse of women, the results can be better than predicted. Laws are one way for countries to maintain anti-gender-based violence policies, particularly in transnational settings. According to Kim (2018:222), male migrants in countries with anti-gendered violence laws are less likely to commit violence than those without such laws. The causality of GBV was not the emphasis of this theme. Still, the link appears to be significant in that having anti-GBV legislation in place can help reduce the violence perpetrated. Accordingly, a high prevalence of violence exists in transnational locales of countries where laws opposing GBV are not enforced (Bamidele, 2016:36; Kim, 2020: 313). Whereas legislation alone cannot eliminate violence against women in international settings, the promise of legislative reform can be a preventive tool. This is because most countries have some form of legal protection, gender-based violence is widespread, and enforcement looks inadequate (Carson, 2018). Dealing simply with the repercussions of violence has obvious flaws, not the least of which is the potential for the causes of violence to go neglected. According to Kabaseke and Kitui (2022), changing the norms that permit GBV necessitates a better understanding of the laws and legal reforms that can help modify the norms that obstruct women's independence and development.

Indeed, laws are one of the realms that advocates and campaigners for modifying GBV regulations can dispute. Men have internalised gender-based violence, which infers that changing informal societal norms that support it is more challenging. These informal dimensions include profoundly ingrained attitudes, beliefs, norms, practices, traditions, and values (Akira, 2013; Kusakabe & Pearson, 2013:968; Yaro, 2015). All of these elements operate as a community structure in transnational situations and at the

level of individual male refugees. Because culture is much slower to change than formal policy or law, and law and policy do not immediately induce changes in culture, changing such views are time and effort bound.

Furthermore, in some cases, legal action against men who perpetrate gender-based violence in transnational settings is forthcoming. This would imply that current legal services are unsuitable for the unique circumstances in which GBV occurs, as well as the perpetrators. For example, according to GenerationFive (2017), law enforcement regulations and support services may be appropriate for the local population or culture but not for migrant perpetrators. This may infuriate the aborigines, prompting them to seek retribution from the perpetrator once he has harmed a local woman or man, a circumstance that could cause unrest. Research conducted in South Africa by Oparinde and Matsha (2021) shows that local people's irritation often leads to acts of xenophobia in transnational settings, acts that become very stressful for migrants.

7.3. Conclusion

The interventions offered by the interviewees to combat gender-based violence (GBV) in a transnational environment are examined in this chapter. This part is directly related to the research's third goal, as the researcher requested his interviewees to propose their thoughts on the best ways to prevent gender-based violence in a transnational locale. Including male refugees is based on the notion that men are the perpetrators of GBV in greater numbers than women. By paying attention to the proposals made by male refugees, there is a chance of addressing the scourge's true causes rather than its effects. Putting males in an environment that does not support the causes of GBV can also encourage them to dismantle the scourge by promoting peace in families and communities. The insights these men offered can be used in any transnational environment with male refugees, regardless of where they came from.

In the context of this research, these men's proposed interventions are mere techniques that have the greatest potential to make a difference in addressing GBV in the transnational environment. Men commit GBV against girls and women because of patriarchy that encourages women to remain in

submissive status, economic deprivation, and dependency that all allow men to uphold their eternal social authority and control over women. Traditions in refugee communities give males more power than women, meaning that men and women are treated differently in their communities. Because of the gendered power imbalance, unpleasant and dangerous male habits can emerge in society, leading to the plague of GBV.

Interventions to address this social ill are needed from the entire transnational community. To halt the spread of this pandemic, men and boys must play an active role by becoming advocates of change that can end the current scenario. GBV must be addressed in both its personal and structural aspects to be defeated. In other words, boys and men must be taught how to cope with the pandemic constructively. As a result, transnational governments must demonstrate a desire to assist refugees in integrating them into safe environments where they can be assured of their welcome. Governments, for example, can engage with refugees in particular programs to equip them with skills that can address GBV in various ways and provide them with suitable refugee documents. This can help them relax since they know they will be loved and protected in their transnational communities, and they will be able to integrate quickly because they can find work. Unfortunately, because they feel their masculinities are being harmed by their inability to integrate, many refugees resort to gendered assault. This is important because violence does not occur in a vacuum but in a society that tolerates and supports it through established norms. Thus, those traditional standards can be challenged through family education, which teaches children about equal gender roles and positive masculinities.

Interviewees indicated that the process of educating people to address GBV positively must take the form of a multifaceted collaboration. In this way, boys and men can contribute to activities encouraging them to negotiate their identities and masculinities to immerse themselves well into the transnational community. Male refugees need access to essential social services that can help them eschew trauma or stress caused by their refugee status. Additionally, since reliable information has been collected from male perpetrators of GBV and how society endorses violence through cultural norms and traditions to promote masculinity, effective concentration on these coping strategies can curve gendered violence. Collecting the necessary information needed to address gendered violence can make it much easier to comprehend male

migrants' attitudes and views about it. Therefore, this can be a starting point for determining the actions required to combat GBV and related issues in a transnational milieu.

Finally, law enforcement has been discussed in this chapter as another strategic intervention for addressing GBV in a transnational environment. Male refugees should be informed of the legislation if it exists in the international setting. If it does not exist, local governments can construct one in conjunction with male refugees, including the fate male refugees who may commit gendered violence can face. The legislation alone will not be able to eradicate GBV in communities unless all social layers work together. In communities, impunity must end so males who enjoy gendered violence can be disarmed and give up their weapons.

CHAPTER EIGHT

RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS, SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research summary of findings, recommendations for curbing GBV in a transnational setting, contributions to the scientific knowledge and suggestions for further research. It also discusses the contributions the entire research has brought to the scientific knowledge domain. Finally, the chapter presents some suggestions regarding further research and ends with a short conclusion.

