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MASCULINITY AND ITS ROLE IN GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Social and Psychological Research in Psychology

2023

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is solely my own and that all the sources used were acknowledged and accurately referenced. I certify that I have not copied in parts or in whole any other person's work.

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2023

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates ways in which men construct masculinity and understand its role in gender-based violence. An increased interest in studying masculinity and its construction suggests that there are different ways in which men express their masculinities. 11 males over the age of 18 participated in the study. A semi-structured interview schedule was used to guide one on one interviews that were used to collect data. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for easy analysis. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data through identifying, analysing, and reporting repeated themes. Specifically, four themes were identified in this study: (1) Constructions of traditional masculinity, (2) Construction of gender-based violence, (3) Role models and (4) Proposed interventions for gender-based violence. The findings suggest that participants have a negative view towards the traditional ideology of masculinity and conventional masculinity. For most of the participants' influential role models were predominantly male figures who held positions of authority in their households or communities while for other media emerged as a significant role model. The participants understood the impact of GBV and its far-reaching consequences on its victims. The research will contribute to the field of psychology in the understandings of constructions of masculinity and its role in Gender Based Violence.

Keywords: Gender; Gender-based violence; Hegemonic masculinity; Masculinity; Men; Patriarchy; South Africa

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Chapter 1: Introduction, Background, and Rationale.

1.1 Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) has been described as a crisis in South African society (Dlamini, 2021). Research suggests that one of the strongest contributors to GBV is the increase in hegemonic masculinity in our society (Salazar, Daoud, Edwards, Scanlon & Vives-Cases, 2020) and that an important intervention to combat these high prevalence rates is understanding the ways in which masculinity is implicated. As such, the present research study focuses on exploring the ways in which South African men construct and understand masculinity and its relationship with violent attitudes and behaviours towards women. The aim of this study is to explore how men understand and construct masculinity in relation to GBV, and to use these insights to frame interventions that will educate men and women.

Gender as a research subject is popular in the field of social science, however more and more studies are moving away from studying females and focusing on males and masculinity. Recent studies demonstrate that masculinity is sometimes placed as superior to other genders (Field, 2009). According to Hearn, Nordberg, Andersson, Balkmar, Gottzén, Klinth and Sandberg (2012) the different forms of masculinity are Hegemonic masculinity, Complicit masculinity, and Subordinated masculinity. One of the most dominant forms of masculinities is hegemonic masculinity, which emphasizes the traits of physical dominance and control (Donaldson, 1993).

An increasing number of men seem to be renegotiating their position in society and in family settings (Field, 2009). Although new forms of masculinities have been emerging, the hegemonic form of masculinity is still popular and there are individuals who firmly believe that masculine identities are superior to other identities. In the past decade there

has been an increased interest in studying the relationship that exists between masculinity and femininity (Connell, 2002; Schippers, 2007). This study seeks to explore the different ways in which South African men understand masculinity and its relationship with gender-based violence.

Although there are many forms of gender-based violence, this research study focuses on gender-based violence inflicted by men upon women. The reason for this direction is due to the fact that several researchers (Dlamini, 2021; Graaf & Heinecken, 2017; Salazar et al., 2020) have illustrated that perpetrator of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) are often men. GBV is a global challenge (Christian, Safari, Ramazani, Burnham & Glass, 2011). The increasing rate of GBV is alarming across the globe; however, GBV affects countries differently (Nkya, 2020). The severity of GBV is not the same, and developing countries have higher rates of GBV compared to developed countries (Nkya, 2020). GBV in South Africa is a common social ill that has been on the rise. According to Albertous (2010) the high rate of GBV affects the wellbeing of GBV survivors and in many instances survivors of GBV are left unfit to work. The South African president has declared GBV as a twin pandemic to Covid-19 (Dlamini, 2021). In 2019, the South African Minister of Police, Bheki Cele, reported that domestic violence cases average 87290 on a weekly basis (Pikoli, 2020). During the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, domestic violence complaints increased by 37% (Pikoli, 2020). According to Minerson, Carolo, Dinner and Jones (2011), GBV against women is one of the worst forms of abuse of human rights, which harms women, families, and the nation at large. Heise, Ellsberg and Gottmoeller (2002) further illustrate that although GBV harms human rights, these kinds of violence are the least recognised across the globe.

As highlighted by Connel (2002) men can exercise violence as a way of claiming respect, intimidating others, or acquiring material gains. South Africa has a history of

violence and the apartheid era allowed violence and oppression to thrive in South Africa and as a result, certain masculinities have been linked to violence (Morrell, 2001). According to Matoushaya (2013) it can be argued that black resistance during the apartheid regime was a way in which individuals applied their masculinities in the sense that men used violence to declare their masculinity. According to Morrell (2007) during the apartheid regime, settler mentality shaped the way South African masculinity was constructed in white males and this in turn influenced how black groups constructed their masculinities.

This study explores the negotiation of masculinities from different South African males that identify as masculine and are from different backgrounds. The construction of masculinity by South African men is unique because of the African history of colonisation and inequality. According to Kiguwa (2004) patriarchy is universal, however factors such as politics, race and culture contribute to the different forms of patriarchy.

The standard categorisation of the hegemonic form of masculinity is widely accepted and supported by men and society. According to Donaldson (1993) Hegemonic masculinity is the form of masculinity whereby manhood is associated with male dominance, aggressiveness, and control. The concept of hegemonic masculinity relates to this study as it is one of the most dominant masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity can be argued to be one of the contributing factors of the perpetration of Gender-based violence and in order to understand how masculinity plays a role in GBV, it is critical to understand the hegemonic form of masculinity (Russo & Pirlott, 2006). Thus, although Gender-based violence studies usually focus on women, this study attempts to understand from a male perspective what role masculinity plays in gender-based violence.

In the South African context, the term ‘masculinity’ is not homogenous, colour-blind, or equal. Rather, the complexities of the country’s history provide diverse expressions of masculinities. South Africa as a country has a complex history shaped by apartheid, colonialism, and diverse rich cultures (Kandiyoti, 1998; Mohanty, 1988). Due to these complexities, it is crucial to understand that the constructions of masculinity are shaped, or may be directly or indirectly influenced, by this socio-cultural context (Morrell, 2001; Smith & Langa, 2010). Langa (2020) explored the construction of masculinities within a South African township environment, which highlights the significance of considering the impact of the country’s social history when exploring the constructions of masculinity in any given setting. It is paramount to consider the intersectionality of race, gender and class when exploring masculinity construction in South Africa (Morrell, 2005; Ratele, 2008).

According to Gqola (2015) violence is multifaceted, and in order to understand violence, and especially gender-based violence, in South Africa, one needs to explore the historical context of injustice and systematic inequalities, factors which may have potential contributions towards the construction of masculinities that result in violence (Gqola, 2015). In essence, in order to understand the construction of ‘masculinity’ one needs to acknowledge and appreciate the many influences on the country’s socio-economic complexities and history, And, in order to understand gender-based violence, one needs insight into how masculinity is constructed among SA men (Morrell, 2005; Ratele, 2013).

1.2 Research Aims of the study

This study is aimed at exploring constructions of male masculinities and the role masculinity plays in gender-based violence. The analysis focused on how men negotiate their own masculinities and their understanding of the ways that masculinity is implicated in gender-based violence. In doing so, this research hopes to offer insight into a common

social ill in South Africa and may also contribute to supporting interventions for men it may contribute to literature which will aid in establishing interventions for men. This research may also be used to support interventions that challenge traits of toxic masculinity that are often implicated in violence against women.

1.3 Research problem for the study

It is evident that a lot of South African research on GBV is centred on women and not men for example, see Abrahams and Jewkes (2005); Boonzaier (2008); Brownmiller (1993) and Jewkes, Dunkle, Nduna, and Shi (2010). As noted, the focus on women in studies on GBV has left a gap that might help us to understand the phenomenon more comprehensively. The increased interest in studies of men and masculinity is crucial as it helps us understand SA men in a post-apartheid/global context. There is growing literature focusing on gender relations particularly the construction of masculinities (Connell, 1995; Morrell, 2001; Shefer, Ratele, Strebel, Shabalala & Buikema, 2007). It is important that this study considers men and the different factors influencing how their masculinities are constructed. According to Nkya (2020) GBV is often present in patriarchal societies that promotes male dominance over women. In men-on-women violence, GBV might emerge from a patriarchal society, it is crucial to engage men in order to curb violence against women (Graaff & Heinecken, 2017). Minerson et al. (2011) illustrate that in order to prevent GBV it is crucial to engage men, as they are often the perpetrators of violence against women. This work can be effective in changing harmful masculinity traits that encourage dominance over women (Minerson et al., 2011). Therefore, a qualitative study of this nature increases our understanding of different masculinities and how challenging these masculinities can encourage equality between the male and female gender (Matoushaya, 2013).

1.4 Structure of the research report

Chapter one, the present chapter, consists of the introduction, aims and research problem. The chapter focuses on introducing the research topic as well as laying a foundation for the study.

Chapter two reviews literature and provides a theoretical framework for the study. In the literature review I examine the historical antecedents of patriarchal violence in SA, as well as traditional conceptions of GBV and masculinity. I also review prior literature on the intersection between GBV and masculinity.

Chapter three focuses on the research methodology that was used in this study. This chapter looks at the research design, the sampling methodology used, the data collection process followed, the analytic method used to analyse the data and the ethical considerations. This chapter concludes with a section on self-reflexivity to account for my subjectivity during the course of this study.

Chapter four contains data analysis and a discussion of the findings that emerged from analysis. The central themes that emerged from the data are:(1) Constructions of traditional masculinity, (2) Construction of gender-based violence, (3) Role models and (4) Proposed interventions for gender-based violence.

Chapter five, the conclusion, comments on the main findings and demonstrates their contribution to existing literature. It also provides a section on the limitations of the study as well as directions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This chapter seeks to delve into the relationship between masculinity and Gender-based violence (GBV) against women by examining its multifaceted dynamics. Furthermore, it will explore how hegemonic masculinity intersects with violence against women. Literature in this section reviews how other scholars understand masculinity and gender-based violence. Overall this section aims to understand existing literature and knowledge on masculinity, GBV, current South African and global statistics and history on GBV in South Africa, gender and gender inequality, Violence, colonialism, The theories supporting the study: (1) The theory of Hegemonic Masculinity, (2) The theory of Patriarchy, and (3) The link between GBV and Masculinity). By understanding these key elements, this section will provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex factors that underly GBV and inform interventions aimed at addressing this pandemic of GBV.

The theoretical framework provides theoretical links between Masculinity, Hegemonic masculinity, gender inequality, Patriarchy and Colonialism; as a useful frame for the subsequent analysis which explores how constructions of masculinity and GBV intersect in a South African population. the concept of gender, gender inequality and how GBV and masculinity intersect.

2.1 Gender and gender inequalities

According to Mahalik, Burns and Syzdek (2007) men who conform to the traditional norms of masculinity tend to be at high risk of subscribing to violence and aggression. In seeking to understand the role masculinity plays in relation to GBV, gender is crucial to this study as GBV is fundamentally influenced by gender and power (Boonzaier, 2006). Nevertheless, the concept of gender is broad. Gender can be understood from a social psychological viewpoint, which emphasizes the stereotypical beliefs about women and

men that may result in practices that discriminate against women (Geis, 1993). There are different approaches to gender. Clarke and Braun's (2009) views on gender place emphasis on gender being fixed characteristics of individuals that do not change even under different situations. However, Ratele (2013) notes that gender is constantly under construction, and Thompson's (2002) views are based on the belief that men and women create their own gender identities and act accordingly. This study chooses to not regard gender as something an individual is born with but as how an individual chooses to identify (Clarke & Braun, 2009). According to West and Zimmerman (1987) gender is not linked to internal attributes such as masculinity and femininity but rather external actions. History has already set the path of how specific genders (men and women) can behave/act (Shefer, 2004). Butler (1993) further highlights that gender is performative and constructed over time through the repetition of certain acts or behaviours. When genders do not conform to historic paths of how each gender should behave they are thought of as being deviant and this is usually followed by some form of punishment (Schofield, Connell, Walker, Wood & Butland, 2000).

2.2 Masculinity

Whitehead and Barrett (2001) define masculinity as behaviours or practices that are culturally associated with biological males that can be described as not being feminine. In the context of this research, the definition of masculinity is aligned with being of the male sex (Barrett, 1996). Connel (2005) in his writings describes masculinity mainly as individuals whose core characteristics include aggression and risk-taking behaviours. Men by virtue of their sexual orientation, culture or religion occupy different positions from women, and sometimes those positions are oppressive in nature (Connel, 2002-2005). Davis and Gergen (1997) further suggest that men are different from women due to the distinct qualities they are born with. According to Cornwall and Lindisfarne (2016) the

explanation of why men and women are not seen as equals in society is not clear. According to Tan, Shaw, Cheng, and Kim (2013), masculinities are constructed through history and social interactions. The relationships men have with men, girls and women influence the construction of masculinity (Ratele, 2013). Masculinity is a lifelong phenomenon that men learn and employ with time as they find their own identities (Ratele, 2007). Masculinity is learned through comparison of men to other men, and comparison of men to another version of themselves (Ratele, 2013).

2.3 How role models influence the construction of masculinities

According to Bandura (1977) role models play a significant role in shaping and influencing behaviour through observing, internalizing, and emulating behaviours. In formative years, individuals observe and imitate behaviours in order to shape their own understandings (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Connell (2002) argues that when it comes to the construction of masculinity, role models often embody the norms and expectations associated with masculinity by the society. Individuals can get a sense of validation when they identify with a role model and may end up adopting to behaviours or traits that are similar to their role models (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Kroger (2006) further affirms Hogg and Ried by arguing that when it comes to role modelling, individuals integrate aspects of their role model's values and behaviours as a template to formulate their own identities, which is how some men develop their masculinity. Studies have shown that society plays a crucial role in the construction of masculinity and the expression of that masculinity (Itulua-Abumere, 2013). Importantly, Mendelsohn and Sewell (2004) have illustrated that society does not always encourage the expression of emotions by men. Kimmel (2017) indicates that role models play a significant role in influencing the perceptions and expression of emotions in masculinity. Individuals adopt or reject the expression of

masculinity depending on how they witnessed their role models respond towards the expression of emotions (Kimmel, 2017). The above demonstrates the theoretical link between the role modelling of not expressing emotions and later outbursts of violence in males

Another way that role models influence how individuals construct their own masculinity is media According to Connell (2005) media can contribute to setting social norms and expectations when it comes to the construction of masculinity. It is crucial to take into consideration that the role of role models varies across individuals (Eagly & Wood, 2012), but there are also some social influences that are normative and pervasive and which "most" men adopt in constructing their own masculinity. The concept of masculinity construction is multifaceted and can be shaped by a combination of factors such as, cultural norms, individual experiences as well as the influence of role models in an individual's life.