8.2 Research overview

Presenting the research's major findings means that the researcher has linked them to the research question and objectives as outlined in the introductory chapter. In a nutshell, the objective of this research was to explore the experiences of Congolese male refugees living in Durban regarding GBV in a transnational context. In addition, the research aimed to understand socio-cultural norms, socialisation, and their impact on Congolese male refugees' understanding of GBV.

The researcher wanted to know whether these male refugees' displacement impacted their perceptions of GBV in the first place. Their society's construction of social and cultural responsibilities and distinctions between females and males has created gender norms. Moreover, patriarchal attitudes shaped these men's upbringing and fostered hegemonic masculinities and power inequalities at the household and societal levels. Such social norms caused horrendous consequences to women as they endured physical, emotional, and financial power and control, as well as complete deprivation of liberty, resources and services.

Second, during armed conflicts, parties to the conflicts raped women to express their masculinities. Although military masculinities also victimised some men, women suffered unimaginably sexual violence. This happened because men fighters used rape as artillery to conquer women's bodies. Such conditions persisted because Congolese social and cultural norms had already been nurturing GBV through the culture of silence despite its devastating consequences on the victims (Terry & Hoare, 2007).

Atrocities pushed some Congolese men to migrate to South Africa, a transnational setting where they navigated their socialisation and masculinities while remembering how the war back home had affected them. In other words, the research looked at how the context of armed conflicts and the re-negotiation of masculinities altered these men's perspective of GBV in their current transnational locale. While in DRC, these men witnessed how atrocious armed conflicts were to women, in addition to a patriarchal system that triggered GBV through religious and social norms and gender imbalance. This confirms the refugees' need to renegotiate a space for their masculinities and identity to integrate into their new environment because the current local cultural beliefs differed from those they came from DRC. Bargaining a new space has impacted their domestic lives and gender relations. Indeed, organisations and churches have offered refugee women to learn life-changing skills, languages, food, and petty funds for social integration (Gogolo, 2016), which was an impractical situation back home due to the discriminatory gender roles that patriarchy and hegemony support. Such unexpected changes in gender roles, coupled with life stress in their transnational space of Durban, jeopardised the masculinities of these men, resulting in violent behaviours in the home. This paints how patriarchy, hegemonic masculinities and what it means to be a man have prompted GBV in this transnational milieu.

On the other hand, GBV has been horrendous in South Africa though there is no war as it has been in DRC. The apartheid history has used violence against women by belittling them and their communities at class, gender and race levels. Today, the plague is still raging in the country because men use it toward women to reaffirm their masculine powers (Goodrich & Brammer, 2019; Ratele, 2008). The dominance of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinities leads to misogyny and compulsory heterosexuality, causing GBV in South Africa (Morrell, 1998). Similarly, hyper-masculinities push South African men into overcompensation for their insecure gender identity as they raise their violence toward women to sit their power and confirm their maleness (Ratele, 2008). South African men also display toxic masculinities through the concepts and standards of being a real man, which encourages the norms of forceful, unemotional and sexually destructive masculinity of men and society. Thus, GBV outspreads due to masculinities, the socialisation of gender roles and family structure.

The perceptions of Congolese male refugees regarding GBV in their transnational locale imply understanding the role the transnational local culture played in allowing these men to immerse themselves in it and the impact it has had on their understanding of GBV. This means that social integration allowed them to learn about the local culture, including how to apply GBV.

Finally, this research highlighted various interventions the respondents believed might be used to combat GBV in a transnational setting. The South African government, local organisations and male refugees should join efforts to address GBV, although each still has a critical and distinct role to play in that fight. They must involve the refugees in activities that can help them curb GBV in their community.

Having stated that, this qualitative research took a thematic approach to the experiences of Congolese male refugees with GBV in their transnational realm. This research used purposive sampling to select thirty male interviewees to participle in in-depth telephonic interviews. They all were Congolese male refugees living in Durban who had either perpetrated, witnessed, or heard of GBV. Because of their Congolese background and refugee status, they willingly shared their experiences, which intersected with the researcher's role in creating meaning. Being self-reflexive during the data collection process enabled the researcher to generate critical insights concerning the experiences of GBV with qualitative research methods. The male GBV focus of the research and the refugee status in a transnational environment proved to be critical factors in understanding these male immigrants' experiences because the researcher belonged to both settings. The interviewees also shared some interventions they thought could scale down the scourge in the transnational locale.

These details allowed the researcher to better comprehend these men's GBV experiences in their environment and cultural backgrounds. In other words, the researcher was able to understand how these men interpret GBV and what they propose to handle it. This was naturalistic research conducted in Durban, KZN Province of South Africa. Several reasons motivated the researcher to choose the Durban setting, including being the province's capital that borders Mozambique, where most refugees arrive in South Africa. Moreover, Durban City is home to the biggest Congolese community in the country and has a Home

Affairs Branch where people file their asylum applications. Finally, Durban is in the KwaZulu-Natal province, with a history of high GBV cases in South Africa (Gender Links, 2017).

There was some scarcity in the literature reviewed for this research regarding transnational male GBV. The gap confirms that the experiences of men from a war-torn country who are immigrants in a country with high levels of violence against women receive less research consideration. This is because most GBV research focuses on women as victims in various settings, including armed conflicts. Still, little has been done investigating men as perpetrators in a transnational setting. Several men shared crucial viewpoints because they heard, observed, or perpetrated GBV while living in DRC. However, these men have also suffered in the South African transnational realm due to inverted gendered roles, life hardship, and regulations protecting women. Again, little has been researched regarding the impact of socio-cultural norms and socialisation on male refugees' perception of violence against women, combined with the techniques they employ to renegotiate their masculinities in a transnational setting.

To fill in these gaps, this research looked into the general understanding of socio-cultural norms, socialisation, and their impact on Congolese male refugees' experiences with gender-based violence. The research also examined how the background of conflict and the re-negotiation of masculinities shaped these men's understanding of GBV in a transnational locale.