2.4 Violence, Patriarchy, and colonialism

Violence is considered a complex phenomenon which is made up of sexual, physical, psychological, and emotional harm that is inflicted upon another individual (Krug et al., 2002). Galtung (1969) described violence as multifaceted and manifesting in three different forms: direct violence (this involves acts of psychological and physical harm), Structural violence (societal injustices and inequalities in society) and lastly cultural violence (this involves belief that justify violence in society). Studies show that violence perpetuated towards women by males is a result of males using power and control to enforce their domination over women (Hearn, 1999).

Colonialism is a system that expresses cultural, economic, and political domination of one nation over the other (Fanon, 1963). Colonialism played a role in instigating unequal

power relations in society which resulted in gender inequality and patriarchy, and essentially influenced how resources and opportunities are structured in society (Kandiyoti, 1998; Mohanty, 1988). As previously noted, Patriarchy as highlighted by Nkya (2020) is a system that promotes male dominance over women and has been argued to influence GBV. According to Mohanty (1988), colonialism played a role in establishing patriarchy in colonised nations through subordination of women whilst endorsing norms and values that support patriarchy.

Violence, patriarchy and colonialism are linked. The patriarchal system of male domination over women reinforces violence and inequality through a system that encourages males to exert power and control over women (Graaff & Heinecken, 2017). Colonialism played a significant role in establishing structures that support patriarchy in society (Mohanty, 1988).

2.5 Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence is a pervasive global issue, that manifests in different forms. Gender-based violence in this research includes women only as victims and males as the perpetrators. As highlighted by United Nations Population Fund, Gender-based violence affects its survivors in different ways (UNFPA, 2005). The phrase Gender-Based Violence is often characterised as violence against women and children (Enaifogheet al., 2021). GBV according to Dlamini (2021) involves a range of abusive behaviours inflicted upon individuals because of their gender; this abusive behaviour includes but is not limited to physical, emotional, sexual, and other forms of maltreatments that deprive a person of certain liberties. According to Rasool et al. (2002) acts that are associated with gender-based physical violence include, but are not limited to, hitting, throwing objects, shoving, choking, kicking, and punching. GBV is a form of violence that is explicitly grounded in gendered relations (Dlamini, 2021). It is most often understood as violence by men toward

women (Enaifoghe, Dlelana, Abosede, Durokifa & Dlamini, 2021), although there are many forms of GBV (Jewkes, Sen & Garcia Moreno, 2002). Enaifoghe et al. (2021) note that women suffer severe consequences due to GBV, such as unintended pregnancies, physical injuries, suicides, homicides, miscarriages, pregnancy complications, gastrointestinal disorders, and many other complications. The current system in the contemporary society is one where women and minority groups are disempowered and consequently their basic human rights can be taken away (Enaifoghe, 2021).

Dlamini (2021) argues that gender related violence is promoted by family, community, or the state, a finding that is supported in the present study. According to Sanjel (2013) abuse of women is learned by observing family members or community members; in many cases the society thinks that women abuse is a personal matter, and they tend to look the other way when they witness abuse.

According to Meyiwa, Williamson, Maseti and Ntabanyane (2017) GBV in South Africa is normalised or acceptable in the community because it is experienced across all social classes, ages, and races, while in fact it is a human right concern. Despite the many interventions out there to curtail GBV, women continue to be victims of gender-based violence (Salazar et al., 2020). Literature suggests there is a link between the increase of GBV occurrences and men's masculinity and their expectations of gender roles (Graaff & Heinecken, 2017). UNFPA (2005) further illustrates that GBV perpetrators use physical force to exercise control or dominance over victims. Research shows that in African culture, male toughness and strength or hegemonic masculinity is celebrated; unfortunately, this is usually at the expense of women. Masculinities are based on dominance over women, which may take the form of sexual practices, violent acts against women and risky sexual behaviours (Jewkes, Dunkle, Nduna & Shi, 2010). The literature

review demonstrates the importance of understanding masculinity and its construction in order to understand the link between masculinity and gender-based violence.

2.5.1 Prevalence rates of gender-based violence

The prevalence rates below shed light on the magnitude of GBV in South Africa and around the globe. Including the prevalence rates is crucial in providing context for understanding the issue as well as informing interventions. According to Ott (2017) gender inequality plays a role in gender-based violence. Between 2017 and 2018 nearly 3000 women were killed in South Africa (SAPS, 2022).

On a global scale, Enaifoghe et al. (2021) stated that more than a third of women fell victim to violence from non-partners, whereas 70% of women have experienced GBV. Approximately one in three women are affected by gender-based violence in their lifetime (WHO, 2019). GBV is a global pandemic (WHO, 2019). In Africa, 45.6% of women have either experienced sexual or physical violence (Enaifoghe et al., 2021). For its survivors, various aspects of their lives can be affected after having falling victims to GBV, including but not limited to mental injury, while their livelihood can be affected physically and socially as well (Jewkes et al., 2010).

2.5.2 History of Gender-based violence

According to Allen (2018), GBV functions off of different types of oppression, for example, race, class or gender; which may be why GBV is so prevalent in South Africa. Studies since the 1970s have shown substantial interest in violence against women, which resulted in numerous interventions that are feminist in nature (Anderson & Umberson, 2001; Hamill & Saunders, 2003). At the time, interventions from the feminist perspective influenced advocacy work and research towards supporting survivors of violence (Gelles, 1987). Around the 1980s research studies began to focus on perpetrators of violence in

efforts to develop treatment programmes that will reduce violence against women (Gondolf, 1997). Initial studies of men intended to understand abusive men through studying attitudes, personalities, and behaviours. More studies that are qualitative emerged in order to understand men's experiences in-depth (Kaeflein, 2013; Makongoza, 2016; Smith, 2008; Smith & Langa, 2010)., However, this research has been extended through qualitative studies that aim to understand men's experiences in depth.

Violence is considered to be a great threat to human lives (Ratele, 2008). The history of gendered violence in South Africa can be seen long before the Europeans colonized South Africa, with the cultural hierarchy based on unequal relations where men exercised dominance over women. South African cultures practiced gender oppression where only men had positions of power (Thompson, 2017). Culture created a challenging role for women, as they were responsible for taking care of the household, caring for the children, and taking care of the crops (Dubow, 2014). Additionally, Thompson (2017) illustrated that marriage in African cultures represented gender oppression. The economic exchange of lobola for a bride portrayed women as tools or objects that can be bought; this transaction in itself represents oppression against women. It is evident when looking at South African history that gender-based oppressions started before the arrival of the Europeans. However, the colonization of South Africa, and specifically the apartheid regime, encouraged racial tension and a system of slavery in which enslaved women were seen as sexual objects (Gordon & Gordon, 1992). Apartheid came with class and racial oppressions which added to the oppression of gender which already existed before the Europeans' arrival. The inequalities and injustices of the apartheid regime shaped the way masculinity is constructed (Smith & Langa, 2010).

Thus, although the notion of oppression against women in South Africa existed before white supremacy, white supremacy heightened inequalities in the black communities and led to masculinities being shaped in particular ways (Gordon & Gordon, 1992).

The challenge of GBV in South Africa has been so significant that it was recently declared a pandemic (Dlamini, 2021). However, there is a significant gap in research when it come to the role that masculinity plays in perpetuating and preventing GBV by males. Current studies tend to focus on the prevalence of GBV and its impact on women (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005). Notably there is limited research that comprehensively explores GBV by examining the link between constructions of masculinity, constructions of GBV, and the perpetuation of violence, yet studies do agree that males are the main perpetrators of GBV (Dlamini, 2021; Graaff and Heinecken, 2017; Salazar et al., 2020). This research gap highlights the need for a more nuanced investigation into the various forms of masculinity and their differential impacts on the perpetration or prevention of gender-based violence. By addressing this gap, the current study seeks to contribute a more comprehensive understanding of how cultural and societal norms surrounding masculinity intersect with and shape understandings of gender-based violence among males in South Africa.

In South Africa, gender inequality is an underlying cause of many health and social problems (Graaff & Heinecken, 2017). South African government policies have since 1994 been trying to promote gender equality (Langa & Kiguwa, 2013). One of the leading causes of GBV is gender inequality, as it not only causes harm to its survivors but affects society as a whole (Dlamini, 2021). Gender-Based violence affects society as a whole because it creates broken families and elicits an ongoing cycle of violence (Noll, 2005). GBV often results in psychological effects such as low self-esteem, lack of confidence and insecurities; and these psychological effects last way beyond the time the incident occurs

(Jewkes & Morrell, 2010). Gender-Based violence (GBV) is a global problem that usually results in psychological trauma and poor health for its victims (Wilson, 2011). According to Wilson (2011) Gender- Based Violence can be categorised as various behaviours that result in sexual, physical, or psychological harm to men and women alike. According to Dlamini (2021) GBV not only negatively impacts GBV survivors (affecting their self-esteem) and their families.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

The link between masculinity and gender-based violence has been explored by a number of theorists. Although many theories can be used as contributions to this field of study, the present study is guided by the following theories: The Patriarchy theory, The Hegemonic masculinity theory, and the theoretical link between GBV and Masculinity.

2.6.1 The Patriarchy theory

Patriarchy is a social system that places men in prominent roles where they are in a position to influence economic, social, and political realms (Lerner, 1986; Nkya ,2020). This system affords men the primary power to exercise moral authority and social privilege (Mies, 1983). Furthermore the patriarchal system thrives on gender norms that favours male dominance and the subordination of women (Hooks, 1981). Additionally, Sultan et al (2017) highlights that through this system men are placed in a position to dominate relationships, institutions and influence cultural norms as well have the upper hand to exercise superiority over women.

Historically, the roots of patriarchy have manifested over a long period of time with different cultures. Social structures have been set up to uphold the superiority of men and as a result this system has encouraged the perpetuation of gendered inequalities and have contributed to gender-based violence where women are victims (Hooks, 1981). According

to Mies (1983) patriarchal norms have been infused into religions, culture, and politics in such a way that a gender inequality has been normalised. Although the economic structure continues to evolve, the patriarchal norms continue to influence the society (Mies, 1983). There has been a lot of work by feminist movements that have been striving to dismantle the patriarchal system through advocacy for gender equality (Mies, 1983).

According to Connell (2013) there are diverse societal and institutional structures that permit male dominance and the subordination of women. Connell (2013) further highlights that there are disproportionate representations of males in political leadership positions and economic systems, culturally and within social institutions. Kabeer (2005) highlights that the power imbalances in political spaces result in men predominantly influencing policies and legislation. This power imbalance may result in women's voices being marginalised which may result in ineffective efforts to combat gender-based violence (Kabeer, 2005). Economically the patriarchal system can be reinforced through occupational discrimination that may result in gender pay inequities and limited resources for women, a system that favours men and may potentially contribute to the perpetuation of gender-based violence (Sen, 2001).Additionally, economic occupational discrimination reinforces a culture where because men have more financial influence and autonomy, women are left vulnerable and financially dependent on men, which increases their risk of GBV(Sen, 2001). Brownmiller (1975) explores the cultural dimensions of patriarchy, highlighting how gender-based cultural practices encourage the dominance over women by men. Additionally, Brownmiller (1975) demonstrates how societal norms perpetuate gendered inequalities and through the normalizations on violence against women.

2.6.2 The Hegemonic Masculinity Theory

The concept of Hegemonic masculinity according to Connel (2005) is characterised by qualities such as strength, independence, and being tough as males. Donaldson (1993)

described Hegemonic masculinity as a form of masculinity where being a man is closely associated with characteristics such as strength, dominance, aggressiveness, and control. The theory of hegemonic masculinity was initially introduced by R.W Connell in the 1980s (Connell, 1987). The theory explores the dominant and socially accepted norms associated with masculinity in society. This theory has since been an influential framework when it comes to masculinity studies. Connell (1987) introduced this theory to provide a framework in which the construction of masculinity within cultural and societal norms can be understood. Understanding the hegemonic form of masculinity in relation to studies of gendered violence or inequalities can provide an insight into the power imbalance between men and women (Langa & Kiguwa, 2013), which is further perpetuated by patriarchal structures in society.

Hegemonic masculinities represent cultural principles and influences of masculinity (Ricciardelli, Clow & White, 2010). Demetriou (2001) illustrates that hegemonic masculinity can be characterised as men's supremacy over women. Furthermore, Salazar et al. (2010) argue that hegemonic masculinities represent what it means to be a man, which is to be dominant over women. Hegemonic masculinities include strong qualities such as being strong heterosexuals, being the head of the family, being the sole providers in the household, being tough, being dominant and having authority over women's bodies (Salazar et al., 2010). Masculine Hegemony is a characteristic, a role or behaviour; and hegemonic men may not necessarily have all the traits at once; they may only have some of the traits (Ricciardelli et al., 2010) Masculine hegemony is a characteristic whereas Hegemonic masculinity is a practice of a strong and tough masculinity (Connell, 2005). Research has shown that the characteristics of hegemonic masculinities change over time, as each generation brings forth changes in cultural practices and attitudes (Connell, 2005). Hegemonic masculinities are powerful because they are able to resist and adapt to change;

whenever these masculinities are challenged, a new masculinity is born (Connell, 2005). Additionally, Ratele (2013) illustrated that masculinity can never be fully constructed, and there is always a form of construction underway meaning that throughout their lives men are constantly developing their masculinity. Ratele (2013) further illustrates that to men and boys' masculinity is incomplete and ongoing; men can find and learn from their masculine identity over time. Human interactions, cultural practices and society all have an influence in the construction of masculinity (Maracek, Crawford & Popp, 2004). Additionally, Connell (2001) reinforces this notion by noting that the representations of men in media and the role that family and society plays contribute to formation of personality of men. Lau (2007) further reiterates that the construction of masculinity involves relationships and various situations that are continuously being influenced by social interactions. Lau (2007) argues that hegemonic masculinity demonstrates how society reinforces the subordination of women through male domination.