The research remains unique in that it has revealed the GBV experiences of male Congolese who fled their country due to war atrocities but now live in a country with a high prevalence of GBV. This epidemic is rife in both countries, and various contextual factors contribute to its spread. In other words, the research aimed to get a wide understanding of GBV as a site for male refugees to reaffirm their masculinities within their transnational territory, as well as the amount to which Durban's dominant black African Zulu culture influenced these refugees' GBV methods. This research spearheaded a previously unexploited domain because most researchers focused on women survivors and ways of bringing them support. Investigating male perpetrators of GBV proves important because they are the constructors and holders of social norms that condone GBV at all levels of society.

Similarly, these men should be equally empowered with skills and means to help them give up abusive attitudes and behaviours. Documenting men's reasons for perpetrating GBV implies fighting the scourge from its real roots instead of addressing the consequences. This concludes that more research is needed to document the understanding of male refugee perpetrators regarding GBV and their experiences with this pandemic. Therefore, this research aimed to give meaning to the experiences of Congolese male refugee perpetrators of GBV using thematic analysis to exploit the themes in the information collected during the in-depth telephonic interviews.

8.3 Summary of research findings

The outcomes of this research confirmed that GBV is predominant among Congolese male refugees living in Durban. Furthermore, the themes generated from the interviewees' verbatim accounts indorse that the scourge is more widespread among these men because society fosters it through socio-cultural norms and socialisation.

Chapter Four has analysed the impact socio-cultural norms and socialisation have had on Congolese men's understanding and experiences of GBV. The interviewees' opinions have revealed that sociocultural norms cause men to create social bonds and reinforce their masculinities. Social norms connect with social task distribution, socio-religious discrimination against women, men as breadwinners and their entitlement to their wives' sex in the marriage. In addition, socialisation links with power relations and women's vulnerability because of gendered socialisation and how socialisation occurs at the family level. The role of religion remains another issue because it influences gendered socialisation and abuse. Similarly, it was found that the government, educational institutions and workplaces play a great role in perpetuating gendered socialisation and gendered abuse. Combined with mediatic socialisation, all these factors promote gendered socialisation and discrimination against women. It was also mentioned that the influence of contemporaries and its impact on fostering gendered socialisation were other socially potent variables that initiated gendered socialisation and maintained it in favour of men since the latter often leave the women

to bear their social burden. These factors remain influential in giving men more power in society, but at the same time keeping the women in eternal social bondage.

In addition to the above, Chapter Five elucidated how the DRC's unending armed conflicts created new ways of abusing women because the societal constraints had become less strong. GBV existed in DRC prior to armed conflicts; women had familiarised themselves with gendered socialisation and were subjected to discrimination in families and society, both considered normal. Men turned to masculine authority in their homes and dominated their spouses, but the armed conflicts taught the men new and atrocious methods to abuse women, such as sexual assault and rape. The power imbalance between men and women is prevalent in DRC, and sexual harassment has taken a different path with subsequent rebellions. Times immemorial, society encouraged silence about sexual harassment by implying that such issues were the concerns of the couple and their families. This was done to safeguard the family's respect and the man's masculinity and control over the woman. Indeed, power is still a gendered social norm that Congolese men use to build and enforce their heterosexual, patriarchal, and frequently violent masculinity.

Regarding the opinions of the interviewees about GBV in the transnational setting between DRC and South Africa, most interviewees pointed to several indicators, including changes in behaviours. Adjustment in manners led Congolese male refugees to engage in GBV, regardless of its impact on their psychological well-being. During the in-depth telephonic interviews, the interviewees admitted that the renegotiation of masculinities influenced their understanding of GBV in their transnational setting. For instance, the frustration men got during their masculinities renegotiation process caused them to resort to GBV. Thus, interviewee Igo DBN 2021 underscored:

> As Congolese male refugees in Durban, we face numerous hurdles in our community. I have to pay rent, eat, pay bills and fees for the kids, and provide for my family back home. These are but all a burden on my head; ah, challenges are many. As I said, my wife has begun looking for work while also selling something. This had a moral impact on me, as we failed to communicate effectively on the matter. We lived intolerance because everyone was on their own, an attitude that culminated

into slaps, and subsequently divorce. Beating a woman is okay in our country but divorce is shameful. Here divorcing, beating and killing women are common. You hear stories of gendered abuse, fights, and separation every day in news and from neighbours.

The outcomes of this research show that multiple root causes push Congolese male migrants in Durban to perpetrate GBV in their transnational setting. Perpetration of violence resulted from experienced atrocities of the cyclic armed conflicts, families' separation and the stress caused by the renegotiation of masculinities for social integration. Furthermore, the Covid-19 outbreak became another backlog of stress these men have endured in South Africa. The pandemic worsened the frustrations, trauma and war stress these men had already experienced, either back home or while in South Africa, resulting in many losing their employment. Joblessness and lack of family and social support can easily break the communication between man and wife, ultimately prompting the man to change attitudes and behaviours by becoming aggressive.

As discussed in Chapter Six, most Congolese refugees who participated in the research raised the issue of joblessness. This situation is a serious challenge because it affects men morally by destabilising them and ultimately culminating in gendered violence. This was evident during the in-depth telephonic interviews as most interviewees shared how economic conditions affected their masculinities. Forms of masculinities and gender identities are in constant fluidity, and these can be challenged, reaffirmed, and reconfigured. The process of rebuilding a new life in their transnational context made these male immigrants lose their status as bread earners and experience a rupture in their sense of masculine identity. Their harsh conditions in their transnational setting are sometimes economically unbearable, forcing their wives to become breadwinners. This shift in gender relations jeopardises the men, forcing them to bow their knees and negotiate respectable forms of masculinities. This implies that GBV is linked to gender inequalities and male refugees' challenges in their transnational communities. These men reconstructed and reconfigured masculinities in their transnational milieu because they faced a masculinity crisis. Congolese

male refugees did so by constantly looking for new ways to keep the meaning of being a man while in South Africa.

Furthermore, there was an expression of disappointment regarding how quickly Congolese men changed their way of living upon familiarising themselves with their new transnational environment. Most of them created "new connections" by adventuring with the Zulu women because they found them well-shaped and sexier than their Congolese wives. DRC traditions stipulate that men must provide for their families, but troubles and inconsistencies increased once in Durban because they had given up this responsibility. Therefore, women became bread earners, making men think that their women have trespassed their social preset gender responsibilities by seeking a job for survival. Besides, the unemployment of these men also made the women seek a job, which made the women permanently absent from home.

Men's unemployment and women's inability to stay at home with their children due to their jobs created a frustrating situation for the men. This condition affected the men's emotional well-being, which had already worsened with joblessness, threatening their masculinities as portrayed through their role as family bread earners. Reversing gender roles can make most men resort to hard power because they are frustrated and believe they have become emasculated. Joblessness coupled with family isolation in a transnational setting creates more stress for men, pushing them into violence. Indeed, joblessness and family inaccessibility were not unique to men's Durban community but were also experienced in the home country. However, the occurrence of both factors in a transnational setting and back home is not the same. Interviewee Nolo DBN 2021 put it in a better way:

> In our country, we also have stress and trauma because there are no jobs, and the war separates us. But at least you could still talk to your neighbours for help. Here, no one cares, and you can die of hunger. Even fellow Congolese will not help. Can you imagine, you have no job, no relative and no compassionate neighbours? This is lack of African empathy and solidarity. You will become virulent as you have been traumatised and mega stressed.

This situation resulted in men creating self-employment to overcome joblessness in their transnational locale. The focus of this research was not the description of self-employment to address GBV caused by frustration due to unemployment. Still, interviewees shared that "it is very exasperating that some of us are working as security or car guards and are poorly paid. Others are hairdressers, vendors or informal traders." These men think that they do not deserve to do such humiliating activities. They believe such jobs generate anxiety because of the complicated challenges they cause regarding the bureaucratic process for obtaining business permits. Besides, the interviewees indicated that their frustrations and stress increased with police harassment and the lack of access to financial support and bank loans because they work illegally in those sectors, and their jobs are not sustainable. Interviewees specified that despite their levels of education and the skills they came with from DRC, they could not easily secure any decent work in their transnational setting of Durban. Therefore, they felt obliged to involve in emasculating and humiliating jobs that women used to do back in DRC.

All this has occurred because these men were attempting to immerse themselves in their new transnational environment. Seeking social integration has required them to respond to and negotiate respectable forms of masculinity by reenacting alternative hegemonic masculinity without traditional types of patriarchal power. These refugees have suffered a masculinity crisis because some external cultural factors intervened in their lives, which has caused them to adopt hybrid forms of masculinity to forge new masculine identities. This combination means that men's identities are socially constructed and subject to change at any time, just like any other type of identity. Furthermore, while patriarchal authority in the family is splitting, Congolese male refugees use larger cultural and religious spaces to reclaim some of their lost status and recognition. In other words, care should avoid stereotyping hegemonic masculinity in cases where adjustments to the host setting's new geographies, norms, and values may have disrupted these men's cultural and social realms.

Interviewees depicted how they experienced various forms of GBV in their transnational setting of Durban by either resorting to various types of GBV or enduring them privately in their homes or the community. Chapter Six explicates how Congolese male refugees have used combined strategies to abuse

their women. The transnationality of GBV in both DRC and Durban is a prevalent reality since sexual violence in both countries is perpetrated differently. In DRC, women are used as another battlefield in armed conflicts, whereas toxic masculinity causes it in South Africa. Men dehumanise women in both environments through coercion and control because traditional norms allow it. All forms of violence are interconnected, and men may use them all simultaneously or throughout their lives. Types of GBV with various strategies men use to maintain their masculinities can mitigate or exacerbate in a transnational locale. Such strategies depict how some men were accusing women of using witchcraft to undermine their masculinity so that they failed to go to other women. Many interviewees revealed that having multiple sexual partners proves a man's maleness; therefore, any woman hindering them from meeting other women had to be silenced forcibly. Patriarchy backs up such accusations, which confirms that GBV continuities and discontinuities intersect with structural violence.

On the other hand, a clear connection exists between the South African masculinities, gender-based violence (GBV) and Congolese male refugee experiences of GBV in their transnational locale. Male refugees embarked on learning various strategies for performing their masculinities as part of the collective and social construction of gender identity in their new setting. In other words, South African society has preset etiquettes in which men should behave to be considered complete men. This has been expounded in Chapter Six, where the researcher presented how South African society accepts a variety of masculinities, but the most powerful remains hegemonic masculinity. This form of masculinity imposes violence because it grants men complete control over women and other men. In South Africa, masculinity leads society by dividing the patriarchal benefits from those available to non-hegemonic masculinities. This exclusion creates a schism between the patriarchal benefits these non-hegemonic masculinities have access to (Broqua & Doquet, 2013:10; Morrell, 1998). South African hegemonic masculinities are constantly reinforced by societal institutions such as political power, mass media, and corporate culture, even though they cause misogyny, homophobia, racism, and compulsory heterosexuality (Hong, 2000; Sibeko, 2017). As a result, South African men often resort to aggressive and violent behaviours to confirm their masculinity. Most men consider aggression and violence as their legitimate means of self-expression, exercising dominance,

and resolving conflicts (Mahandea & Kaseeram, 2018:203; May 2021). Moreover, men's frustration is increasing the crisis of masculinity in South Africa because women have infiltrated men's social power as a result of their growing social and cultural dissatisfaction with male's traditional displays of masculinity (Moolman, 2017:44). The inconsistency between old masculinity principles and men's actual social roles in relation to women exemplifies a potent patriarchal hangover (Luyt, 2015:220). The mechanisms that feed toxic masculinities in South Africa are numerous, but the most important are family structure, socialisation, and shifting gender roles.