In this study, the theory of hegemonic masculinity serves as a theoretical lens to comprehending and understanding the intricate dynamics between the intersection of masculinity and the role it plays in gender-based violence. As previously highlighted, this study employs the theoretical framework of hegemonic masculinity developed by R.W. Connell (Connell, 1987). Hegemonic masculinity theory offers a detailed understanding of how dominant masculinities contribute to forming gender power structures, societal norms, and the constructions of individual masculinity (Connell, 2005).

2.6.3 The Theoretical link between GBV and Masculinity

According to Hearn, Nordberg, Andersson, Balkmar, Gottzén, Klinth and Sandberg (2012) there are three forms of masculinities. The first form of masculinity is argued to be the most valued form of masculinity, Hegemonic masculinity (Hearn et al., 2012). Hegemonic masculinity according to Hearn et al. (2012) represents drive and strength. The

second form is Complicit masculinity, which refers to men who support the ideals of hegemonic masculinity even though they do not attain hegemonic masculinity (Hearn et al., 2012). The third form of masculinity according to Hearn et al. (2012) is the Subordinated masculinity, this form of masculinity is regarded the lowest form of masculinity and is usually associated with people who are males but do not identify as masculine. Hearn et al. (2012) further argue that male gender should be understood including the different forms of masculinities. According to Salazar et al., (2020) South African studies have shown that men with hegemonic masculinities have the ability to perpetrate different types of violence against women (Russo & Pirlott, 2006), since men who associate masculinity with practicing control over their partners are most likely to be abusive towards their partners. Boonzaier (2008) men are often the perpetrators of GBV. McCloskey, Boonzaier, Steinbrenner and Hunter (2016) further illustrate that young men who hold firm views about gender roles tend to be more open to the use of violence to control a female partner. Salazar et al., (2020) also argue that although masculinities have different forms, they are not always harmful. There are masculinities that are firm on anti-violence against women, and such masculinities usually advocate for women's rights and actively participate in interventions preventing GBV. In the South Africa of today, masculinity is challenged by financial and economic conditions which make it difficult for males to reach their ideal standards of masculinity including having families, being employed and having their own children (Langa & Kiguwa, 2013). These authors further argue that in the current South Africa, masculinities compete for power through subordination of women and men, which is a response to their sense of disempowerment.

While much literature is focused on theorising masculinities, studies in South Africa show that masculinity has a variety of traits which are shaped by the environment in which they occur. Traditionally, masculinity is seen as controlling, dominant and powerful

(Shefer et al., 2007). In conclusion, the above section demonstrates the complex relationship between gender-based violence and masculinity, associating normative forms of masculinity with power and control.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter illustrated the history of GBV in South Africa, showing that oppression on women is justified by culture and has been in existence for a long time. In addition, gender-based violence is a complex phenomenon that has detrimental effects on its survivors (Enaifogue et al., 2021. Masculinity plays a significant role in GBV as men are often perpetrators of GBV (Mahalik et al., 2007). Gender inequality enforced by many South African cultures often puts men in a position of superiority over women, which in some cases leads to the abuse of women (Graaff & Heinecken, 2017). It is evident that GBV needs immediate intervention strategies that will be applied at individual and structural levels. In essence, the literature review highlighted the link between GBV and masculinity and how the effects of colonisation and patriarchy came into play. The present research is aimed at exploring GBV and masculinity from South African men's perspectives. In contrast to the majority of literature on GBV, this research seeks to give South African men a voice on matters pertaining to their masculinity and GBV to contribute to interventions that will be beneficial to both men and women, and to South African society more broadly. The theoretical framework discussed theories of patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity, and the theoretical link between GBV and Masculinity. These theories are an appropriate frame for the study as they examine the interplay of the different factors that contribute to masculinity and the role it plays in gender-based violence.

Chapter three: Research Methods

The focus of this chapter is the methodology employed in the study. The chapter begins by discussing the research aims and research questions and then proceeds to address the research design, the participants and the sampling methods employed in the study. This will be followed by the data collection process and thereafter the data analysis employed in the study. This chapter will be concluded by considerations of reflexivity and ethics. Through this research I engaged men 18 years and older on their understanding of masculinity and GBV. By exploring men's understanding of masculinity and GBV, I identified themes that may contribute to interventions supporting healthy expressions of masculinity.

3.1 Research Questions

My research problem seeks to address how masculinity plays a role in GBV in South Africa:

1. How do participants construct their masculinity?
2. How do participants construct GBV?
3. How do these understandings contribute toward supporting interventions targeted toward addressing the causes of GBV among South African males?

3.2 Research Design

This research study is positioned within a qualitative research paradigm which aims to explore the social world (Mason, 2002). Boonzaier and Shefer (2006) argue that in qualitative research, the researcher should be aware of their position in order to accurately interpret and construct meanings of the participant's understandings. I chose a qualitative design due to its exploratory nature. Using a social constructionist perspective (Galbin (2014), this research explored how men construct their masculinities in relation to GBV.

Thematic analysis was used in this study to analyse and interpret the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis is a data analysis method that analyses data by identifying, analysing, and reporting repeated themes or patterns. Thematic analysis allowed for the generation of themes which were later interpreted and analysed. The data collection method that was used in this study was semi-structured interviews. An interview schedule was used to guide the flow of data collection while leaving room for the opportunity to probe and steer the interview in a flexible direction depending on the interaction of myself and my participants.

3.2.1 Social Constructionism

This study explores the socially constructed nature of masculinity and its impact on GBV. According to Galbin (2014) Social constructionism is a theory that seeks to explore how individuals co-construct their reality, and the ways in which this shapes society. Social constructionism emphasizes that society and culture play a role in how individuals perceive their experiences, beliefs, and reality (Andrews, 2012). It can also be alluded that the focus of the social constructionist perspective is not on the objective reality of the universe but rather on how social interactions and institutions influence how knowledge is constructed (Butler, 1993). Young and Collin (2004) proposed that in social constructionism individuals use cognitive processes to construct their experiences. Andrews (2012) argues that unlike other theoretical frameworks that believe that knowledge is objective, Social constructionism argues that individuals actively construct their knowledge depending on their social interactions and experiences. Because this research assumes that gender is socially constructed, a social constructionist perspective allows an analysis of masculinity and gender-based violence as the participants construct them.

3.2.2 Sampling

For this research project, black and coloured South African males were selected. This study focuses on the multiple oppressions that lead to GBV in a South African context. Because people of colour are historically those who were most subjected to racial forms of oppression under apartheid (Gordon & Gordon, 1993), I have chosen to include only black and coloured participants in my sample. Purposive sampling is a technique whereby participants are selected deliberately because of their qualities or characteristics (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2006). The participants in this study were selected on the basis that they are men who identify as masculine and understand what gender-based violence is. Purposive sampling was used to identify 11 South African men who identify as male as illustrated by Acharya, Prakash, and Nigam (2013). This type of sampling method allowed me to select participants with knowledge of the subject and the traits best suited for the research subject.

This research consisted of 11 South African male participants. Participants were 18 years and older. This selection of the participants is justified by the rationale that men who are 18 years and older are legally able to provide informed consent to be included in the study. The decision to work with participants from the ages of 18 years and older was influenced by Smith and Langa (2010) who argue that this stage is where the transition from boyhood to manhood happens, in which males are also starting to emerge sexually and explore their own masculinity. Although the starting age is 18 years, I also interviewed men who are older than 18 years. The age range was 18 to 40 years. This age range was influenced by Arnett (2007) who believes adulthood commence at 18 years.

This research focused on black and coloured South African men from diverse backgrounds, with participants from different South African provinces. This was so that I can get diverse perspectives and experiences on the research subject. This selection is

influenced by Morrell, Jewkes and Lindegger (2012) who argues that African masculinity is moulded by differences in class, race and societal challenges. The sample in this study did not include all races in South Africa, and this could potentially limit the findings of the study.

The choice of participants that were recruited was influenced by the fact that the participants were recruited through social networks whereby I directly asked participants to form part of my study. Recruitment was done by accessing my social relationships (this included my community, place of work and social media platforms). Recruitment was also done through a snowball sampling method, in which participants were referred to me through other participants (Etikan, Alkassim, & Abubakar, 2016). Consequently, the sample was composed of black and coloured individuals, as they were primarily disadvantaged by the apartheid/colonialism era.

3.3 Data Collection

The study made use of semi-structured interviews as a data collection technique. Face to face and virtual (online) interviews were conducted. Face to face interviews allowed me to interact directly with participants, giving me an opportunity to observe the participants, which increased rapport (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2011). Online interviews were conducted through the Microsoft teams platform. Online interviews increase flexibility and access, especially because the participants were not in one geographic location. Interviews are a common data collection technique in qualitative research (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson & Kangasniemi, 2026). According to Saarijärvi and Brat (2021) the COVID-19 pandemic encouraged the use of virtual platforms when it is not convenient to meet face to face, which has led to the normalization of online interactions. Interviews were an appropriate data collection method for this research because it is a powerful tool to effectively capture the participants' meaning of their experiences (Rabionet, 2011).

I chose this data collection method because of its flexibility (Kallio et al., 2016). As part of the data collection process, before the interviews were conducted, I explained to the participants the interview process. I presented the participant information sheet and the consent forms to ensure that the participants are fully aware of the interview process and that they sign consent forms as conformation that they are giving consent to be part of the study and for the interview sessions to be audio recorded. Where there was a need to re-explain the interview process I did so. The interview only commenced once the participants fully understood the interview process and had given consent. I used an interview schedule that was aimed at exploring GBV and masculinity from South African men's perspectives. The schedule assisted men with unfolding their understanding of the subject. In addition, Valenzuela and Shrivastava (2002) describe an interview schedule/guide as a data collection tool used for acquiring data that is linked to aims and objectives of the study whilst allowing adaptability throughout the data collection process. Open-ended questions were utilized to capture participants' understanding of the phenomenon through a semi-structured interview guide that allowed for probing and follow-up questions. Open-ended questions allowed me to be flexible and also allowed me to adapt the questions to the individual context. The interviews averaged from 45 minutes to 90 minutes in duration. The objectives of this study guided the primary questions in the study. The questions asked during the interviews were influenced by literature on constructions of masculinities, gender and GBV. The full interview schedule is available as appendix 1. Questions such as how participants would describe their own masculinities and how participants present their masculinities when interacting with females allowed the participants to construct themselves in relation to females. I employed follow-up questions to gain more insight and understanding of the participants' perceptions and experiences. Follow-up questions are crucial when trying to gauge the participant and elicit more

information from the participant (Rabionet, 2011). I chose interviews because they allow me to directly ask the participant the studied phenomenon, since interviews are flexible and allow for probing and follow-up questions (Rabionet, 2011). The interview sessions were recorded and transcribed for better analysis. After all the interviews were done, the audio recordings were uploaded and saved on Google Drive. I used the audio recordings to transcribe the data verbatim. Most parts of the interviews were in English although some participants used their home language for particular phrases or when they felt that they would express themselves better using their home language. In instances where participants expressed themselves in their home language, I translated the text to English. I was fortunate enough to understand all the home languages the participants used (Sepedi, Isizulu and Setswana). Nes, Abma, Jonsson, and Deeg (2010) stressed the importance of representing the participants as accurately as possibly in scenarios where there are language differences during the data collection process. After all the interviews were transcribed and translated, I uploaded and saved the transcribed texts on Google Drive.

3.4 Data Analysis

This study made use of Thematic Analysis to analyse the transcribed raw data collected. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis is a method used to analyse data by identifying, analysing and reporting repeated themes or patterns. Thematic Analysis provides rich and detailed analysis of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic Analysis allows for data to be analysed in ways that will be understood by readers. I familiarised myself with the material obtained from the interview by reading and rereading the material. The interview material obtained was used to create a detailed coding scheme. This method of data collection reduced the data collected into smaller data that is easily understandable and interpretable (Babbie & Mutton, 2011). Thematic analysis has been used for social constructionist research (Joffe, 2011). According to Gablin (2014) the

social constructionist perspective focuses on social influences that make up social reality. Butler (1993) and Van Dijk (1998) both echo Gablin (2014) when they argue that language and social interactions influence the way in which individuals view the world. Thematic analysis has been used to understand social constructs and their influences.

3.4.1 Data Analysis Steps

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested that the steps below be followed to make data analysis easier.

Phase 1- immersion in the data

Braun and Clarke (2006) stress the importance of understanding one's data. This step required familiarisation with the data which meant I read and reread the data. I familiarised myself with the transcripts, which aided in me gaining an in-depth understanding of what the participants meant with the data they provided. With this process I was able to develop hypothetical codes and themes.

Phase 2- Generating initial codes

After I was familiar with the data and had developed hypothetical themes and codes, the next step according to Braun and Clarke (2006) is to develop initial codes. I used the transcripts to arrange the data into initial codes. There are two factors that influence the manner in which initial coding can be done according to Braun and Clarke (2006), one could code using the actual data or use the theory that is used to understand the data. Due to the exploratory and inductive nature of the study, I used the actual data to generate the initial codes.

Phase 3- Identifying themes

In this step, Braun and Clarke (2006) discussed using the different coded data and turning it into themes. I made use of the grouped coded scripts to transform them into possible themes. I analysed the codes to determine what the general message of the text was, and then generated the themes thereafter.

Phase 4-Reviewing themes

This step involved reviewing the potential themes that were identified in the previous step. The themes were carefully reviewed until I remained with the most dominant themes. During this phase of reviewing, Braun and Clarke (2006) mentioned that it will become apparent that some of the themes may resemble themes but are not actual themes. The coded data and literature informed the final themes.

Phase 5-Defining themes

According to Braun and Clarke (2006) the themes need to be defined and refined, and each theme needs to represent certain aspects of the data that the researcher deems important without assigning too many meanings to just one theme. I clearly defined the themes and what they mean by ensuring they speak to the data in an understandable way that is not complicated.

Phase 6- Producing the report

At this phase Braun and Clarke (2006) discuss the finalisation of the data analysis which entails writing a report. At this stage, the themes were consolidated to speak to the research questions with the backing of literature. The final analysis explored how men position themselves in the notions of traditional masculinity, how they construct their own masculinity, and how they understand the relationship between masculinities and GBV.

3.5 Self-Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a core function of qualitative research (Rankl, Johnson & Vindrola-Padros, 2021). It is important in research for the researcher to reflect on how their own values and biases may shape the interpretation of the research data (Creswell, 2009). Terre-Blanche and Durrheim (2002) mentioned that every researcher conducting a study does so with pre-conceived perspectives and this affects how the research findings are interpreted. It is therefore important for the researcher to approach a research study with openness (Creswell, 2009). According to Pillow (2003), reflexivity is as an analysis of the author's position of where they stand throughout the research process. Nagata (2000) indicated that reflexivity involves a continuous conversation with self throughout the research process to evaluate one's position within the research and the thought processes one experiences with regards to the study. The researcher needs to adopt a sensitive approach of acknowledging the different ways in which they have shaped that data collected through but not limited to the influence of experiences and assumptions which can directly influence the direction of the study (Mays & Pope, 2000).