Furthermore, Chapter Seven pertains to anticipated potential interventions to address GBV in a transnational setting. The interviewees indicated the necessity of including male refugees in all attempts envisioned. In other words, men's proposals to address GBV can deter the root causes of the violence since they are the perpetrators, which can offer a chance to address the real causes of the scourge rather than its effects. Involving men in a setting that combats GBV can inspire them to combat patriarchy because it is a system that keeps females in submissive conditions, economic deprivation, and dependency (Book & Morgan, 2020:20; Wintermute, 2017:25). All these factors sustain girls and women's eternal inferiority to men because society allows men's social authority and control of women. Traditions in refugee communities favour gendered power imbalance and unpleasant and abusive male habits that often cause GBV.

There is a need for interventions to address GBV from the entire transnational community, and boys and men must be active by advocating change to end gendered violence. This denotes how GBV must be addressed in its personal and structural aspects. Males must cope with the pandemic constructively, as long as transnational governments prove their will to help refugees integrate into safe environments where they can feel at home. For instance, governments can engage with refugees in particular programs to equip them with skills to address GBV in various ways and provide them with suitable refugee documents. This can help them relax since they know they are loved and protected in their transnational communities, and they can quickly integrate because they will be able to find work. Unfortunately, many refugees resort to gendered assault because their inability to integrate into their community harms their masculinities. Gender-

based violence happens in a society that tolerates and maintains it through social norms. This implies that family education can help challenge traditional norms by teaching children about equal gender roles and positive masculinities.

Such complex collaboration can encourage boy's and men's education to address GBV positively. Boys and men can contribute to activities encouraging them to negotiate their identities and masculinities to immerse themselves well into the transnational community. They need access to essential social services to help them eschew trauma or stress caused by their refugee status. Additionally, since reliable information has been collected from male perpetrators of GBV and how society endorses violence through cultural norms and traditions to promote masculinity, effective concentration on these coping strategies can curve gendered violence. Collecting the necessary information to address gendered violence can make it much easier to comprehend male migrants' attitudes and views about it. Indeed, this can be a starting point for determining the actions required to combat GBV and related issues in a transnational milieu.

Finally, discussion regarding law enforcement was another point chapter seven has discussed as a strategic intervention for addressing GBV in a transnational environment. Male refugees should be informed of the legislation if it exists in their international setting. If it does not exist, local governments can construct one in conjunction with male refugees, including the fate male refugees who may commit gendered violence could face. The legislation alone will not be able to eradicate GBV in communities unless all social layers work together for the same cause. In communities, impunity must end so that those men who appreciate gendered violence can be disappointed and give up their dirty manners.

All in all, most interviewees confirmed that the interventions they proposed could work if male refugees, the government and local organisations worked hand in hand to implement them. They acknowledged that changing men to behave positively toward GBV is not complicated if the will is there and that discriminatory rules are man's constructs. The man himself can still deconstruct them provided a good plan that involves males, starting from male children, is well set and implemented jointly.

8.4. Recommendations

The outcomes of this research have shown that Congolese male refugees perpetrate GBV in their transnational setting of Durban. This is a real concern that requires urgent and special interventions for peaceful and sustainable Congolese families in Durban, the entire community in the country, and the world. The process necessitates a multi-approach intervention to build a more effective and peaceful Congolese community and families. Men are the perpetrators of GBV in most cases; therefore, male refugees must be involved in different programmes to learn ways of curbing and preventing the scourge in their community and the country.

Male refugees face many socio-economic challenges that seriously affect their masculinities and social integration. Therefore, the government, local organisations and male refugees can work hand in hand to address the issue.

8.4.1 To the South African government

The government should train these refugees in anti-GBV programmes and facilitate them to access required papers. For instance, the government should address male refugees' issues of obtaining proper documents to work or legally start their own businesses, accessing public and private services such as opening bank accounts or getting a space for trading activities. Sustainable approaches that address GBV and allow male refugees' social integration in their new community and any other tactic that satisfies their integration can help these men to feel they are not discriminated against, but rather welcomed in their transnational setting and their masculinities are not jeopardised. On the contrary, not addressing these difficulties can negatively influence social integration and masculinities.

The government should also involve these men in community-based family support services, which include resources and supportive programmes for counselling and educational services. This can lead to supporting the men suffering joblessness because lack of work creates stressful frustrations that lead to GBV. Examples of these services include assisting the male refugees in obtaining the necessities of life or

empowering them to obtain such necessities for themselves. The government should also provide male refugees with proper documents to gain access to all basic services available in their city.

8.4.2 To churches and local organisations

Churches and local organisations should also support male refugees because these institutions greatly influence the community's minds and perceptions on various social issues, including developing constructive masculinities. Churches and local organisations should assist in shaping the emotional and spiritual lives of male refugees.

Because most churches cannot help financially or with a job, they could help with moral and spiritual support. Accordingly, the churches should not keep praying and condemning GBV without doing something specific to address the plague. In this vein, churches should organise regular teachings that focus on changing the attitudes towards GBV within the congregation. They should teach boys and men how to live right and that God desires people to live happy lives. From general teachings, boys and men should learn that God is never pleased to see his people in general, and men in particular, perpetrating or enduring GBV in any form. Moreover, churches should set activities in the form of seminars where boys and men could learn about marriage and ways of changing general behaviours. These forums should also deal with constructive masculinities, breaking some harmful traditional beliefs, and train men on how to be parents to their children, mostly the boys, in a meaningful way and how to support their wives. This should also discuss social roles in preventing gender-based violence at the family and community levels.

On the other hand, local organisations can offer training in anti-GBV programmes and financial support. Unfortunately, most of these men lack work, which pushes their wives to take on the role of breadwinner, which is basically a man's role triggering men to resort to violence because they feel their social role as family breadwinner has been at risk.