Keeping the above in mind, throughout the course of this study, I was conscious that I am a woman studying men and I have my own perceptions of how masculinity should be expressed and participants in my study have their own perceptions of how they should express their masculinities. I exercised caution throughout the study to not allow my own biases to interfere with the research process.

As a female researcher who professionally work for an organisation that does advocacy work for survivors of GBV, it was at times difficult to listen to the male participants position the role of women in society (roles which I did not entirely agree with that positioned women as inferior to men). I, however, exercised control to not react or demonstrate discomfort in order to affect the flow/direction of the research study when

conducting the research and when transcribing the data. The literature review assisted me in understanding natures of the different forms of masculinity prior to the interviews, which allowed me to acknowledge my biases and how they co-construct the research.

I acknowledge that the above could have possibly affected the ways in which I structured my follow-up questions; however, none of the participants expressed discomfort which leaves me confident that this did not interfere with the research process.

An interesting observation was that although some of the participants were forthcoming about their experiences, especially with discussions that centred around expression of emotions, there were participants that held back and were not willing to open up and in some instances portrayed themselves as strong when sensitive topics arose. I suspect that this could have been caused by the fact that I am a female researcher, and perhaps the participants would have been more open if they were being interviewed by a male researcher who also identifies as masculine.

Above all, I approached this study with the mindset that this study is qualitative in nature, hence I took extra caution in ensuring that I remain transparent and reflexive about how I locate myself in relation to the data and how this shaped the co-construction of the data.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was granted by the Witwatersrand ethical committee (PROTOCOL NUMBER: MASPR/22/02). All participants were given a detailed participant information sheet (appendix 3) with an explanation of what the study is about prior to them agreeing to take part in the study. Participation was on a voluntary basis, and it was made clear that there will be no incentives or monetary gain from participating in the study. All the participants gave consent and signed consent forms (appendix 2) prior to participation. I

clearly explained the data collection process to all the participants. The participants were informed that they will not be forced to answer any questions they do not wish to answer; and they were informed that they are free to withdraw from the interview at any time if they no longer wish to participate in the study. Participants were informed that the interview sessions will be recorded, and consent was granted by all participants for the interview sessions to be recorded. Participants were informed that should they confess to any crime, including a crime against a child, I will be obligated to report the crime. In cases where participants may experience distress during their participation and require counselling, I had listed contact details of SADAG on the PIS that was given to the participants.

I informed all the participants that all the information they provide would be anonymous and will only be used for research purposes only. All/any information that would compromise anonymity was removed, including names and specific locations. The information was stored safely where it will only be accessed by myself and my supervisor. I informed all the participants that all the information they provided would be anonymised and used for research purposes only.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis, Findings and Discussion

This section focuses on the analysis of the data and the discussion of the analysis. For continuity and clarity, the analysis and discussion will be presented together. Thematic analysis was used to analyse transcribed text from the individual interviews. I identified four dominant themes and varying sub-themes. The themes were as follows:

- Constructions of traditional masculinity
- Role Models
- Constructions of gender-based violence
- Proposed interventions for gender-based violence

These themes are unpacked in the discussion and supported by quotes from participants.

4.1 Theme one- Constructions of Traditional Masculinity

The findings of this section demonstrate the different ways in which men understand masculinity. It shows how there is a negative connotation towards the traditional ideology of masculinity and conventional masculinity. Although 7 of the 11 participants felt that masculinity was determined by generations that preceded them, they did not necessarily agree with these definitions although they accepted that is how things should be. Discussions that emerged during interviews portrayed masculinity as somewhat toxic as most participants leaned more towards understanding traditional masculinity as hegemonic masculinity. Some of the examples of toxic masculine traits that were raised by participants were: expressing emotions is seen as vulnerability, and men are expected to take a senior role and express dominance in the household. As noted, Hegemonic masculinity can be described as a set of widely accepted behavioural traits and attributes that are considered to be ideal in men (Connell, 2005). These attributes are associated with power and dominance (Connell, 1995). The data suggests that key indicators of

masculinity are centred around providing, protecting, being strong physically and mentally. Data further shows that masculinity is equated with leadership, dominance and being ethical. During the interviews when the participants were asked what masculinity looks like to them in general, there were sub-themes that emerged: **Providers and Protectors, Men don't cry, and Masculinity in relation to women.**

4.1.1 Providers and Protectors

Masculinity is associated with being strong, not showing emotion, dominating and being an Alpha male. The general sense is that masculinity is defined by physical traits, and the following quotes from participants provide examples of the physical traits: "being Muscular" and "being strong." There is emphasis by participants that the above-mentioned traits affirm the participant's masculinities. One thing that stood out in the interviews is that to the participants masculinity is measured by the ability to provide for one's families financially (Families through marriage or parents and siblings). The participants feel they have an obligation to take care of their families. The below statements illustrate the participants' meanings of being masculine.

> *And I think you know my understanding of masculinity sort of sits around the whole notion of being an alpha male. So basically, being the most dominant, the strongest. The bravest, the greatest provider, the most outstanding* (Participant J)

The above statement illustrates the importance of the participant to assume a leadership position. The participant places himself as an alpha male. An alpha male is associated with success, confidence, and intelligence. The term 'Alpha male' is commonly used in the animal kingdom to demonstrate leadership and superiority (King & Cowlishaw, 2009). Through his words, the participant suggests that he strives to be in a position where he should excel in his role of being a man, and this is clearly illustrated in the following

words: "the most dominant, strongest, bravest, greatest, most outstanding." Participant J is describing some characteristics of the theory of hegemonic masculinity mentioned by Connell (1995) when explaining Hegemonic masculinity.

> *A man is a provider, a producer and a protector that has self-control* (Participant A)

Being a provider, a producer and a protector can be linked to Hegemonic Masculinity where men are expected to show no weakness and as a result must exercise emotional and physical control. In the above statement the participant illustrates the qualities of men emphasizing that in addition to providing, producing and protecting, a man should have self-control. This statement implies that because he is a male, emotions should not direct his actions.

> *For me it means protecting, it means security, it means cover* (Participant B)

> *Being a man means providing sense of security to those around you. To those that depend on you* (Participant C)

The statements above illustrate that the participants have the expectation that they must provide and take care of their families. The notion of men being providers could possibly come from women's dependence on men. According to Rokhimah (2014), gender inequality protects patriarchy and endorses male dominance of women. Literature suggests that patriarchal values in male/female relationships view men as superior to women (Rokhimah, 2014). Men are "being Muscular," "Masculine," "being manly," and "being strong" and therefore it is their responsibility to take of their families as a way of asserting their masculinity.

> *Look after your family and take care of your family. And take care of your farm state. If you have animals or livestock, to take care of. Be that person, step into that role of a man* (Participant I)

Note that from the statement above this participant is more culturally inclined. When the participant talks about his responsibilities, he also talks about being responsible for his farm stead and his livestock in addition to being responsible for his family. This perspective illustrates that masculinity is not only emphasizing dominance over people, but dominance over everything, depending on your background.

According to Everitt-Penhale and Ratele (2015), African culture emphasizes specific aspects of masculinity that are not always emphasized in Western cultures. Here, the participant had incorrectly assumed that I (as a black female) already knew the role that a man living in a rural area should play. The participant's masculinity is in his description is centred around providing and taking care of women, traits commonly linked to the attributes of hegemonic masculinity. What the participants had in common is that they seem to have a strong belief that to establish manhood they need to be able to provide security and care for their family.

4.1.2 Men do not cry

Hegemonic masculinity suggests that some actions or behaviors, such as expressing emotions, are not encouraged for men. Participants talk of how society shapes their manhood (Itulua-Abumere, 2013), and reflect that in most cases, society does not encourage men expressing emotions (Mendelsohn & Sewell, 2004). In addition, being emotional and crying are seen by participants as attributes of women. Participants are also distancing themselves from these behaviors of expressing emotions, which may be a way of constructing their masculinity as normative and socially acceptable. The examples below demonstrate how some of the participants feel about expressing emotions:

> *I would not expect myself to be overly emotional about things. I think that is what we've grown into that you're not overly emotional. So, the expectation is that [Participant F] does not cry, [Participant F] solves his problem and I think that is where I am, though I have evolved over time, but I think that is what I would attach masculinity to, in my definition* (Participant F)

This statement from the participant conforms with the theory of hegemonic masculinity as it shows that there is an expectation that men should be tough and retrained (Connell, 2005; Salazar et al., 2020). The participant seems to have adapted to the notions of traditional masculinity, although he recognises that he has evolved over time, and his evolvement could signify non-traditional masculine behaviours such as showing emotions. When the participant talks about the expectations set for him in terms of expressing emotions, he expressed himself in third person, which could mean that Participant F does not agree with the expectations. It is known that crying is a healthy expression of emotions, however the participant talks about crying in a way that almost equates crying to not being able to solve one's problems, or crying resembles self-pity and a "real man" just figures things out.

> *Yeah, because society that we live in has taught us that men do not cry, you know? Take it like a man when we take knocks. Sometimes they're really painful. Sometimes life will knock you down and you will cry when you're alone, you will cry when you're in the car. You will cry when you are not around your loved ones. You don't want to be seen as weak and they are the people that need to understand that even though you're strong, you're not always at your strongest points*
> (Participant H)

There seems to be some level of awareness of the notion that men do not/should not cry or show vulnerable emotions more generally. Although some of the participants went through difficulties that resulted in them crying there is some level of discomfort attached to crying in front of people as the participant equates crying with weakness. The participant makes use of a well know phrase "take it like a man." This phrase is an example of hegemonic masculinity that discourages men from showing emotions as the ideals of hegemonic masculinity emphasise that men should not show emotions as it is seen as a feminine characteristic (Mendelsohn & Sewell, 2004). The participant's statement reflects the cultural expectations or societal expectations of the avoidance of vulnerability, which closely aligns with the theory of hegemonic masculinity.

> *You know, now having to go through that again in a different setting, it was very uncomfortable, and I was lost in tears, but the society says men cannot cry* (Participant B)

Although the participant was going through a situation that he felt warranted expressing emotions through crying, there was still a level of discomfort associated with expressing emotions. Further to the above, the participants refer to the long-standing beliefs of the theory of hegemonic masculinity constructed by society that men should resemble strength and toughness and should not express emotions as they will be regarded as not manly enough (Mendelsohn & Sewell, 2004).

> *I know that the way I speak to my boys cannot be the very same way that I speak to women. Women are sensitive, women are emotional. So, I need to, to some degree, count my words. And there are also some things that I cannot just Um outright just say when dealing with women* (Participant A)

The above statement illustrates that the participant recognizes that there is a certain level of sensitivity expected when interacting with women, implying that men are able to regulate their emotions more that women. Being “sensitive” and “emotional” are qualities that are attributed to women. Participant A is generalizing and stereotyping here about "what women are like", in contrast to what men are like, suggesting that one way of constructing masculinity by constructing its "other" (Connell, 1995; Edley, 2002; Kimmel, 2008). The statement by Participant A closely aligns with certain elements of the theory of hegemonic masculinity that suggests that men should always maintain dominance in their interactions and always demonstrate strength and rationality, while women are perceived to be fragile or delicate (Mendelsohn & Sewell, 2004).

> *So, from the person I am now, I treat women the same and they are the same. They can do what they can do. It's a pity that we are built more stronger than them*
> (Participant B)

The participant is contradictory because he acknowledges the physical differences between men and women, yet he still mentions that he treats women and men the same even though he notes that women are biologically inferior. The participant is attempting to validate "both sides of the argument". On the one hand he notes that women and men are equal. On the other he notes that there are biological differences which make males physically superior. So, he is saying that it's not that HE thinks women are inferior, but simply that biologically they are.

These masculine characters have normalized detachment from their emotions, similar to a study by Kupers (2005) on toxic masculinity, in which the ideals of masculinity tend to promote the suppression or detachment of emotions by men. Most participants do not openly express their emotions as it is deemed a weakness. Traditional masculinity

encourages strength and showing emotions opposes being masculine. There is an expectation within the hegemonic masculinity framework that men should be tough.

Responses such as those illustrated above demonstrate the level of discomfort that participants find in showing vulnerability. In their understanding of traditional masculinity, participants affiliate with hegemonic masculinity. According to Salazar et al. (2020) hegemonic masculinities are strong heterosexuals, they are the head of the family making them sole providers in the household who are tough, dominant, and strong. Participants' views and beliefs that men should always show strength at all times are aligned with and support the attributes of the theory of hegemonic masculinity.

4.1.3 Masculinity in relation to women

An important theme derived from the analysis was that there are certain expectations attached to the male gender and female gender. There is a hierarchy between men and women that places men higher up in the hierarchy as a way of sustaining the patriarchal society (Sultan, Guimbretière, Sengers & Dell, 2018). In this section the participant's perceptions reflect or challenge the characteristics associated with the system of patriarchy, such as gender roles and power dynamics. This section demonstrated that some participants are still negotiating their stance toward traditional or hegemonic masculinity (Ratele reference about masculinity under construction). For some participants, the biggest attribute defining their masculinity is non-femaleness. According to Connel (2005), hegemonic masculinity emphasises that men's construction of masculinity is through distancing from femaleness or femininity.

> *Everything opposite to be feminine or feminism; Being more of a breadwinner normally; From a personal perspective, being resistant to certain duties*
>
> (Participant D)

Participant D seems to separate duties/activities performed by men and women: some activities he deems fit for men and some he does not, suggesting that he views gender roles as appropriate. Participant D's own notion of masculinity is opposing femaleness. He illustrated that to him masculinity is "*Everything opposite to be feminine or feminism*." He further supports this statement by saying for him activities like house chores are not an obligation because he is a man, and he does house chores only occasionally. For Participant D the most significant role he plays is "*being a breadwinner*" implying that he carries the financial responsibilities in the household. Being a breadwinner is associated with being a sole provider in the household (Salazar et al., 2020). The participant's perception aligns with the theory of patriarchy as it reflects that the roles of men and women in society differ, and that men occupy dominant roles such as breadwinning (Nkya, 2020).