8.4.3 To male refugees

Male refugees should show their committed desire for social change in matters concerning GBV and masculinities. They can only show this at family and community levels. Male refugees can socialise

with their children about positive masculinities and respect for women. For instance, fathers can initiate their boys to break the belief of gendered task distribution. The fathers, on the other hand, can organise community meetings where they gather boys in the community to initiate them about gender roles, positive maleness and respect for girls and women. Since redressing mature people is not often easy, teaching the children anti-gendered violence values at an early age and its importance to the boys can help them change their attitudes and grow into mature men who will always address GBV and toxic masculinities to have harmony in families and communities. The impact of fathers socialising with their sons about positive masculinities and breaking attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate GBV at the family level, coupled with community meetings with the boys, can influence the children to grow into men who oppose gender-based violence.

8.5 Contributions to the scientific knowledge

This research is very important to all men, policymakers and researchers. Men in transnational settings are perpetrating and perpetuating GBV, this is affecting everyone in society, and there is an urgent need to intervene. The potential value of this research is that its outcomes will help a lot in developing, refining and supporting the existing GBV education and deterrence programmes for its perpetrators. Moreover, it will open opportunities for all those involved in its scaling down to be involved in the prevention. This data would equally assist in enabling supplementary research in planning policies toward justifiable behaviour changes among male perpetrators. Detailing experiences about the male committers of GBV in a transnational setting is a major step in understanding their invisibility before the policymakers and the judgmental reactions of those in power to do something about the scourge.

The literature review has discussed the relevant literature in connection with male GBV and identified prominent gaps in the knowledge within this research field. This research has innovatively filled those gaps, making the following key contributions in the fields of GBV in a transnational setting.

It has endeavoured to bring in the experiences and understanding of male refugees regarding GBV in a transnational setting. Focusing on male refugees from DRC based in Durban, the research has generated

critical insights into how they negotiate their masculinities to integrate into their transnational community. From there, they can learn new local strategies for applying GBV.

This research has focused on male refugees' experiences and understanding of GBV in a transnational setting. These men came from a war-ravaged country (DRC) and sought refuge in another country with a high prevalence of violence against women (SA). By immersing into South African society, these male refugees learned about the local culture to foster their strategies of abusing women. This understands that these men learned how to manipulate South African women based on their culture, but they already knew how to manipulate their Congolese women based on their beliefs. This implies that these men have acquired the ability to navigate both cultures easily.

A key contribution of this work has been the illumination of how the construction of masculinities in a transnational space is a struggle for power and social status. This research has explored how Congolese male refugees socialise in the South African context to maintain their masculine traits and submerge them in their new environment. By drawing on social norms that foster GBV, such as being a family leader and bread earner, the South African environment has not been welcoming to immigrants. This situation caused the men to involve in humiliating and emasculating jobs just to maintain their social role as breadwinners. This condition has revealed how male migrants tried to re-assert themselves in the South African context.

This research has contributed to the scientific world of science by highlighting how the transnational space between DRC and South Africa is unique. This distinctive contribution highlights that the same factors do not prompt the high levels of GBV in both countries. This context dissimilarity has influenced male perpetrators to apply GBV differently. In DRC, the repeated armed conflicts coupled with discriminatory traditions and hegemonic masculinities prompt women's unimaginable suffering. On the other hand, GBV is widespread in SA because of the country's history of apartheid, hegemony, patriarchy and poverty. Violence against women also spreads in South Africa due to changes in gender relations post-apartheid. This revolution has generated a masculinities crisis, the effect of race and class oppression on the construction of violent masculinities. However, the country has a Constitution (The Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998) as its supreme law that deals with GBV, despite the appalling victimisation of women

nationwide and in KwaZulu-Natal, in particular. This clearly confirms the role the South African new environment has played in prompting Congolese male refugees to learn new strategies to adapt to it. In a word, this depicts how they have explored the existing tactics or combined them to perpetrate gendered abuse. Having said that, the research has broadly discussed gender-based violence as a site for male refugees to reinforce their masculinities within their transnational space and the extent to which the predominantly black African Zulu culture in Durban has influenced these refugees' strategies for perpetrating GBV.

Another major contribution of this research resides in the fact that there is restricted attention to research on men's experiences with GBV by male perpetrators in a transnational context since most research has focused on women as victims of men's violence. This research has explored the experiences of Congolese male refugees living in Durban toward GBV in a transnational setting. This research has illustrated the transnational locale's impact on how male refugees renegotiated their masculine identities, beliefs, practices and attitudes and personal and social influences regarding GBV in their host country. Therefore, various channels have been used to disseminate the above-described findings. Two papers based on the findings have been published in different international popular journals, and another is under edition. Additionally, the university's library will also receive some copies of the thesis. Publishing the thesis as a book is another conduit the researcher is aiming at. Lastly, the interview subjects have been debriefed on the findings and a copy of the thesis will be given to RPC.

8.6 Suggestions for further research

This research has analysed the information collected from a small number of Congolese male refugees through in-depth telephonic interviews. Information analysis produced critical insights into how these men used different strategies to integrate their new transnational setting. They have used various strategies combining those from DRC with local ones. Understanding how they reconstructed their masculinities for social integration was of great significance. Accordingly, violence erupted once they felt their masculinity was in danger because they failed to preserve their social role as household heads who have power over every member of the family, particularly the wife. Masculinities are not negotiated in a

vacuum. They would be useful to interrogate the impact of Congolese male refugees on the local Zulu women since they have many local girlfriends. Therefore, the researcher recommends further research on Congolese male refugees' perceptions of the GBV they commit to Zulu women and how their maleness influences the violence.

This kind of research would also cross-examine the phenomenon of misogyny and men accusing women of witchcraft. Misogyny is hatred of women and favours patriarchal rules and enforcement of those norms. It relates to patriarchy as a system that condones social relations that build on gender and females' subordination. The local setting in which this happens depicts how patriarchy works through men and boys behind the scenes to teach obedience to women and maintain hard power over them no matter their age and status in society. This denotes that it is hard to change the patriarchal structure. The hatred of women causes them to use allegations of witchcraft to humiliate and punish those who do not follow the local norms that men have put in place. This signifies that partiality is a strategy in which men try to make women more vulnerable because they do not trust them. Men use this biased technique to compel other women to conform to avoid carrying the labels of witches.