It was evident during the analysis that society plays a role in shaping masculinity and determining which activities are best suited for which gender, suggesting some intersections between the theories of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity on the one hand, and participants' experiences on the other. For example, with Participant A, the traditional expectation for men is that men provide, and women take care of the household chores and children:

> *Okay, with your traditional type of man, this is a guy that would go out, go to work, uhm make money and then just support the um, what you call this, the family financially. A traditional man does not sit at home with his wife every day and then change nappies, you know, clean the house with the wife* (Participant A)

Interestingly, the participant described the socially acceptable idea of masculinity. The participant's explanation of traditional masculinity portrays the gender hierarchy that

implies that men are above women as women are dependent on men. This perception reflects the theory of patriarchy. In this instance the man's role would be to provide whilst the woman stays home taking care of the children and household.

However, it is also evident that there are masculine characters that still willingly defy the hegemonic masculinity. For example:

> *Okay, [laughs], yes, I do, I do regard myself as manly, like I said to some degree, I'm not your traditional type of man, I'm the guy that, I have a son, 8 months, 8 month old son, I change his nappy, I wash him, I feed him, I clean around the house with my wife, I do all these things that, in the, in the traditional sense, it's not manly type of uhh what you call this?, manly type of uh activities that a man should not be doing* (Participant A)

From the above extract the participant was unapologetic about some of the traditionally female activities he does. He defies the common traditional masculinity ideology and is aware that those activities are not commonly known to be performed by men, placing himself outside the theory of hegemonic masculinity. This reveals his perception of what men and women are like, and what is conventional for males to do. There is a certain level of belief that feminine activities are unconventional for masculine characters, and even though the participant engages in "feminine activities" he still describes this as unusual and portrays these activities as being organized according to gender.

> *God is without form, but he's thought to be a male. he's thought to be the almighty God almighty father and. With creation, you know the male seed is thought to be what gives the child identity and their life* (Participant H)

The above statement from Participant H shows that he ranks being a man as spiritually superior. He introduces the idea of religion to support his patriarchal beliefs. According to

Whitehead (2012) God is portrayed as 'Father' meaning God is associated with the male traditional ideologies. A male God is used to gain power in religious settings.

Hegemonic Masculinity (Connell, 2005) emphases dominance and encourages male power and privilege. Participant H associates masculinity with superiority/godliness. This statement illustrates that religion also influences how the participant constructs masculinity.

> *Because being soft, by definition, you know, I mean, it's one of those, like, not pretty mainstream words but I think being soft is we associate that with the female nature of being, loving, being caring, being naturing and being able to let things go, being non-confrontational, and you know, if anything happens, typically you, your wife, your partner, your girlfriend would stand behind you* (Participant F)

Expressing emotions is associated with womanly characteristics implying that men should conform to the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity and refrain from expressing emotions. There is an idea that men are stronger than women and that women are not as strong as men. The participant is promoting masculine ideologies and sharing assumptions of what the nature of women is like, which is softness, nurturing and expressing love and kindness (Murnen, Wright & Kaluzny, 2002). According to Butler (1993), describing women as soft and nurturing is a patriarchal practice of assigning gender roles which contributes to the patriarchal system of power imbalance. This practice is also criticised by Valenti (2007) who supports Butler's stance by suggesting that the traditional cultural roles or expectations of women as soft and nurturing can be used to undermine their competence and agency.

4.2 Theme two- Role models

Theory suggests that many of our behaviours are learned through observation and role-modelling (ref), from family members, peers and even the media. During the research it was evident that role models played a crucial role in shaping and modelling the masculinity of the participants. Although most participants leaned more towards other male figures to reference from whilst developing or shaping their own form of masculinity, some drew their masculinity from female figures, or even from society more broadly.

The participants had several role models, and each role model has had a different impact on them. Notably, the influential role models were not family members only but there was external influence from the community and literature, as well as media that played a role in the development of masculinity in the participants. Some of the role models had qualities or characteristics that the participants coincided with, however, in some cases there were qualities that participants did not agree with. So, in some cases participants align with the masculine qualities modelled to them, and in other cases they distance themselves from masculine qualities modelled to them. This suggests that participants have agency in choosing how they construct their masculinity and that they are able to resist qualities that do not align with their values.

During the interviews when the participants were asked about the people that helped shaped their masculinity and how those people influenced the participants' views on masculinity, there were sub-themes that emerged: **Representations of close relations, and Media and the general society.**

The below discussion will be centred around these two sub-themes.

4.2.1 Representations of close relations

Throughout the course of this study, it became evident that the participants' behaviours were influenced/modelled by those close to them. In this section we see how different individuals around the participants helped shaped their masculine views in one way or the other. According to Courtenay (2000), as opposed to women, men experience more pressure to endorse the gender prescriptions set out by society of how they should behave and express their masculinity.

> *I've got two brothers, and my dad was there as well. So, I guess I kind of learned or socialized around them* (Participant K)

In the quote above, Participant K illustrates that the male figures he grew up around played a crucial role in the sense that he learned how to socialize around them. The participant demonstrates a significant role that family plays (in this case the male figures in his life, his brother and father).

> *Also, my grandfather was a headmaster, so he when he walked into the room, he commanded a certain level of attention or certain level of respect. So, is that also played into my masculinity? My grandfather was, like, pretty educated and he was like, big on learning and education so that contributed, my grandfather was a Christian, so he was really firm in his beliefs around Christianity. So, he stood for something, he believed in something, believed in something. My grandfather provided, he took care of his family, which had six children, and extended family so he was a provider, so those are some of the notes that I that I took from him and just to invest my grandfather had like 2 farms at the house there and the house there and you know, you could not move him like, if he believed in something, then*

> *that was that. So, I think that also like crystallized into who I've become today* (Participant F)

Participant F illustrates the importance of having a close role model with an influence in developing his masculinity. The participant talks about how his grandfather shaped his masculinity; grandfathers are known to be traditional and pass on knowledge from a cultural perspective. This symbolizes the intergenerational influence of masculinity (Neal, 2011). The participant is pointing out the characteristics of masculinity; leadership at home and in the community, the ability to provide for one's family, and commanding authority and respect. The participant also pointed out a few traits that he associates with masculinity, such as education and religion. According to Neal (2011) there are cultures and ethnic groups whose basis of masculinity is rooted in religion and culture. The above are the traits that shaped the participant's view of masculinity and his perspective of the role of a man in society.

> *I grew up where there was a tuck shop at home. We were once robbed at a gun point. My dad knew at that moment he did not want to risk losing the lives of us like basically losing us in protecting what's in the shop. But he was able to stand there and say leave my family out of this. Like, please take whatever that you want. Umm, and if there is anyone you want to let it be me, you know. And they took everything they wanted because it was in the gun point. He did not literally fight them because he knew that okay now If I'm fighting them, I'm going to put my family at risk* (Participant C)

According to Salaza et al., 2020, supported by the findings of this study, for men it is crucial that they take the role of being a protector and a provider in their household. The participant witnessed his father playing the protector role in an unpleasant situation and

putting himself in the firing line in order to protect his family. It is evident that this experience greatly influenced the participant's desire to protect those under his care, and this is endorsed by the following statements made by the participant during the interview: "*I get that comfort that, should anything happen, would I be able to stand in the front and protect the one behind me*"; or *"When I'm there, I just need to be able to know that she feels safe. She feels protected;"* and, *"So it was at a very young age whereby I was taught to say protect this, this, this, this, this other gender is fragile."*

From the above it is evident that for the participant, his masculinity can be aligned with traits of hegemonic masculinity as the participant's masculinity is centred around provision and protection of those he cares about (Connel, 2005). The participant associates masculinity with playing a protective role, which stems from his upbringings and background.

> *They taught you how to man up. They taught you as a man you should never be comfortable. You should take care of your family. Masculinity for me are norms and standards that are set by ancestors or generation before us* (Participant E)

Participant E describes the values that were passed down by his uncle and grandfathers. The participant believes that the standards of masculinity were predetermined by the generations of men that came before him. These principles are centred around the ideal male (Courteney, 2000). The participant talks about never being comfortable, which represents the idea of always being prepared and in a position of power and guardedness. Hearn et al. (2012) argue that the ability to provide for one's family can be a form of hegemonic masculinity. The participant goes on and uses the phrase *"man up"* to illustrate what is expected for a masculine man. This phrase represents toughening up, showing

braveness, and rising above any situation or circumstance, characteristics associated with the concept of hegemonic masculinity (Hearn et al. 2012).

With most participants, they viewed the ideal masculine male as a man who can provide and care for their family's needs. Participant E shows us that the generations that came before him (Uncles and Grandfathers) passed down their form of masculinity and influenced the development of Participant E's own masculinity.

> *What I learnt from my grandfather, my grandfather was a family man, so family was important to him. He brought everyone together within the family. So, I think you know, he was the head of the family. Everyone looked up to him, which is something I also like, appreciate. It's something that I'd want for myself in in the near future. You know, everyone looks to you to make things happen. So, he made things happen like from a from a, you know, from a bringing people together perspective* (Participant F)

Research conducted by Lwambo (2013) affirms that part of masculinity is being able to assume a leadership role for family and society. This is a patriarchal norm which places men in high positions withing the family unit (Nkya (2020). In this instance the grandfather was the leader of the family, and in the above quote the participant expresses the importance of family. The role that the participant's grandfather played represents traditional masculinity wherein the grandfather being an elder male in the family is the one leading the family and bearing the responsibility of ensuring the family is taken care of. The participant discusses how he would like to follow that kind of legacy and play a leadership role of leading his family by bringing people together like his grandfather did. This is a fitting example of the influence of masculinity that was passed down intergenerationally.

There were participants who shared experiences with their close family relations that affected their view of masculinity. These constructions subvert the dominant understandings of masculinity particularly in the African culture and promote alternative forms of masculinity (Morrell et al., 2012). They highlight how these constructions are multifaceted, negotiated and contextually embedded (Ratele, 2007).

> *My grandfather was imposing because he was a very intellectual person. He was a reader; he would read like 7-8 books like in a month. He would constantly be reading and so that is where he drew most of his masculinity from. Not just the fact that he was physically imposing, but he never used his physique to impose himself. It was always humbler and more intellectual, so that is where I learned most of myself, so, anyone who knows me knows that I would never impose myself physically on anyone, but I would rather identify by communicating in order to relate to someone else or for them to understand me* (Participant G)

In the quote above, the participant is illustrating the values or qualities he learnt from his grandfather, which are communication, humbleness, and the importance of being intellectual. The participant appears to be distancing himself from the idea of masculinity as physical strength. He is challenging the stereotype and saying the core of masculinity is communication, understanding and intelligence. The participant has expressed that for him masculinity is centred around emotional strength and intelligence, For example:

I believe that my masculinity comes from the way that I impose myself mentally. So that is how I would consider masculinity from my side, so I can be mentally imposing, as in I'd use my intelligence to draw strength from a situation and stuff (Participant G)

While this specific participant stressed the notion of mental strength as a source of his masculinity, it is interesting to see the source of his masculinity or how that ideal was

established. The participant's use of the word "imposing" could resemble hegemonic masculinity which emphasises dominance and strength. The reference to mental, intellectual, and emotional strength could mean that the participant in this instance is exercising hegemony from a mental or intellectual capacity, which is an interesting view that is distinct from where the other participants are drawing their masculinity (Wilson, Shuttleworth, Stancliffe & Parmenter, 2012).

The influence of role models can have both negative and positive impacts on individuals. As noted by Stephens (2007), parents play a significant role in how their children will turn out therefore there is an expectation that parents should be positive role models to their children; however, this is not always the case. The following discussion focuses on role models who had a negative impact on the lives of participants. The participants shared their experiences with male figures in their lives who portrayed hegemonic masculinities that harmed women/children as opposed to protecting their families, which many participants described as the core of being a man.

> *And then my father was abusive or used to beat my mother several times. Used to go on for years. Uhm, he was gone like 1992 to 1998. That is a trait that I would not want. When I grew up myself I had difficulties, but he wasn't there. So, you would not want to take that out of him. But again, he was using his masculinity to say when I do whatever I want you're mine, you're my wife, or I'm going to come back home whenever I feel like, I'm going to leave, I'm going to be known that I'm seeing this other person. That was his way of doing that but that is something that I would not have wanted to take out of him* (Participant B)

The above shows that even though the participant had his father as a male figure when he was growing up, his father was not a positive role model. The father's behaviour was

one that the participant did not want to emulate. The participant witnessed traits of hegemonic masculinity from his father, which may have been the result of racial and economic oppression. He witnessed his father abusing his mother, disappearing for years and not being present, and he witnessed his father's infidelity. According to Holt, Buckley, and Whelan (2008) witnessing domestic violence or abuse by their fathers can leave boys distancing themselves from perpetrators of male violence.

> *For instance, uhm, my uncle, he was a good provider, he was a good person, but never married, a womanizer. So those things, you don't wish to do them. You would want to say you know what? I'm going to take that he financially supports, he provides, he protects, he makes sure that everyone goes to bed with a full stomach and so forth, then I pulled that from him* (Participant B)

The above statement affirms that role models can have bad and good qualities and the participant picks and chooses what is beneficial for him. Therefore, the participant is of the notion that you do not write off someone because you disagree with some of their qualities as there are certain traits that can resonate with you. In the above section, the analysis highlighted the ways in which the participants derived their masculinities from their immediate family male figures by pointing out the role played by their fathers, grandfathers, and uncles when it comes to the construction of their masculine identities. The majority of participants in the above sections referenced male role models who were crucial sources from which they learned different facets of their masculinities.

4.2.2 Media and the general Society

In many cases participants noted that masculinity was modelled to them through society more generally rather than through specific family members. This could include specific members of the community and/or media representations.

> *I would not say I had a role model. There is not one person that I would point out and say that this person I looked up to, the person whereby I saw what masculinity is, what a manly man is. No, it's not something that I've seen close range whereby I would say that, OK, this is a point of reference. Yeah, no, I don't have that. For me, it's more about life, living, traveling, meeting people, having conversations, Watching TV, watching movies, reading, all those things exposed me to see life the way I see Life* (Participant A)

Participant A's masculinity seemed to be shaped by their experiences in life rather than one or more specific role model. The participant illustrates the importance of social aspects in shaping one's masculinity.

> *Uhm, you start consuming music, you know, maybe you go to church more if you're religious, So like your role model is probably a pastor. And a rapper there, an actor there, a comedian there. You start looking up to people that are high up in business depending on where you are, people that are in business, people that are like higher ranking in organizations, whichever way you might look at it* (Participant A)

The participant highlights that role models that shape masculinity can be different people you meet at different phases of your life and not necessarily only people that are around you or people you have a relationship with. This could suggest that his reference point for masculinity is people that are in positions of power and influence, such as business leaders, pastors, and entertainers, which can be linked to traits of hegemonic masculinity (Connel, 2005)

> *I pull certain traits from different people, and I discard certain traits that are that are defining myself from those very same people and it does not take away when you see a good thing being done by someone else to want to do that* (Participant B)

Participant B is acknowledging that people have good and bad qualities, and that he is able to isolate the good qualities from the bad.

> *So, I grew up in a family where I did not have Brothers who were next to me and stuff, but I had male neighbours that I grew up with that were slightly older than me. I had people that I was looking up to besides my uncle. As he was old, old. But I had guys that were a few years older than me, and I learned a lot from, you know, from. Making toy cars, teaching me how to fight physically, how to defend yourself, how to do this, how to do that* (Participant H)

The above is a good demonstration of roles neighbours played in the life of a participant who did not have many male figures at his home shaping his masculinity. It also suggests that role models are so important that children will learn from any available role models if their own parents are not available. The participant refers to the different attributes that were modelled to him, such as being taught how to fight, and make toy cars. All these aspects can be considered hegemonic masculine attributes, as men are thought of as protectors (Connel, 2005) so knowing how to physically defend oneself would be considered a crucial masculine trait. Toy cars are also associated with boys, a patriarchal assumption that males are more interested or competent in mechanical toys (ref?). Although the participant did not have any brothers, his neighbours filled the void, they served as role models and guided the participant. This demonstrated the importance of having a male figure in the participant's life.

> *Because we grew up in a violent society. So, you needed to know how to fight. You know, as a boy, and this I learned from the older guys that I grew up with, but I think some of the most important lessons that they taught me was you do not just take flight, you know you must know which fights to fight, not just physically? When I speak in that regard, you know, it was just life lessons and even in that light you must know and try, by all means, to make sure that victory is certain. But now this became a life lesson, you know, to try and conquer the things that I come across as an individual* (Participant H)

Participant H learnt from his role models, that as a man you need to know how to defend yourself, be it physical or not. This was particularly because the participant grew up in a violent society. Participant H talks about knowing which battles to fight. The participant grew up in a violent society whereby because the participant is masculine, he needed to know how fight and how to defend himself. The participant's environment influenced his masculinity as the sense that being able to physically defend himself formed part of his masculinity. Participant H's upbringing implied that violence was an ingrained part of his environment and he needed to construct himself within an environment that required him to learn violence so he may be able to defend himself. This statement supports the theoretical link between masculinity and violence as it suggests that masculinity can be asserted by violence (Boonzaier, 2008). The mention of violence supports the idea that specific expressions of masculinity may play a role in the perpetuation of gender-based violence (Boonzaier, 2008).

> *Obviously I'm a sports fan as well, I like soccer and rugby, so there is certain players who were like, OK fine like, you know, he embodies what I would like to be, for example, the reason why I like watching sports as well because when you watch the sports and there are certain players that you like, I think I like certain*

players because they represent how I want to show up and compete in the world. Yeah. So certain rugby players, soccer players and yeah (Participant K)

Participant K's strong interest in sports, specifically soccer and rugby, suggests a connection to the traditional notions of masculinity that associate sports with being masculine which suggests that in the participant's perspective the two are intertwined. The participant's masculinity is modelled by sports and learning how to compete in the world as a man. The participant talks about certain players whose traits he embodies, which suggests that the players are examples of the type of masculinity the participant emulates. In most cases sport players are disciplined, healthy and great team players (Waddington, 2000). Sports players are also incredibly competitive as the whole idea of sports is centred around the patriarchal practices of competing, winning, or not losing. The above suggests that the participant's masculinity is founded by his ability to compete and win.

The above section demonstrated the complex ways in which participants refer to their interactions with role models and life experiences to define/construct their masculinity. It was evident that different participants are influenced by different life events. For some, neighbours played positive roles where there are no brothers, fathers, or close family members in one's life, Whilst for some, role models were different people and media throughout different phases of the participant's life. Other participants used sport players as references of how they align themselves with the traditional form of masculinity.

4.3 Theme three-Constructions of gender-based violence

This section will discuss the participants' constructions and understanding of the concept 'Gender-based violence.' The section will focus on two sub-themes, **Dimensions of gender-based violence and Normalizing violence/GBV**. I acknowledge that there are many other forms of gender-based violence that are not mentioned in this study. However,

the forms of GBV discussed in this section are based on the participants' views and understandings.

4.3.1 Dimensions of GBV

The findings of this section demonstrate that most participants understand the multifaceted nature of GBV and highlighted that GBV is complex and manifests in several ways. However, despite the gender-neutral definition of GBV, it is a fact that in South Africa the victims of GBV are most often women (Dlamini, 2021, Graaf & Heinecken, 2017; Salazar et al., 2020). The statements below reflect the participants' understandings of the phrase gender-based violence, with the majority of participants sharing similar views on its meaning. Refer to the participants' definitions below:

> *My understanding of gender-based violence is when one gender and I always believe in being gender neutral. So, I think it does not matter which gender male to female or female to male imposes themselves, not just physically, mentally but emotionally, financially, dominates or makes it known that that the way that they are. That they are superior to the other gender by demeaning the other gender using financial, emotional, or physical* (Participant G)

Participant G demonstrates awareness of gender neutrality when it comes to GBV which indicates the importance of discussing GBV from an inclusive and holistic manner whereby any gender can fall victim to GBV. Participant G also emphasized that GBV has different forms, and it goes beyond physical harm which highlights the participant's understanding of GBV's nature as multifaceted. Overall, the participant's perspective of GBV is how complex it is.

> *My understanding with gender-based violence is inflicting emotional or bodily harm to a person of the opposite sex or gender, and this can be perpetrated by a female towards a male* (Participant F)

In the quote above the participant recognises that violence in GBV can manifest in different ways, acknowledging that violence can be perpetrated by females towards males. Similar to the previous participant, this signifies that GBV is inclusive and that understandings of GBV are evolving.

> *GBV, uh my understanding of gender-based violence is, you know, violence that is carried out usually intergender like between male and female* (Participant K)

In the above quote, the participant recognises gender as a crucial factor in the GBV dynamic. One aspect that is common about the participants above is that they all believe in the neutrality of GBV, that any gender is capable of perpetrating the act of GBV (Jewkes & Morrell, 2010).). It was particularly interesting to see that the above participants voice out that the act of GBV can be committed by both genders. This coming from masculine characters it was important for the participants to express this because the common perception is that women and children are often victims to male perpetrators (Jewkes et al., 2002). In the above extracts participants demonstrate an understanding that GBV is gender-neutral and that it can refer to a range of types of violence. The nature of the violence of GBV as multifaceted can also be seen in the extract below:

> *For example, the three forms that it could take the physical, the emotional and the sexual right* (Participant A)

Participant A indicates his understanding that violence is not only physical but can also be emotional or sexual. Literature suggests that GBV refers to physical, emotional, sexual, financial, verbal, and other forms of violence (Dlamini, 2021). Participants demonstrate

this awareness of the complexity of GBV. In the extracts below, participants referred to gender-based violence as being violence carried out against women and children, mainly due to their inferior physical strength. As such, the construction of masculinity as being "biologically superior" to females may be used in understanding the nature of GBV. This belief that masculinity is biologically superior may shape societal view on gender roles that contribute to the perpetuation of violence.

> *It is just that women and children are more susceptible because they cannot, you know, defend themselves as well Basically, the female is in most cases the one at the receiving end of this violence* (Participant K)

I think ladies are typically on the receiving end of it (Participant F)

According to the WHO (2002) the majority of men use violence as a way of disciplining women. The above statement made by participant K and Participant F shows there is a consensus around female victimhood when it comes to GBV. According to Enaifoghe et al. (2021), women and children are most likely to fall victim to GBV as illustrated by the two participants in the statements above. Participant F and Participant K highlight that women and children are more susceptible to violence which reinforces the notions of patriarchy that suggest that women being the weaker gender are incapable of defending themselves as they are perceived to be weak and vulnerable (Krug et al., 2002).

> *Personally, I think females. I think in the case of gender-based violence, we have more statistics of gender-based violence being reported by females, so I think it is always considered that females are higher. I don't think males really report issues or situations of gender-based violence, so I think based on statistics alone, it is females* (Participant G)

> *But most of the time the reported cases are those of man who have assaulted women, you know, these are what I have witnessed and the project that I worked in over 90% of the cases that were opened, women were victims* (Participant H)

As demonstrated above, it is also clear that GBV where males are recipients is often under-reported which is also a symptom of patriarchy (that disadvantages men as well as women) since men "aren't allowed" to be sexually assaulted by the weaker sex.. This statement draws attention to the reluctance of men in reporting GBV cases, which is a critical issue when it comes to the different dimensions affecting GBV (Dutton & White 2013).

According to De Havilland (2011) GBV impairs human dignity and consequently violates human rights. Economically and culturally women and men are not seen as equals, and women are regarded as inferior to men (Morrel, 2001). The above statements by participants demonstrate the perceptions of the participants that women are mostly recognised recipients of GBV. Supported by literature, Kaeflein (2013) has demonstrated that women in South Africa particularly remain subjects of gender-based violence, it being physical, emotional, or sexual; and unfortunately, GBV in South Africa has been on the rise with very little evidence to suggests the prospects of it decreasing.

> *But just think in, you know, as we as we move towards a society that is violence free. That is safe for women and children, I think also, let's not neglect the boy child. Umm. Because if, if he's raised properly, um then he will not be a perpetrator* (Participant J)

The participant above not only supports the notion of men being the perpetrators of GBV, which is similar to what some of the other participants have alluded to as well; however, he specifically talks about a preventative measure of curbing GBV that can be

taken by ensuring that a boy child is raised in a manner that will not lead in him being a perpetrator of GBV. It was interesting to observe that he does not mention the girl child which could imply that in the participant's view the problem lies solely with men and not women (Dlamini, 2021, Graaf & Heinecken, 2017; Salazar et al., 2020).

> *Well, basically like I said as a male figure we know they are physically strong as compared to women on a higher percentage rate overall* (Participant D)

In a patriarchal system, women are thought of as weak and incapable of defending themselves and therefore need men to protect and defend them (Connell, 1987). As such, they are normatively assumed to be on the receiving end of GBV. Participant D when talking about masculinities illustrated that men are physically stronger than women, which could also explain why women are recipients of GBV because it would be easier for a man to physically handle a woman. Studies have shown that men are often perpetrators of violence against women and this violation not only undermines women's dignity, but it violates women's rights (Bott, Morrison, & Ellsberg, 2005; Dunkle, Jewkes, Nduna, Levin, Jama & Khuzwayo, 2006). This highlights a systemic pattern that recognizes that men are physically stronger making women more susceptible to violence perpetuated by men.

> *We'll see men as perpetrators and stuff of this violence* (Participant H)

The above illustrates that some of the participants' perceptions of GBV are linked to men being the perpetrators of GBV and women/children being on the receiving end of the violence.

Although participants believed that men are common perpetrators of GBV, some participants also believed that men also fall victim to GBV and there are women who are perpetrators of this form of violence. These findings can also be supported by Jordan

(2005) who illustrated that women can also be perpetrators of GBV. The statements below by participants of this study support this ideal:

> *Masculinity could be one factor. I think males generally have more pride than females when it comes to gender-based violence. Specifically, I think certain cases are not taken seriously by policemen. When you say that a woman abused you* (Participant G)

The above extract demonstrates that although the common perception is that men are the main perpetrators of GBV, the participants point out that women are also capable of being perpetrators and that males are constrained by their gender roles into not reporting. There is currently a level of discomfort for men to open up and report GBV cases in instances where women are perpetrators. Participant G illustrates the victimization of male victims of gender-based violence. In instances where males are victims, their victimhood is considered a weakness. The institutions that are supposed to protect all individuals such as law enforcement can contribute to the victimization of male survivors, since society also mocks and laughs at men who are victims of GBV (Cook, 2009).

> *Many are times there a lot of men who are victimized but cannot speak about it and cannot report such cases. The first response is that people will laugh. Yeah. You understand? And to extent gender-based violence affects everyone. It could be there are men who are physically abused by their partners as well, but they do not come out because they feel there is no space in society for them to highlight this, which seems to be a weakness, opening a case against your partner*" (Participant H)

Participant H's perspective highlights that there is no room for male victims in society, and that society does not support male victims the same way they support female victims

but instead ridicules male victims. This could be attributed to the patriarchal culture that associates masculinity with strength. Being a victim undermines the patriarchal systems that culture reinforces on men, further marginalizing male victims of violence (Hines, Douglas & Berger, 2015).

In this section, participants collectively acknowledged the multifaced nature of GBV and its evolving dynamics. One recurring viewpoint is that GBV is not confined to one gender but manifests across all genders. The participants highlighted that when it comes to GBV the common perception is that victimhood is often limited to one gender (usually women), due to the superior biological strength of most males. Nevertheless, the participants seem to challenge this viewpoint by providing a narrative whereby all genders can experience victimization or perpetration. It was evident in this section that when it comes to male victims of GBV, there is underreporting, or male victims are hesitant to report GBV. The reason for this could be because of the patriarchal systems that associates masculinity with strength. This can also be aligned with the theory of hegemonic masculinity where masculine expectations of toughness, dominance and strength may discourage male victims from speaking up (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

4.3.2 Normalization of violence

A second sub-theme that was evident in the data is that participants' understanding of GBV is closely linked to the normalization of violence in many South African communities. According to Thaler (2011) violence should not be justified, and no situation should suggest that violence was warranted or should be accepted. Violence is a way of dealing with conflict in relationships and is often a tool men use to establish control over women and is thus a patriarchal tool that maintains the oppression of women (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005). According to Rasool et al. (2002), violence/abuse has been so normalised that certain people do not find anything wrong with such behaviour. In South

Africa men have been using violence as a way of expressing their masculinity due to apartheid/colonialism, where black men were oppressed by white men, and in order to conform to patriarchal assumptions in society, oppressed women. (WHO, 2004). Consequently, women have been seen to be prone to accept violence perpetrated by men (WHO, 2002). In this study participants have said that, in their communities, violence is widely accepted and normalized. In many cases, people in these communities choose to not intervene whenever there are disputes that eventually lead to GBV.