On the other hand, having multiple sexual partners is another way men use to define themselves as real men. Thus, it is another expression of masculinity and a strategy that male refugees use to silence any woman who opposes their affairs with multiple sexual partners. The truth being said, no woman would appreciate sharing a husband with several other women. Accordingly, when women raise this issue, most men react brutally as they think their masculinity is threatened, making them resort to gendered abuse. Such research would make sense because South African women have endured a lot of GBV, and the fact that traditional beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery are popular in South Africa.

It would also be useful to conduct such research in another province of South Africa, outside KZN. This is because it would compare and contrast how Congolese male refugees perpetrate GBV to Zulu women and those from another South African tribe. It would also probe how these men renegotiate their masculinities in a non-Zulu tribe in a transnational setting. In other words, this would expound on

similarities and differences in GBV perpetration depending on the social values conserved in two South African tribes.

8.7 Conclusion

This chapter overviews the research, followed by a summary, conclusions and recommendations. The overview section deals with the global points included in the research. It has discussed the key research findings, made comments, and drew conclusions based on the different chapters focused on data analysis and their key findings. It also looked at the recommendations that can help curve GBV in a transnational setting. The recommendations were directed to the South African government, churches and local organisations, and male refugees in particular. This is because the socialisation of children and mature people at family, community and societal levels remain very strong. Involving them all can help teach people constructive masculinities to reach harmony in families and communities as the factors that widespread GBV have been addressed.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: ETHICAL APPROVAL LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

15 July 2021

Mr Ndabuli Mugisho (209526069)
School Of Social Sciences
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mr Mugisho,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00002662/2021
Project title: Experiences of Gender-Based Violence in a Transnational Context: A Case Study of Congolese Male
Refugees Living in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal
Degree: PhD

Approval Notification – Full Committee Reviewed Protocol

This letter serves to notify you that your response received on 05 June 2021 to our letter of 10 May 2021 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 for one year until 15 July 2022
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 faithfully

....
Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587
Website: http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/

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INSPIRING GREATNESS

400

APPENDIX 2: GATEKEEPERS APPROVAL LETTER

THE CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF DURBAN
Refugee Pastoral Care

Cathedral Road, Durban 4001, South Africa. Tel-Fax: 074 173 2201. E-mail:refpascdbn@iafrica.com. Web : www.refugeepastoralcare.co.za

October 30, 2019

To: University of KwaZulu- Natal Research Office

Re: Allowing Mr. Mugisho to Conduct his PhD Research at Durban Refugee Pastoral Care.

With reference to his letter dated 30 October 2019, I am writing to confirm that Mr. Mugisho Ndabuli Theophile whose student number is 2095260694 and undertaking a PhD programme in the School of Social Sciences, Gender Studies, at the University of KwaZulu Natal has been granted full permission to conduct his research at Durban Refugee Pastoral Care. His topic is **"Perceptions of Gender Based Violence in a Transnational Context: A Case Study of Congolese Male Refugees Living in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal."**

Since this is a sensitive topic, Mr. Mugisho is advised to discuss with the project Manager of our centre about psycho-socio support in case any eventual trauma arose during the interviews process, and ways to handle it.

We will assist Mr. Mugisho to the best of our ability, except financially, with ideas to allow him to conduct his research with satisfaction.

Wishing him an anticipated success.

With kind regards,

Makusha Hupenyu

The Co-ordinator

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APPENDIX 3: INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT – ENGLISH

1. Informed consent document (English)

Informed Consent Document

Dear Participant,

My name is **Mugisho Ndabuli Theophile (209526069)**. I am a PhD candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus. The title of my research is: **Experiences of Gender Based Violence in a Transnational Context: A Case Study of Congolese Male Refugees Living in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.**

The aim of the study is to collect information regarding the experiences of male refugees based in Durban regarding GBV . I am interested in interviewing you so as to share your experiences and observations on the subject matter.

Please note that:

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

I can be contacted at: School of Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus, Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg. Email: 209526069@ukzn.ac.za;
Cell: 0670367424

My supervisor is **Dr Janet Muthoni Muthuki** who is located at the School of Social Sciences, Pietermaritzburg Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Contact details: email muthuki@ukzn.ac.za   Phone number: +27797430404

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

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

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

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire. I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.
I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT   DATE

………

1. Informed consent (French)

Document d'avis de consentement

Cher Participant,

Je m'appelle **Mugisho Ndabuli Theophile (209526069)**. Je fais une recherche en Doctorant à l'université de KwaZulu Natal UKZN, campus de Pietermaritzburg. Le titre de ma thèse de recherche est **Expériences sur les Violences Basées sur le Genre dans un Contexte Transnational : Cas des Hommes Réfugiés Congolais Vivants à Durban, Kwazulu Natal** (Experiences of Gender Based Violence in a Transnational Context : A Case Study of Congolese Male Refugees Living in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal).

L'objectif de cette recherche est de compiler l'information sur les expériences des hommes réfugiés congolais habitant à Durban concernant les violences basées sur le genre. Je suis intéressé de vous interviewer pour que j'aie des idées concernant vos expériences et observations sur ce sujet.
Notez que :

- L'information que vous me fournirez ne sera utilisée que dans le contexte académique et pour cette seule recherche.
- Votre participation est entièrement volontaire. Vous avez le choix de participer ou pas, voire interrompre votre participation à cette recherche. Personne ne vous en tiendra compte.
- Vos idées dans cette interview seront présentées sous anonymat. Ni votre nom, ni votre identité ne sera révélée sous toute forme dans cette recherche.
- L'interview durera entre 30 et 40 minutes.
- L'enregistrement, tout comme autres données concernant l'interview seront bien protégés par des mots de passe dans un fichier accessible seulement à ma superviseure et à moi-même. Après une période de cinq ans et en rapport avec les règles de l'université, les données seront débarrassées et détruites par incinération.
- Si vous acceptez de participer, veuillez bien vouloir signer la déclaration jointe à ce constat (une feuille séparée vous sera donnée pour signatures).

Vous pouvez me contacter à la Faculté des Sciences Sociales, Université de KwaZulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg. Courriel : 2 0 9 5 2 6 0 6 9 @ u k z n . a c . z a ;
Mobile: 0670367424
Ma Superviseure est **Dr Janet Muthoni Muthuki** qui est aussi de la Faculté des Sciences Sociales, Campus de Pietermaritzburg de l'Université de KwaZulu Natal. Courriel : muthuki@ukzn.ac.za   Phone number: +27797430404
Le Comité d'Ethique et Recherche des Sciences Sociales et les Humanités peut être contacté à travers : **Mme Phumelele Ximba**, Université de KwaZulu Natal, Bureau de recherche, courriel : ximbap@ukzn.ac.za, téléphone mobile +27312603587.

Merci de votre contribution à cette recherche.

1

DECLARATION

Moi, ... *(nom complet du participant)* confirme que j'ai compris le contenu de ce document et la nature de ce projet de recherche et je consens d'y participer.

J'ai compris que j'ai une liberté totale de me retirer du projet à n'importe quel moment si jamais je le désirais. J'ai aussi bien compris l'objectif de cette recherche. Partant, j'accepte d'y participer.

Je consens/ je ne consens pas de me faire enregistrer (au cas où ceci est applicable).

SIGNATURE DU PARTICIPANT   DATE

....

2

APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW GUIDE – ENGLISH

Interview guide for in-depth discussions in English

1. What is considered to be a real man in your home country ?
2. How does your home culture define a man ?
3. How does your culture influence the way you view yourself as a man ?
4. How has the context of war impacted on how you view yourself as a man ?
5. What is your understanding of gender based violence ?
6. How does your community define gender based violence ?
7. How does your culture influence your understanding of gender based violence ?
8. What was your experience of gender based violence back home in the DRC ?
9. What was your experience of GBV in the context of war ?
10. In what ways do you think that war fuels GBV ?
11. How has living in South Africa affected the way you see yourself as a man ?
12. How does a refugee status impact on your identity as a man ?
13. In what ways has your identity as a man remained the same since you came to South Africa ?
14. In what ways has your identity as a man changed since coming to South Africa ?
15. What is the possible reason for any change you may have undergone in your identity as a man ?
16. In what ways have you experienced GBV while in South Africa ?
17. How has this experience been different from the experience of GBV in the DRC ?
18. How has your experience in a South African context impacted on how you view GBV ?
19. How does your status as a refugee influence how you view GBV ?
20. What are the possible ways in which you think that GBV can be addressed amongst immigrants and refugees ?
21. What recommendations would you give for addressing GBV in the South African context ?

Guide d'interview

1. Qu'est-ce qui est considéré pour être un vrai homme dans ton pays ?
2. Comment la culture de ton pays définit un homme ?
3. Comment ta culture influence-elle la façon dont tu te vois comme un homme ?
4. De quelle manière le contexte de la guerre a influencé la façon dont tu te considères comme un homme ?
5. Quelle est ta compréhension des violences basées sur le genre ?
6. Comment ta communauté définit les violences basées sur le genre ?
7. Comment ta culture influence ton entendement des violences basées sur le genre ?
8. Quelle était ton expérience des violences basées sur le genre quand tu étais encore en RDC ?
9. Quelle était ton expérience des violences basées sur le genre dans le contexte de la guerre ?
10. De quelle manière penses-tu que la guerre peut stimuler les violences basées sur le genre ?
11. Comment vivre en Afrique du Sud a affecté ta façon de te voir comme un homme ?
12. Comment le statut de refugie joue sur ton identité masculine ?
13. De quelle façon ton identité masculine est restée la même depuis que tu es venu en Afrique du Sud ?
14. De quelle façon ton identité masculine a changé depuis que tu es arrivé en Afrique du Sud ?
15. Quelle est la raison possible de tout changement tu dois avoir traversé dans ton identité masculine ?
16. De quelle façon tu as vécu les violences basées sur le genre depuis que tu es en Afrique du Sud ?
17. Comment cette expérience a été différente de celle des violences basées sur le genre en RDC ?
18. Comment ton expérience dans le contexte sud-africain a influencé la façon dont tu vois les violences basées sur le genre ?
19. Comment ton statut de réfugié influence ta façon de voir les violences basées sur le genre ?
20. Quelles sont les voies possibles que tu penses que l'on peut utiliser pour combattre les violences basées sur le genre parmi les immigrants et les refugies ?
21. Quelles recommandations pourrais-tu fournir pour combatte les violences basées sur le genre dans le contexte sud-africain ?

APPENDIX 7: TURNITIN REPORT 1 – FIRST THREE PAGES

PhD thesis

EXPERIENCES OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN A TRANSNATIONAL CONTEXT: A CASE STUDY OF CONGOLESE MALE REFUGEES LIVING IN DURBAN, KWAZULU NATAL-SOUTH AFRICA

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APPENDIX 8: LANGUAGE EDITING LETTER

LEORA SEWNARAIN

14 Malton Mews

29 Malton Road

Seaview

17 AUGUST 2021

To whom it may concern

This is to certify that the PhD Thesis entitled "**EXPERIENCES OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN A TRANSNATIONAL CONTEXT: A CASE STUDY OF CONGOLESE MALE REFUGEES LIVING IN DURBAN, KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA**", written by Mr Theophile Ndabuli Mugisho (209526069), has been formatted according to APA 7th Edition Guidelines.

Proofreading, language editing and formatting of the general style of the document have been conducted.

Please do not hesitate to contact the writer should you require anything further.

Yours sincerely

Leora Sewnarain

+27 73 963 4573

sewnarainl@ukzn.ac.za