> *I've seen a man and woman fighting, the woman was the one stabbing the man stabbing the men with a knife, You know this guy grabs the knife and throw it away. The community said [speaking Setswana – Let them be as long as they not stabbing one another]. You understand the acceptance that has happened that is taking place in communities* (Participant C)

Participant C highlights the acceptance of the described incident of violence by the community. This demonstrates that when it comes to domestic violence, the community has a certain level of tolerance towards these forms of behaviour as supported by the findings of Rasool et al. (2002). This suggests that hegemonic masculinity is so normalized that traits such as aggression and violence are treated as a normative part of being a man, rather than as problematic and toxic behaviours. (Rasool et al., 2002). This could also imply that the community normalizes violence wherein there is no severe life-threatening harm.

Fighting is normal (Participant D)

A study conducted by Jewkes et al. (2010) demonstrated how in many communities, violence has been accepted and is considered normal. The above statement by this participant can contribute to and reflect on the normalization of violence. The participant

sees fighting as normal, since he is the product of his socialization, and he is also contributing to the continuation of this norm. This is particularly problematic as it could undermine the many interventions that are put in place to address gender-based violence (Stark & McEvoy, 2017). This normalization of violence could undermine interventions as GBV is so normalized that society would not be open to addressing it. This can also be linked to the theory of hegemonic masculinity which argues that the normalization of violence is closely associated with the expressions of certain masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

> *It's just like we've normalized gender-based violence so much that it's like, yeah, being beaten up by your husband or your wife pouring hot water on you comes with the territory. To show that you are a man, you must hit your woman* (Participant F)

Participant F is demonstrating a stereotype that normalises violence within domestic relationships and family structures. Such perceptions condone and perpetuate or reinforce a cycle of gender-based violent acts. The participant's examples of GBV such as the normalization using physical violence against your spouse or partner illustrates how even the most extreme violent acts are accepted or normal in the society. The theoretical framework of the hegemonic masculinity can be applied to Participant E's statement as one can argue that the societal norms posits that the hegemonic masculinity is the ideal form of masculinity as it is made up of characteristics such toughness and control, this can encourage men to use violence as a way of asserting their masculinity and maintain power over women.

> *To assert your role in the family household. You must hit your woman. You must hit the kids. You must beat them up. You must do this and that, you know, and the*

> *family will not eat until you've had your food and you know different things that traditionally was seen as norms especially from the rural aspects of the traditional setup of where people grew up and where people were raised to a point where some of these things still come as a culture shock for me, you know, and because of tradition, certain things are seen as normal* (Participant H)

The above demonstrates abuse within the family context and highlights the influence of culture and societal expectations when it comes to the shaping of beliefs and attitudes towards gender-based violence. The participant demonstrates how tradition encourages the assertion of authority and control through the normalization of violence and abuse. Heise (1998) supports the notion that culture plays a role in the shaping of behaviours and beliefs that are associated with gender-based violence. The participant believes that cultural expectations of placing men above women results in the normalization of violence by men against women and children. This violence has been normalised not only in relationships but also within the family context, however the participant places himself outside this belief.

According to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (2011) the gender inequality between men and women contributes to violence in relationships. One of the influences of the patriarchal system presents in the form of Culture, whereby it promotes male dominance and subordination of women in the household which sometimes leads to the abuse of women (Strebel, Crawford, Shefer, Cloete, Henda & Kaufman, 2006). There is a level of normativity in the community regarding these forms of violence. Participants appeared to understand the notions that violence perpetrated by others is normalized or not recognised as a form of abuse; instead, it is a way in which men proclaim their roles as family heads, it is a way men demonstrate their superiority over women and children, and it is also a way in which men position themselves as house

heads. The above comments also demonstrates that violence is used to command respect in family structure.

In conclusion, the findings of this section demonstrate that participants collectively shared perceptions that demonstrated the deeply rooted nature of how violence is normalized in some communities. These perceptions highlighted the complexity in different power structures, gender dynamics and cultural norms. It was evident in this section that GBV in society has become a norm, which reinforces the cycle and perpetuation of violent acts within relationships.

4.4 Theme four-Proposed interventions for gender-based violence

In the interviews, participants often suggested possible interventions for gender-based violence. My hope is that these interventions, which are data-driven and suggested by a young generation of males, may be effective in addressing some of the root causes of GBV in South Africa. According to WHO (2007) there are opportunities for GBV intervention programmes to be effective. It was evident in this section that men have similar ideas of how GBV can be combated. Many participants mentioned incorporating GBV awareness in primary schooling, This targets the idea of role modelling. The same participants and/or other participants suggested reaching out to men in their places of social gathering such as taverns or places where they meet to drink alcohol. This links to hegemonic masculinity/patriarchy. In other words, these interventions acknowledge the social structures that influence our lives, and work within them to find solutions for GBV.

Provisions of psychosocial support interventions for men in and around their communities was also mentioned. Throughout the course of the data collection there were participants who mentioned they witnessed gender-based violence from their parents, brothers, and male figures in their homes or close relations. The following interventions

may be useful as they are suggestions from participants who have been directly affected by gender-based violence.

Four main interventions emerged in this section, which are: **School Curriculum, interventions in men's common social spaces, strengthening existing resources in the policing departments and Addressing social ills that lead to gender-based violence**.

4.4.1 School-Curriculum

Krug, Mercy, Dahlberg and Zwi (2002) suggested that in order to successfully curb GBV, intensive work needs to be done at primary level, since interventions that target children may prevent GBV as these children become adults. What the participants have in common is that they recognise the importance of having conversations around GBV from a young tender age, thus incorporating the realities of gender-based violence within the schooling system. In doing the above the participants are of the opinion that integrating gender-based violence education into their curriculum will curb the occurrence of incidences of gender-based violence as children will be raised having an in-depth understanding of the impact of gender-based violence. Some children are exposed to violence from their homes as they are growing up, therefore incorporating GBV interventions on their school curriculum will assist them in reframing the normativity of accepting violence as well as provide the children with an effective way of dealing with violence, anger, and conflict (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005). The following are perceptions from participants on how primary intervention can be implemented to curb GBV:

> *There could be programs whereby it starts with kids in the foundation phase like in primary, like they could incorporate gender-based violence teachings.* (Participant A)

South African Police Services (2022) note that young people need an education that not only assists with developing their sense of discipline and self-esteem but also the impact and dangers that are associated with criminal activities. Incorporating GBV interventions in the primary schooling systems may be an effective intervention for ending GBV. This intervention links to theme 1 (traditional masculinity) about GBV being learnt through witnessing GBV from an early age. This section addresses the awareness around the socialization around GBV and that GBV needs explicit education to combat.

4.4.2 Interventions in men's common social spaces

In this section participants suggested that support can be provided to men in spaces where men gather. The participants talk about intervention programmes that engage men and offer support services through advocacy work that challenges GBV. A crucial way of addressing GBV is understanding how men construct masculinity and their understandings of being men in relation to gender relations (Heise, 1994; Patel, 2005; Peacock & Levack, 2004). Men are believed to be the biggest perpetrators of GBV and their role in developing a solution to stop GBV is important (Heise, 1994; Patel, 2005; Peacock & Levack, 2004).

> *We also need voluntary forums and sort of like safe spaces, you know, take this conversation to the Taverns where these gents meet. Take these conversations to a chisanyama where we find these gents. You know, so yeah* (Participant H)

Participant A alludes that men are the biggest perpetrators of gender-based violence and that the best way to reach out to men is go to their social spaces. Participant A suggests that one intervention could be creating campaigns that could raise awareness of GBV and an effective way of doing that would be taking these campaigns to places where men are already gathering. Participant H further illustrates that men's social spaces could be their

safe spaces where they feel free to discuss issues affecting them, which is why it is crucial to take interventions to help men to such spaces. This intervention is linked with theme 2 (role models), about how alternative role models could provide new masculinities to model.

> *The importance of being self-aware, knowing that as a I am carrying a lot of heat, I am carrying a lot of anger and if I am aware of it then then next step is what do I do about it?* (Participant E)

This participant talks about self-awareness as a crucial step to resolve gender-based violence. In order to effectively address GBV, it is important to understand how men construct their masculinities (Heise, 1994; Patel, 2005; Peacock & Levack, 2004). The suggestion is that men should engage with inner self to discover what their triggers are and work on those triggers. Similar to what this participant has said, a lot of other participants referred to social ills or alcohol being a trigger to increased violence against women, which shows that men are not open to addressing their traumas which according to this participant is imperative to curbing the increase in gender-based violence.

4.4.3 Strengthening existing resources in the policing departments

> *I think there needs to be a separate department in the policing system a separate department where people who report gender-based violence cannot only report privately but feel secure once they've reported.* (Participant G)

In this quote the participant is expressing concern with the justice system in South Africa. More often than not cases are not fully pursued, and this results in the continuation of gender-based violence or even death. According to Enaifoghe et al. (2021), gender-based violence cases are under-reported due to the stigma surrounding gender-based violence and the inability to access resources and support structures. A solution to gender-

based violence could be fully equipping the police departments with victim support services whereby they will be fully supporting survivors of gender-based violence by the police departments and not sending the survivors back to their perpetrators where they would most likely be killed or abused further.

> *The number one intervention is to make sure that the law stands with these women and these cases are fully considered and fully assessed. And when people are found guilty, they should do time for that* (Participant H)

The statement above from Participant H emphasis what Participant G has alluded, which is having the policing system that fully supports victims of gender-based violence. The current South African justice system has a reputation of failing victims of gender-based violence which could potentially be the reason why GBV cases are on the rise. According to Stank (1995) the police sometimes fail women or revictimize women when women report GBV cases; women may encounter frustration, disbelief from the police and sometimes impatience, which can be discouraging to victims. The participant not only talks about victim care after reporting GBV cases but also briefly discusses the intervention that would help perpetrators and in turn curb the spike in GBV cases. Some of the potential problems could be that the current South African justice system or South African Police Service (SAPS) has been reported to discriminate against survivors of GBV instead of assisting them, Or maybe patriarchal structures marginalize women's experiences, and the normalization of violence makes this seem like not such a big deal (Kaeflein, 2013). South Africa is known for its ineffective policies and ineffective implementation of laws. For example, a study in Mpumalanga indicated that police stations have poor recording of domestic violence cases (Mathews & Abrahams, 2001).

> *There should be corrective counselling for people who have who are found to have been perpetrators. There should be some corrective counselling done* (Participant H)

Often perpetrators of GBV are jailed and left to self-rehabilitate but often there is not intervention to prevent the GBV act from happening in the future. Participant H suggest a crucial intervention that will address the root of the problem, as other participants in this study have suggested. This intervention is linked with theme 3 about normalised behaviour: modelling behaviour by teaching men new ways to behave.

4.4.4 Addressing social ills that lead to gender-based violence

GBV is often reinforced by cultural norms which condone and create the culture of the acceptance of violence (Kim & Motsei, 2002). Interventions require an understanding of the circumstances that lead to GBV:

> *I don't think there is an intervention that can speak directly to GBV, but I think just generally interventions around like social ills such as, you know, alcohol abuse. Uhm, I mean general interventions curbed at or aimed at reducing those things could have an impact on reducing GBV cases* (Participant K)

The quote above suggests that there are general interventions needed for gender-based violence and in order to combat gender-based violence we need to address the different issues that lead to it. The participant recognised that GBV is a symptom of social ills, these ills for example could be alcohol, which makes GBV an after effect. Literature supports what this participant is saying by showing a link between violence and substance abuse (Jewkes, 2002; Krug et al., 2002; Strebel et al., 2006; Thaler, 2011; WHO, 2009). Participant K recommends that dealing with the root would be a more effective solution. In this instance, the problem is not the lack of education but a failing society in which

violence is the norm and women and children are the natural victims because of biological weakness (Krug et al., 2002).

> *I think we need to strengthen victim empowerment centres. We need quite a lot of those, and you need to capacitate women one, in terms of them seeing their value, two, upskilling them and giving them opportunities in terms of business and in the workplace, you know, trying to even get woman to earn as much as male, you know, many times you find a man and a woman working the same position in a man with any more money* (Participant H)

It was interesting to observe that an intervention for GBV according to participant lies on capacitating women, this participant's suggestions are centred on empowering women to leave the toxic men who are abusive towards them. One difference with this participant from all other participants is that all other participants focused on changing the root which, according to other participants, assumes that men are the common perpetrators of GBV. Literature suggests that there are patriarchal beliefs that directly linked to GBV, such as the cultural practices that place men above women (Lang, 2003). The participant refers to the inequality between men and women implying that gender-based violence could be a result of inequality between men and women, and that by increasing the role of women in society, the inequality between genders would decrease which would lead to lower rates of GBV.

> *Men need to have meetings and forums where they discuss this and they talk about it and they teach each other and show each other how to go about, you know* (Participant H)

Participant H further affirms what participant E said when he highlights the importance of men having safe spaces to discuss issues affecting them. It is often difficult for men to

open up and talk about their emotions (as demonstrated by several participants in theme one) however these interventions show that there is a need for men to have spaces that allow them to open up about issues affecting them or to open up about issues that they face in daily life.

4.5 Discussion-The relationship between gender-based violence and masculinity

This section will discuss the link between masculinity and GBV. The relationship between masculinity and GBV is multifaceted and influenced by individual beliefs, societal and cultural expectations, tradition, and gender inequality. Masculinity presents in several forms (Hearn et al., 2012) and most forms are not linked to GBV; however, there are aspects of masculinity that can be associated with the perpetuation of GBV or violence. The below discussion will be centred around **Suppressed emotions and Cultural expectations.**

4.5.1 Suppressed emotions

According to Itulua-Abumere (2013) society has an influence on how men shape their masculinity. Boys or men are socialized into believing that expressing emotions is a sign of vulnerability. Expressing emotions for men is not encouraged by society (Mendelsohn & Sewell, 2004). This kind of masculinity can be considered toxic as it discourages expressions of masculinity in a healthy way and may result in the expression of emotions in negative ways such as using violence as a coping mechanism (Bohnert et al., 2003). The theory of hegemonic masculinity reinforces the gender norms that encourages the notion that when it comes to expressing emotions and being vulnerable, men should exercise restraint (Mendelsohn & Sewell, 2004).

The participants in this study allude that society expects men to not openly express vulnerability. This can be associated with the notion of traditional hegemonic masculinity which argues that some of the characteristics of masculinity are centred around strength and being in control of one's emotions (Donaldson, 1993), which was supported by the participants' own statements. Connell (1995) furthers highlights that a hegemonic form of masculinity reinforces characteristics of dominance and control, and it can be argued that these characteristics may promote violence. Some participants in the study suggested that they have learned to control and supress their emotions as a coping mechanism. According to Bohnert, Crnic and Lim (2003) the suppression of emotions can have dire consequences including using rage and violence as a coping mechanism to deal with supressed emotions, For example: This means that when men enter romantic relationships, they may not have the coping skills to manage the challenges of daily life and may engage in violence toward their partner as a way of expressing their emotions..

The data highlights that when it comes to men, there is an expectation that they should not express emotions of sadness or pain. This can be reinforced by the notions of traditional hegemonic masculinity which emphasizes that men are strong and in control (Connell, 1995). The above further illustrates that even though men are going through something painful, they should supress their emotions in order to be seen as a man. Society plays a significant role in influencing men on the notions of masculinity (Maracek et al., 2004). Society does not condone the expression of emotions such as crying. In society, the expression of emotions is not considered stereotypically masculine (Donaldson, 1993). This study demonstrated that what the participants have in common is that they all believe society/culture has set expectations of how they should conduct themselves as men. One of those expectations centered around the suppression of emotions. Bohnert et al. (2003) suggest that there is a link between the suppression of

emotions and violence, as supressing emotions can often lead to rage which can manifest as violence against other individuals. This stems from the expectation that men represent strength and should not show weakness and/or vulnerability, this can also include the suppression of emotions (Mendelsohn & Sewell, 2004).

4.5.2 Gender inequality

Dlamini (2021) argues that gender inequality is one of the leading causes of GBV, which has a negative impact for both the survivors and society as a whole. Gender inequality is a result of power imbalances that stem from a patriarchal system (Graaff & Heinecken, 2017). According to Connell (1995) hegemonic masculinity is characterised by male toughness, dominance, and control. Such traits can be used to justify inequalities between men and women as (Graaff & Heinecken, 2017). African cultures uphold traditional norms of masculinities that position men as superior to women which might result in violence against women as in some instances, this marginalizes and disempowers (Graaff & Heinecken, 2017). Strebel et al. (2006) further support this by alluding that male dominance and subordination of women are promoted by some cultures and may manifest through the control and ultimately the abuse of women.

Heise (1998) argues that culture plays a significant role in shaping beliefs associated with gender-based violence. It was demonstrated in this study that some of the participants conform to the traditional hegemonic notions of masculinity wherein the head of the household is positioned as the primary breadwinner in the household. This notion positions the man as the decision maker and can reinforce inequality within the relationship. According to United States Agency for International Development (2011) power dynamics in relationships can lead to violence in relationships. In situations that places men as superior to women, the gender inequality may result in men exerting power and control over women (Graaff & Heinecken, 2017).

In seeking to understand the relationship between gender-based violence and masculinity, it is crucial to highlight that masculinity on its own is not violent. The majority of men do not conform to the notions of violent or harmful masculinity, including the participants in this study. As illustrated in the above section, harmful masculinity can manifest through the suppression of emotions and gender inequality. Boonzaier (2006) alludes that gender and power are some of the most important aspects that have an influence on the perpetuation of GBV. Studies have shown that there were instances where men used their domination over women to exert violence against women (Hearn, 1999). In order to address the link between gender-based violence and masculinity, the following characteristics need to be prioritised; encouraging the expression of emotions by men, gender equality, engaging men/ educating men on the nature of healthy relationships and having awareness campaigns that highlight the importance of changing harmful perceptions relating to gender-based violence and masculinity.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this research was exploring constructions of masculinities, and the role masculinity plays in gender-based violence. This study particularly focused on how men negotiate their own masculinities and sought to explore ways in which men understand GBV in South Africa. In this chapter, the main findings of the research study will be presented aligned to the objectives of the study. The significance of the research study will be highlighted.

5.2 Summary of major findings of the study

The findings from this study supported other similar research in masculinity studies and its integration with violence (Langa, 2020). When participants were asked about what masculinity means to them their responses were centred around the ability their provide, protect, and lead their families (Rokhimah, 2014). Emphasis was placed on physical strength, the ability to control emotions and need for participants to demonstrate strength at all times and not show any vulnerabilities (Mendelsohn & Sewell, 2004). In one way or another the participant's understanding of masculinity resembled the characteristics of Hegemonic masculinity as most participants in their descriptions of their own masculinity embraced strength, confidence, and independence (Connel, 1995). The majority of participants tried to distance themselves from the negative traits of masculinities and patriarchal forms of masculinity. It is evident that the younger generation of men are establishing their own masculinity which challenges the normative characteristics of historic patriarchal masculinities of the previous generations. Participants are interrogating the notions of masculinities set by previous generations and their constructions of current masculinities contradict that of the older generations, this supports Ratele (2007) 's notion that the construction of masculinity is ongoing. In relation to women, it was evident that

that some of the participants are entrenched within the current patriarchal social structure which places men above women., and men are higher up in the hierarchy (Sultan et al., 2017). This was demonstrated through participants who distanced themselves from any characteristics that resembled femaleness when asked to describe their own masculinity (Connel, 2005).

Notably, the majority of participants had influential role models that they drew their masculinity from. These role models were predominantly male figures who held positions of authority or providers in their households. However, there were participants who did not have male figures or father figures in their households when growing up and for such participants, community members, sports coaches and neighbours played instrumental roles in shaping their masculinities Additionally for some participants, media emerged as a significant role model when it came in shaping the perception of their masculinities. Depending on the content from media the participants consumed, media presented examples of how one should present their masculinity. There were participants whose masculinity was shaped not by the men in their lives but by women, indicating that even though it is a common perception that males influence other males' masculinity, women do also have a role in how men perceive themselves.

This study demonstrated that the impact and consequences of GBV are far-reaching. Participants were aware of what GBV is and the different forms of GBV. Most of the participants pointed out that GBV is not gender specific. Participants expressed that both males and females can be victims of GBV, and both males and females can be perpetrators of GBV. Nevertheless, many of the participants agreed that when it comes to GBV, women are often on the receiving end of the violence and men are often the perpetrators (Enaifoghe et al., 2021). The participants also expressed that although men are perceived to be the main perpetrators of GBV it could just be because men often do not report GBV

in situations where men are victims (Cook, 2009). Although participants agreed that violence, particularly GBV, is wrong and should not be normalized (Thaler 2011), they have also acknowledged that in society gender-based violence is tolerated and to a certain extent condoned.

5.3 Study Limitations

5.3.1 Gender bias

The fact the research was being conducted by a female researcher might have had an influence on the way participants responded to the interview questions. During the course of the data collection process, precaution was taken as I was aware of the gender dynamic and how this could impact the study.

5.3.2 Participant bias

Due to the sensitivity of GBV in the country, it is possible that participants could have been not forthcoming about their experiences and true perceptions of GBV, Masculinity and any other concept that was discussed with the participants and as a result, information that could have been valuable might have been missed.

5.3.3 Data Collection

Interviews were used to collect data from the participants, and the majority of those interviews were conducted virtually through the Microsoft Teams platform due to the physical distance between myself and the participants. The challenges experienced with virtual interviews were connectivity and network interruptions due to loadshedding. There were instances where interruptions due to either loadshedding or connectivity led to interviews being paused and postponed, which prolonged the data collection process, and impacted the flow of the discussion.

5.4 Recommendations for future research

As I was reflecting on the limitations of this study, it became apparent that my gender as a female researcher where all the participants were males may have potentially influenced the participant's responses. According to Upchurch (2020) it is crucial for research to have equal representations of all genders. Recognizing this, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding in the dynamics surrounding masculinity and gender-based violence, I recommend that future research projects involve researchers of different genders as this may address the issue of gender bias. Due to the small sample that only included black and coloured participants, it would be beneficial to conduct further research exploring how factors like race, class and sexual orientation intersect with masculinity in relation to gender-based violence. It was evident from this study that interventions to reduce gender-based violence require men to challenge harmful ideals of masculinity which prompts a recommendation that there should be research projects that investigate the effectiveness of studies such as this one. Moreover, future studies should explore the mental health implications of harmful masculinities as a way to deepen the understanding of the impact of gender-based violence in order to develop effective strategies to end gender-based violence.

5.5 Conclusion

South Africa is a patriarchal society, where men are raised to believe that they are superior to women and that this gives them rights to use physical violence as a form of punishment to their partners (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; MRC Policy brief, 2009). The South African society, shaped by its history of apartheid and colonialism, expects women to be submissive and men to make all the decisions (Strebel et al 2006). This has led to the normalization of GBV in relationships (Kim & Motsei, 2002). The problem with GBV's increase in the country is that society places men high up in the hierarchy and makes them

believe that they are allowed to hurt women, suggesting that harsher punishment might resolve the GBV challenge in the country. Additionally, gender inequality is one of the biggest contributors of the patriarchal system and in order to dismantle this form of patriarchy, women need to have voices in decision making bodies such as political spaces and within family structures (Boonzaier, 2006; Dlamini, 2021; Graaff & Heinecken, 2017).

This research study aimed to explore the constructions of male masculinities and their role in GBV in South Africa. 11 men who identify as masculine were selected to be part of the study. The study investigated how men positioned themselves in the construction of their masculinities in relation to their understandings or perceptions on GBV. Through the understandings of the Social Constructionist framework the study explored the constructed nature of masculinity and its influences thereof on GBV.

In this study, masculinity was the central theme. The participants drew their masculinity from different aspects, including but not limited to, culture, male figures in their lives, their intellectual abilities, or their male physique. Additionally, the construction of masculinity was mostly influenced by their ability to provide and protect their families and loved ones. The participants illustrated those masculine ideologies can contribute to GBV. This could also be because of the patriarchal cultural beliefs that place men above women and leave men believing that they are superior to women and therefore can objectify them and sometimes inflict harm/GBV.

In this study it was highlighted that gender-based violence is a social problem that has a negative influence on society. GBV affects both males and females although GBV is commonly believed to affect more women than men. Communities need to be educated on the impact of GBV as it poses challenges and can lead to social impediments. It was

evident from this study that the consequences of GBV are dire to all the victims including men. This study demonstrated that for men, there is no room or very little room for them to be victims of GBV due to the way society often reacts to cases in which men are the victims. According to Cook (2009) male victimhood is not an accepted form of masculinity as it undermines the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. This demonstrates the need for male-targeted interventions to be prioritised in the same manner that female-targeted interventions are prioritised. This research study highlighted the need for male-based interventions that specifically target men. This study demonstrated that it is possible to combat GBV by addressing issues that impact or cause GBV by having preventative interventions from an early age.

From a theoretical point of view, the findings indicated that the traditional gender roles, normalization of violence and power imbalance inadvertently supported the norms of patriarchy and have the potential to contribute to GBV. In exploring the role of masculinity in gender-based violence the findings revealed that the most significant elements that influenced the participants in their construction of their masculinities can be drawn from the hegemonic masculinity theory, which is centred around providing, protecting, dominance, leadership and strength (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Overall, the study provides insights on the impacts of societal expectations in shaping behaviours of men which contributes to the link between masculinity and gender-based violence (Flood, 2005).

While South Africa continues to see a rise in GBV, the construction of hegemonic masculinity and its role in encouraging violence and dominance in heterosexual relationships is an important starting point for creating community-based interventions that educate men and empower women in reducing gender-based violence.

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1

Interview schedule

The questions are not necessarily in sequential order. The order will be led by the participant's responses. Other questions may arise from the interactions and responses from the participant. The interview is intended to be conducted for an hour to an hour thirty minutes.

- What does masculinity mean to you?
- How would you describe your own masculinity?
- What is your understanding of gender inequality?
- What are the disadvantages of gender inequality in South Africa?
- What is Gender-based violence?
- Who is affected by Gender based violence?
- Do you consider GBV a human rights issue in South Africa?
- Why is Gender-based violence a human rights issue in South Africa?
- What are the consequences of Gender-based violence to both victims and perpetrators?
- Would you consider masculinity to be important to our understanding of GBV?
- How does masculinity play a role in Gender-based violence?
- Is GBV something you would encourage?
- What measures can be taken to prevent Gender-based violence in South Africa?

APPENDIX 2

Consent Form

Title of project: Masculinity and its role in Gender-based violence in South Africa

Name of researcher: Vhugala Davhana

I, ……agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about. YES NO

I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study YES NO

I agree that the interview may be audio recorded. YES NO

I agree that direct quotations from my interview may be used by the researcher in their research report. YES NO

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name will not be used by the researcher in their research report YES NO

I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on. YES NO

…… (signature)

…… (name of participant)

…… (date)

…… (signature)

…… (name of researcher/person seeking consent)

…… (date)

APPENDIX 3

Participant Information Sheet

PSYCHOLOGY
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 • Tel: 011 717 4541 • Fax: 011 717 4559 • E-mail: psych.SHCD@wits.ac.za

I, _____ (participant name), hereby give my consent to participate in the study titled 'Masculinity and its role in gender-based violence in South Africa'. I confirm that the purpose of this study has been clearly explained to me and I understand what is required of me as a participant.

I understand that:

- My participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any point in time, without any negative consequences. ("CHECK LIST FOR RESEARCH APPLICATION FORM - University of KwaZulu-Natal")
- There are no risks or benefits associated with this study.
- My contribution will remain confidential amongst the researcher and Supervisor involved in the study.
- Anonymity cannot be ensured amongst the researcher and Supervisor. However, anonymity will be ensured in the write-up of results as you will be referred to by a pseudonym (fake name).
- My interview will be audio recorded. These will be used for transcription and analysis purposes,

- The transcriptions of the interview will be stored by the researchers for a period of five years on a password protected cloud platform. Only the researcher will have access to these transcripts during this period.

I hereby give consent to my interview being recorded and transcribed for the purpose of this group project.

Participant Name & Surname: …… (please print)

Participant Signature: ……. Date: ……

APPENDIX 4

Clearance certificate

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND JOHANNESBURG

SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE:	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: MASPR/22/02**
PROJECT TITLE:	Masculinity and its role in gender-based violence in South Africa.
INVESTIGATOR	Davhana Vhugala (721139)
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR	SHCD/Psychology
DATE CONSIDERED	30 May 2022
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
RISK LEVEL	Low Risk
EXPIRY DATE	31 December 2024

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE 11 July 2022 **CHAIRPERSON** ____ (Dr Sahba Besharati)

cc: Dr Daniella Rafaely (Supervisor)

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Signature **Date** 20 /07 /2022

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES