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Svova, Newlane. (2025). Exploration of Perceptions of the Inclusion of the Boy Child in GBV Awareness Programmes: A Case Study of Gauteng North [Master's dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg]. WIReDSpace. https://hdl.handle.net/10539/49480

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TITLE: EXPLORATION OF PERCEPTIONS OF THE INCLUSION OF THE BOY CHILD IN GBV AWARENESS PROGRAMMES: A CASE STUDY OF GAUTENG NORTH

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DECLARATION

I, Newlane Svova, hereby declare that this research paper **TITLED: EXPLORATION OF PERCEPTIONS OF THE INCLUSION OF THE BOY CHILD IN GBV AWARENESS PROGRAMMES: A CASE STUDY OF GAUTENG NORTH** is an original work completed by me as part of my MA in Social Work by Research at University of the Witwatersrand. All sources of information and data have been duly acknowledged and referenced in accordance with academic standards. This paper has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for any other degree or qualification at this or any other institution

I confirm that the work is entirely my own, except where otherwise indicated and acknowledged. Any errors or omissions are my sole responsibility.

Signature 

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Laetitia Petersen, for her continuous support, guidance, and encouragement throughout my research. I am also thankful to the educators and principals of the schools where the research was conducted for their continuous support and assistance throughout the research. Special thanks to the Department of Education for allowing me to do my research, particularly for their technical assistance. I am deeply indebted to my colleagues and friends, for their constant encouragement and stimulating discussions. Lastly, I extend my heartfelt thanks to my family especially my mom and dad for their unwavering love, patience, and support throughout this journey. To Reuel and Ryaan, thank you for encouragement. Above all to EL ROI, THE GOD THAT SEES ME, WHAT GOD CANNOT DO DOES NOT EXIST.

ABSTRACT

Gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the most prevalent human rights violations that transcend socio-cultural, class and economic boundaries. The study aimed to explore the perceptions of the inclusion of the boy child in awareness programmes in the hope of making a small contribution to educating the boy child in Bronkhornspruit on Gender-Based Violence in South Africa. The study was guided by the need to: explore how the boy child who formed part of a GBV programme, understand and view gender-based violence, explore the boy child's opinion on the inclusion in the fight against gender-based violence, and to analyse the effects of gender-based violence awareness directed at the boy child. A qualitative approach and intrinsic case study research design was used. The researcher facilitated face-to-face interviews to gather information relevant to the study. Purposive sampling was used to l to select 28 secondary school learners and four educators as participants. An interview guide was used as a research instrument. Thematic analysis was used for data analysis. The findings indicate how the boy child views their inclusion in the fight against gender-based violence and how they view gender-based violence. The results showed how gender-based violence education and awareness need to be rolled out in schools to continue educating the boy child of their role in addressing gender-based violence issues. It also showed the role the community plays in informal education of gender-based violence and how "men" are expected to treat women. Also, GBV awareness programmes increase the boy learners understanding of GBV and reveals the dangers of GBV in their communities and it instils the desire to change in learners.

Keywords: **Awareness Programmes, Boy child, Gender-based violence, Inclusion, Perceptions, South Africa**

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ABBREVIATIONS

DBE- Department of Education

EAH- Empathy Altruism Hypothesis

EM- Ecological Model

EU- European Union

FORUT- For Development/Utvikling

GBV- Gender Based Violence

GBVF- Gender-Based Violence and Femicide

GDE- Gauteng Department of Education

GRT- Gender Role Theory

HIV- Humane Immune Virus

IT- Intersectionality Theory

JWH- Just World Hypothesis

KIP- Key Informant Participant

LP- Learner Participant

MGLSD- Ministry of Gender, Labor, and social Development

NGO- Non-Governmental Organization

NISSA- National Institute for the Support and Safety of Women

NSP- National Strategic Plan

POWA- People Opposing Women Abuse

PTSD- Post Traumatic Disorder

SADC- Southern African Development Community

SAPS- South African Police Services

SLT- Social Learning Theory

TGP- Theory of Gender and Power

UN- United Nations

UNICEF- United Nations international children's emergency fund

USAID- United States agency for international development

VCI- Valued Citizens Initiative

WHO- World Health Organisation

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a widespread and deeply ingrained problem in South Africa. It impacts individuals across all genders, age groups, and socio-cultural and economic strata. The country's colonial legacy, the enduring effects of apartheid, and patriarchal social structures have created a complex matrix of power dynamics, which have fostered a culture of GBV and perpetuated harmful gender norms and stereotypes (Barker, 2010; Jewkes et al., 2018). These structures not only normalise GBV, but also serve to disempower those who are marginalised, rendering them more vulnerable to violence and abuse (Barker, 2010; Jewkes et al., 2018). Despite significant progress in addressing GBV, traditional programmes have primarily focused on supporting women and girls, while inadvertently marginalising the experiences and needs of men and boys, Maliki Muunguja (2018)

In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the importance of inclusive GBV programmes, acknowledging the critical role of men and boys in shaping gender norms and preventing violence (Ratele, 2016). However, societal perceptions and attitudes towards the inclusion of the boy child in GBV programmes remain largely unexplored. This knowledge gap hinders the development of effective, inclusive GBV interventions, ultimately undermining efforts to address the country's GBV epidemic.

In South Africa, Valued Citizens Initiative (VCI) is one organisation that has taken steps towards the inclusion of the boy child in GBV issues. According to VCI (2021) it is time that boys are given a platform to find their voice, express their emotions, and commit themselves to taking their rightful role as accountable leaders for their lives and challenging the status quo regarding the scourge of violence against women and girls. The VCI firmly believes that involving boy learners at an early stage in life skills programmes will not only empower boy learners to become role models in their communities but also challenge the social conditioning under which our boy learners are raised (VCI, 2021).

According to the Boys and Girls Education Movement in South Africa (UNICEF, 2012), giving children a voice and a chance to participate in decisions that will affect them

at home, in school, and in the community at large contributes to building self-esteem and courage through empowerment. Children are, therefore, more likely to stand up for themselves and act against negative impacts on their lives. Similarly, the VCI emphasises that the iNSPIRE Change Programme will play a central role in creating a new generation of confident young men who value gender equality (VCI, 2021). The intervention aims to challenge certain gender stereotypes and behaviours that perpetuate and heighten violent behaviours towards women and girls by boys and men. The programme empowers boys to become change agents in reducing sexual violence and abuse against women and girls. The focus is to guide their behaviour through increased skills awareness, understanding and appreciating differences in the opposite gender and enhancing relationship skills (VCI, 2021).

'iNSPIRE Change' is a preventative programme that addresses gender-based violence (VCI, 2021). Its objectives among other things, are directed towards enabling boy learners from grades 8 to 10 in different government schools in the Gauteng province to heal the emotional wounds that have been suppressed from childhood, afford them the chance to reflect on who they are and what they wish to become, and in the process regain the lost confidence as boy adolescents while learning to appreciate both genders, and articulate their personal values as a compass for change and articulating personal goals (VCI, 2021). By tapping into their greatest potential, our boy learners gradually become agents of positive change, advocating their cause with strong willpower through civic engagement (VCI, 2021). The criticality of this can never be over-emphasised because by improving healthy relationships between males and females, the possibilities of correcting some harmful stereotypes and promoting mutual relationships between genders increases. Inspire Change is unique in its concept, approach, design and implementation because it targets boys with approaches aimed at ensuring that they become change agents.

This research study aims to examine the perceptions of the boy child towards the incorporation of the boy child in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) programmes in South Africa. Specifically, it investigates the contextual, historical, and sociocultural factors influencing the design, implementation, and effectiveness of inclusive GBV interventions. To that end, this chapter introduces the study by looking at issues such as research context/background, and rationale, and outlining the significance of the study. The chapter concludes with an overview of the research questions, objectives and methodology, and provides a framework for the study.

1.2 BACKGROUND

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) remains a pervasive issue in South Africa, deeply entrenched in cultural, social, and institutional systems that perpetuate patriarchal norms and male dominance. The complexity of GBV is reflected in its multi-faceted nature, where it manifests in various forms including intimate partner violence, sexual assault, economic abuse, and femicide. The prevalence and severity of GBV in South Africa have led to the assertion by President Cyril Ramaphosa that GBV is a "second pandemic," a statement made in June 2020 to emphasize the country's urgent crisis in this regard (Ellis, 2020).

Women and girls, who make up 51.1% of South Africa's population, are disproportionately affected by GBV. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021), GBV is both a public health crisis and a grave human rights violation with far-reaching consequences for individuals, families, and society at large. The 2023 UN Women Focus Report reveals that one in every five women in South Africa has experienced physical violence from an intimate partner, underscoring the severity of the situation.

The country's cultural and traditional practices significantly sustain these gender norms, normalizing male dominance and violence against women. These cultural attitudes, often fuelled by deep-rooted gender stereotypes, serve as a foundation for the perpetuation of violence. The gendered structures of South African society continue to reinforce patriarchal control, where women's bodies and voices are marginalized, making them vulnerable to various forms of abuse (Mfecane, 2017). For example, Gauteng North is one of the provinces with a notably high prevalence of GBV, and many of the perpetrators often come from deeply conservative, patriarchal communities where violence against women is not only tolerated but at times justified through culture and tradition.

The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the GBV crisis. Lockdown measures and social distancing resulted in women and children being confined to their homes, often with their abusers, cutting off access to shelters and other essential services. As the world grappled with a viral health crisis, the surge in GBV cases became a tragic parallel to the pandemic. Reports from GBV helplines revealed that some experienced up to a 200% increase in call volumes during the lockdown period (van Niekerk, 2021). The dual crisis exposed the vulnerabilities of South Africa's social support systems and revealed how inadequate current GBV interventions are in times of crises.

While South Africa boasts a robust legislative framework to address GBV, including the 1996 Constitution's guarantee of gender equality and the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act (2012), these measures have struggled to reach effective implementation. For instance, delayed legal proceedings, poorly trained police, and victim-blaming attitudes within law enforcement systems create an environment of impunity, discouraging survivors from seeking justice (Vetten, 2014). These systemic barriers, particularly in rural and underserved areas, prevent women and children from accessing timely protection and support services.

Despite the legislative strides made over the years, the fundamental challenge remains the consistent failure to address the root causes of GBV. GBV awareness programmes in South Africa have largely focused on women as victims and men as perpetrators. However, such an approach neglects the broader societal structures that perpetuate violence, particularly the role of boys and young men in sustaining gendered violence. Research indicates that societal norms and expectations around masculinity are key factors in the normalization of violence, Graaff and Heinecken (2017).

Boys are often socialized to view violence as an acceptable means of asserting power, and as such, many grow up with distorted perceptions of gender roles. This perpetuates a cycle of violence, as boys who witness or experience violence in their formative years are more likely to perpetrate violence later in life (Wessels, 2017). To break this cycle, GBV awareness programmes must shift to include boys in their strategies, challenging harmful gender norms and equipping them with the knowledge and skills to foster healthier relationships and prevent violence.

The exclusion of the boy child from GBV prevention programmes represents a significant gap in current interventions. Research has shown that when boys are excluded from these initiatives, the focus remains solely on women, often positioning them as passive victims and men as active perpetrators (Mfecane, 2017). This exclusion risks overlooking the role of men and boys as critical agents of change. Boys must be engaged not only to understand the causes and consequences of GBV but also to be involved in reshaping attitudes that condone violence. When boys participate in GBV awareness programmes, they have an opportunity to confront cultural stereotypes, learn about the importance of gender equality, and become advocates for change. These programmes can be crucial in challenging the notion that masculinity is defined by aggression, control, and

dominance, and instead promote alternative models of positive masculinity that emphasize respect, emotional intelligence, and collaboration Moura (2024).

In Gauteng North, where cultural resistance to gender equality is pronounced (Albertyn, 2009), including boys in GBV awareness programmes can catalyse significant change. Programmes such as iNSPIRE, which aim to engage boys in educational campaigns, community activities, and dialogues about gender equality, have shown promise in shifting attitudes. However, there is still a need for more research to explore how communities, boys, and schools perceive the inclusion of boys in these programmes. Without understanding the perspectives of these key stakeholders, it becomes difficult to design interventions that resonate with their lived experiences. Furthermore, addressing barriers such as cultural resistance, lack of parental support, and resource limitations is critical to ensuring the success of these programmes.

Research has consistently shown that when boys are excluded from GBV prevention efforts, the impact is limited (Graaff, 2021). Including boys in these programmes does not only involve challenging harmful norms but also provides them with the tools to understand consent, respect boundaries, and promote equality. This can be achieved through school-based initiatives, mentorship programmes, and collaborative community outreach that highlight the importance of non-violence and healthy relationships. Additionally, local and national campaigns like the "We Can End All Violence Against Women" campaign have shown how media and social platforms can engage boys and men in actively challenging toxic masculinity and the normalization of violence (Crooks & Wolfe, 2019). The success of such programmes shows the potential for digital platforms, alongside community-based interventions, to amplify the message of GBV prevention and promote healthier gender relations across all levels of society (Crooks & Wolfe, 2019).

In South Africa, the gap in services for boys, particularly those who may be at risk of perpetrating GBV, remains an underexplored area. One significant challenge is the unequal access to resources such as shelters, counselling, and legal services. Often, the focus on addressing the needs of female survivors of GBV leaves the needs of male survivors and potential perpetrators underserved. The lack of services for boys, in particular, limits their ability to participate meaningfully in the efforts to combat GBV. Consequently, programmes that aim to include boys need to be designed in ways that cater to their specific needs, providing not only education on GBV but also offering appropriate

support for those who have been exposed to violence or who may have internalized harmful gender norms.

Globally, other countries have implemented successful strategies that can inform South Africa's approach to GBV prevention. Canada's "The Fourth R" programme, for example, is a school-based curriculum that actively engages young people, including boys, in discussions around healthy relationships and violence prevention (Crooks & Wolfe, 2019).

This programme provides a model for how South Africa can integrate boys into its GBV prevention efforts. Furthermore, by using peer-led initiatives, schools can serve as spaces for early intervention, where boys learn the importance of mutual respect, consent, and non- violence, contributing to long-term societal change. Programmes such as these can be adapted to local contexts, leveraging existing structures like schools, churches, and community centres to provide education and foster discussion about GBV.

Despite the legislative and advocacy work that has been undertaken, GBV continues to be a significant challenge. The 2020 National Strategic Plan on GBV and Femicide (2020–2030) outlines a roadmap for tackling GBV, but it faces considerable obstacles in terms of implementation. This includes resource constraints, insufficient coordination across different sectors, and the failure of the criminal justice system to effectively address GBV cases (Dlamini, 2021). While the framework is sound, addressing the systemic inequalities that perpetuate GBV requires a more comprehensive approach that includes structural reforms in both policy and practice. This must include a focus on increasing awareness and understanding of GBV, particularly among boys and men, and providing adequate resources to support their participation in such efforts.

This study seeks to explore the perceptions of the boy child in the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes in Gauteng North. The research aims to understand how boys, educators, and communities view the role of boys in these programmes, their potential to contribute to the prevention of GBV, and the barriers that may impede their involvement. Understanding these perceptions will help shape more inclusive and effective strategies that not only engage boys in preventing violence but also challenge the cultural norms that perpetuate it.

In conclusion, GBV in South Africa remains a critical and persistent issue that demands comprehensive and inclusive solutions. While progress has been made through

legislative reforms and advocacy efforts, the exclusion of boys from GBV prevention programmes represents a significant gap in current approaches. By including boys in GBV awareness initiatives, South Africa has an opportunity to challenge harmful gender norms, foster gender equality, and prevent violence. As such, this study aims to contribute to the development of more effective strategies for addressing GBV, ensuring that boys are recognized as key players in the movement to create a society free from violence and inequality. As such, this study aims to contribute to the development of more effective strategies for addressing GBV, ensuring that boys are recognized as key players in the movement to create a society free from violence and inequality. However, due to time constraints and the fact that this research was undertaken on an individual basis, the study is limited in scope. It focuses specifically on selected high schools within the Gauteng North district, rather than attempting to cover the entire province or a national context.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a profound and widespread problem in South Africa, deeply impacting the lives of children and contributing to a cycle of trauma, fear, and social challenges (Jewkes, 2020). This has prompted numerous programmes efforts by both non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and government agencies to combat GBV and promote awareness. Despite these initiatives, GBV remains a constant challenge, characterised by the suffering of children and the continued exclusion of boys from awareness and prevention programmes (Bhana, 2016). This exclusion has resulted in a limited understanding of the experiences and perspectives of boys within GBV awareness initiatives, thereby undermining the potential effectiveness of these programmes.

The lack of inclusivity in GBV programmes has been highlighted as a critical factor that limits the progress toward meaningful change (Colvin, Dworkin, Hatcher and Peacock, 2013). While efforts have focused extensively on addressing the experiences of girls and women, it is essential to recognise that boys also face unique challenges and can contribute significantly to efforts in combating GBV (Edley & Wetherell, 2018). As noted by Morrell, Jewkes, and Lindegger (2012), excluding boys from these programmes perpetuates harmful gender stereotypes and reinforces a gendered understanding of violence, ultimately hindering the creation of a more equitable society. This lack of engagement with boys can lead to the reinforcement of traditional notions of masculinity and violence, which further sustains cycles of violence and inequality (Flood, 2019).

Despite the growing recognition of the need for inclusive GBV programmes, societal perceptions in South Africa often marginalise boys, excluding them from support services and prevention efforts (UNICEF, 2014; UN Women, 2015). The literature suggests that this marginalisation represents a risk factor in perpetuating GBV and reinforcing rigid gender norms, thereby limiting the overall effectiveness of intervention programmes. Peacock and Barker (2014) argue that the engagement of boys in GBV prevention is crucial for challenging patriarchal norms and creating a culture of gender equality. Without their inclusion, these programmes are likely to continue performing below their potential, as they fail to address the full spectrum of gender dynamics that contribute to GBV.

Therefore, this study seeks to explore the perceptions of the boy child on their inclusion in GBV awareness programmes and identify strategies for their participation and empowerment. Addressing this gap is critical to developing more comprehensive and effective GBV interventions that can contribute to the reduction of violence and the promotion of gender equality in Gauteng North, South Africa.

1.4 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

This study examines perceptions of the inclusion of boys in gender-based violence (GBV) awareness programmes in Bronkhornspruit It aims to stimulate debate around GBV programmes, responsibility, and effectiveness within government institutions and private organizations. Evidence from other countries shows that the inclusion of boys in GBV awareness programmes bridges cultural gaps that perpetuate GBV, contributing to more effective programmes. Therefore, the exclusion of boys from such initiatives challenges the effectiveness and appropriateness of current GBV programmes efforts.

Despite numerous studies on GBV in South Africa, such as Kapodogo et al. (2019) focusing on the dangers of GBV for women and Matimba (2016) exploring the motives behind GBV among males, there remains a scarcity of research specifically addressing perceptions of boys' inclusion in GBV programmes.

This gap in the literature has compelled the researcher to conduct this study, which seeks to contribute to the knowledge base in social work by exploring the perceptions of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes. The findings of this study may be crucial for social work professionals and other stakeholders as they highlight the importance of including boys in GBV programmes and the necessary conditions to promote their participation. By providing evidence-based insights, the study aims to inform the

refinement of social work practices related to child welfare and protection, as well as foster dialogue among policymakers on more inclusive GBV programmes. "Ultimately, this research aims to provide a foundation for evidence-based policymaking in South Africa by focusing on improving GBV awareness and prevention strategies within a specific community or region. By understanding the unique needs and experiences of children in this localized context, the study seeks to contribute to more inclusive and effective approaches to addressing gender-based violence in that area."

1.5 RESEARCH AIM

The aim of the study is

- To explore the perceptions of the boy child on the inclusion of the boy child in awareness programmes of gender-based violence in Gauteng-North province of South Africa.

1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To explore how boy children perceive GBV.
- To explore the perceptions of boy children regarding their inclusion in GBV awareness programmes.
- To explore the perceptions of educators regarding the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes.

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was guided by three questions. These were:

- What are the perceptions of boy children towards GBV?
- What are the perceptions of boy children regarding their inclusion in GBV awareness programmes?
- What are the perceptions of educators regarding the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes?

1.8 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Gender-based violence (GBV): violence specifically directed at someone because of their biological sex or gender identity (Durham, 2021). Gender-Based Violence (GBV) refers to harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender, often resulting from power imbalances and societal norms. GBV encompasses a range of violent behaviours, including physical, sexual, emotional, and economic abuse. In the context of the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes, GBV is understood as a pervasive issue that affects all genders, though it disproportionately impacts women and girls. This inclusion aims to challenge harmful masculinities and promote gender equality (World Health Organization, 2021).

Perceptions: a belief or opinion, often held by many people and based on how things seem (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022). In this study perception refers to the way individuals or groups understand, interpret, and form opinions about the importance and impact of involving boys in such initiatives. It involves the attitudes, beliefs, and awareness that shape how society views the role of boys in addressing and preventing gender-based violence, as well as how these programmes are received and valued by different stakeholders (Pickens, 2005).

Boy child: a male child, from birth to full growth, especially one less than 18 years of age (Thesaurus, 2022).

Educator: means any person who teaches, educates or trains other persons or who provides professional educational services, including professional 10 therapy and education psychological services, at any public school, further education and training institution, departmental office or adult basic education centre and who is appointed in a post on any educator establishment under this Act (Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998)

GBV Awareness programmes: are community-wide or audience-specific programmes, initiatives, and strategies that increase audience knowledge and share information and resources to prevent violence, promote safety, and reduce perpetration (Law Insider, 2022). These programmes aim to challenge harmful gender norms and promote respectful behaviours from a young age, fostering an environment where boys can become advocates for gender equality. Including boys in these programmes is crucial for preventing future violence and building a more equitable society (Kaufman, 2013).

1.9 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theories underpinning this research are the social learning theory and the functionalist theory, as frameworks for understanding the development and perspectives of GBV. These theories provide a rich understanding and perspectives relevant for exploring the perceptions on the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programme.

Social Learning Theory (SLT) is widely used to explain gender-based violence (GBV), often referred to as the "cycle of violence" or "intergenerational transmission theory" (Huesmann, 2017). It suggests that individuals model behaviours observed in childhood, learning violence from role models such as parents, relatives, or peers, which can persist into adulthood as a coping mechanism (Powers et al., 2020; Bandura, 2016). SLT highlights how boys learn about GBV through observation, shaping their attitudes and behaviours. Key elements include modelling, where positive role models encourage respectful behaviour; reinforcement, where approval strengthens non-violent attitudes; self-efficacy, which influences a boy's confidence in preventing GBV;and environmental factors, such as family and peer influence. Understanding these aspects can help develop strategies to combat and prevent GBV.

Functionalism views society as a system of interconnected parts that work together to maintain stability and social order (Mooney et al., 2007). Social institutions such as education, politics, economics, and religion play essential roles in transmitting knowledge, governing society, regulating economic activities, and providing moral guidance. This theory aligns with the study's findings, emphasizing that gender norms and behaviours are learned through socialisation within families, schools, and communities. Some learners acknowledged that peer influence shapes their interactions with female friends as they mimic behaviours to fit in. Functionalists argue that social roles are assigned to ensure stability, with collaboration and consensus being key (Diko, 2023).

Violence, in some cases, is seen as a means of enforcing order, and Abioye (2019) suggests that male dominance and violence, rooted in cultural and religious traditions, reinforce social structures and contribute to rape culture. Durkheim further posits that crime plays a functional role in strengthening societal values and cohesion. Functionalism maintains that gender roles are socially constructed and contribute to societal stability through socialisation, moral guidance, and social control. In this study, boys' perceptions of their involvement in combating GBV will be examined through this lens, assessing

whether they see GBV as raising awareness of moral decline and if their inclusion in anti-GBV efforts contributes to community well-being, reinforcing their role in fostering social progress.

1.10 METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research approach to examine perceptions regarding the inclusion of the boy child in GBV programmes, utilising an interpretivist paradigm to explore participants' subjective experiences, attitudes, and perceptions. An intrinsic case study method was chosen, focusing on four high schools in Gauteng North, Johannesburg, under the iNSPIRE programme. From these schools, 32 participants were purposefully selected for semi-structured in-depth interviews and expert interviews. The data collected was analysed through thematic analysis, with all findings triangulated to produce a comprehensive report.

1.11 LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations associated with this study. These range from sample size and selection, which may limit the findings, and thus create the impression that a larger, more diverse sample may provide more comprehensive insights. Again, the reliance on self- reported data may be subject to biases and inaccuracies. However, triangulating data from multiple sources could strengthen the findings. The geographical scope is limited to Gauteng North and the findings may not be generalisable to other contexts. The study is also limited in the cultural and linguistic diversity of South Africa, which also affected the understanding and interpretation of GBV related programmes and power dynamics between researchers, participants, and stakeholders, and ethical considerations such as informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality. Additionally, the timeframe of data collection limited the findings, and resource constraints such as funding, time, and access to participants may impact the study's scope and depth. By acknowledging and addressing these limitations, the study provided a more comprehensive understanding of societal perceptions of inclusive GBV programmes in South Africa.

1.12 LAYOUT OF THE REPORT

This dissertation consists of 6 chapters in sequential order from 1 to 6. To that end, Chapter 1 introduced the study by discussing the study background, problem statement, rationale, objectives, definitions of concepts and brief summaries of the theoretical framework and methodology. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the study`s theoretical

framework, which is social learning theory and the functionalist theory, as paradigms for understanding the development of GBV.

Chapter 3 offers the literature review and focuses on taking on global perspectives, followed by regional and national/local views on the issue of GBV prevalence statistics while highlighting the transcendent nature of the burden of GBV across countries. The chapter will also review literature on perceptions that society has on GBV and the inclusion of the boy child in GBV programmes, causes, and effects of GBV on both males and females Chapter 4 provides the study`s methodology whilst Chapter 5 is the penultimate chapter providing the study findings from interviews with boy child participants and educators. Chapter 6 provides an overall summary, conclusion and recommendations based on the findings of the study.

1.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter introduced the study, by exploring the background and rationale for investigating societal perceptions of including the boy child in GBV programmes in South Africa. The chapter has highlighted the significance of GBV as a pervasive issue in South Africa, the importance of inclusive programmes, and the research gap in understanding societal perceptions of including the boy child in GBV programmes. The research questions and objectives have been outlined, and the methodology and layout of the study have been presented. The next chapter will discuss the theoretical framework and provide an elaborate literature review.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews the theoretical framework of the study. Theories discussed in this chapter are the social learning theory and the functionalist theory, as frameworks for understanding the development of GBV. These theories provide a rich understanding and perspectives relevant for exploring the perceptions on the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes.

2.2 THE SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY (SLT)

Social learning theory (SLT) is one of the most popular explanatory perspectives in gender-based violence literature (Huesmann, 2017). Often conceptualised as the ‘‘cycle of violence’’ or ‘‘intergenerational transmission theory’’ when applied to the family, theory states that people model behaviours that they have been exposed to as children (Powers et al., 2020, p.23). Violence is learned through role models provided by the family, whether from parents, siblings, relatives, boyfriends or girlfriends, who either directly or indirectly witness violence. It is reinforced in childhood and continues in adulthood as a coping response to stress or as a method of conflict resolution (Bandura, 2016).

The social learning theory explains how individuals learn new behaviours, attitudes, and knowledge through observing and imitating others (Bandura, 2016). In the context of this study, SLT can help us understand how the boy child learns about gender-based violence (GBV) and by extension, becomes a guide through which strategies for combating and preventing GBV can be formulated. Its key components include observational learning, which stipulates that the boy child learns by observing others, such as family members, peers, and community leaders, and imitating their behaviours and attitudes towards GBV.

Further to its core tenets, the theory underscores modelling, arguing that in this case the boy child is more likely to adopt behaviours and attitudes towards GBV if he observes positive models, such as non-violent and respectful behaviour towards women and girls. There is also reinforcement, which entails rewarding good behaviours. Thus, the boy child

is more likely to repeat behaviours and attitudes towards GBV if he receives reinforcement, such as praise or approval from others.

Another important building block is that of self-efficacy, which stipulates that the boy child's belief in his ability to prevent GBV and promote gender equality affects his behaviour and attitudes towards GBV. There are also environmental factors, wherein the boy child's social environment, including family, peers, and community, influence his learning and behaviour towards GBV. These tenets are discussed in detail in the section below.

2.3 OBSERVATIONAL LEARNING

As expounded by Bandura (2016), the social learning theory emphasises that individuals learn by observing others and imitating their behaviours. This is also seen in the results of the study with learners noting that they learn some of their behaviours from the older generation around them or their role models. Regarding GBV, the theory underscores that people are products of their socialisation. Consequently, their interaction with the environment has a bearing on their lives Bandura (2016). The inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes can provide opportunities for boys to observe positive role models, learn about respectful relationships, and internalise non-violent behaviours This can influence their perceptions and attitudes towards GBV awareness and prevention in their schools and communities.

2.3.1 Modelling

Social learning theory suggests that individuals are more likely to imitate behaviours they observe in role models who are perceived as credible and influential as argued by Bandura (2016). Thus, by including the boy child in GBV awareness programmes, influential figures such as teachers, community leaders, or peer mentors can model pro-social attitudes, empathy, and respectful behaviours. Regarding its application to the study, the boys may adopt these behaviours and attitudes, thereby contributing to the prevention of GBV. There are several elements of this theory that best explain how the boy child is modelled in South African communities. This coupled with the exposure to role models who perpetuate GBV, be they family members, peers, or community leaders, shapes their attitudes and behaviours towards women and girls and can lead to the modelling of GBV-related behaviour, such as violence and coercion (Chen et al. 2021). Through modelling, GBV programmes can facilitate change in the actions and perceptions of the boy child as

they will be able to learn from others already participating in these programmes in South Africa and this was evidenced by the research findings.

2.3.2 Vicarious Reinforcement

According to the social learning theory, individuals are motivated to adopt the chosen behaviours by positively reinforcing that behaviour through rewards Bandura (2016). Vicarious reinforcement is a form of learning where an individual's behaviour is influenced by observing the consequences of another person's actions, leading to increased or decreased likelihood of imitating that behaviour (Bandura, 1977). This will lead to adoption of the intended behaviours as people will associate it with rewards (Bandura, 2016).

This concept helps explain how individuals can learn and adopt behaviours which can be applied to GBV-related behaviours as the boy child can be rewarded for adopting the needed behaviours to address GBV in their communities. In the context of GBV, boys who witness or experience violence and abuse within their families are most likely to normalise GBV-related behaviour, particularly when this behaviour goes unchecked or unpunished or is rewarded (Peters et al., 2024). As such, through GBV awareness programmes, boys who observe positive attitudes and behaviours towards gender equality and non-violence being recognised, praised, or rewarded are more likely to internalise and adopt these behaviours themselves.

2.3.3 Social Context

The social learning theory emphasises the importance of social context in shaping behaviour (Bandura, 2016). Based on this theoretical approach, GBV awareness programmes that include the boy child strive to create a social environment where positive attitudes and behaviours are valued and promoted (Peters et al.,2024). In the context of this study, programmes encourage boys to develop an understanding of the consequences of GBV, the importance of respectful relationships, and the role they can play in preventing violence.

Linking the social learning theory to the research provides insights into how the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes can influence their perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours towards GBV prevention (Bandura, 2016). It underscores the significance of positive role models, observational learning, reinforcement, and the social context in shaping boys' understanding and engagement in addressing GBV.

Furthermore, during childhood and adolescence, observations of how parents and significant others behave in intimate relationships provide an initial learning opportunity for behavioural alternatives that are appropriate for these relationships. Children infer rules or principles through repeated exposure to a particular style of parenting (Mihalic & Elliott, 1997). If the family of origin handled stresses and frustrations with anger and aggression, the child who has grown up in such an environment is at greater risk of exhibiting as an adult, those same behaviours witnessed or experienced in childhood. Children learn that violence is acceptable within the home and is an effective method for solving problems or changing the behaviour of others.

The primary hypothesis for the intergenerational cycle of violence is that violent and abusive adults learned this behaviour because of being the victims of or witnesses of aggressive and abusive behaviour as children (Powers et al., 2020). If children are abused by their parents, they may internalise beliefs and patterns of behaviour that lead them to abuse their own children. If children observe parents who hit each other, they may develop a greater propensity towards abusing their own spouses. Transmission of violent behaviour occurs through processes of modelling, failure to learn appropriate ways to manage conflict, and reinforcement of violent behaviour. Normal coping mechanisms may not be learned or may become impaired, leading to violence as the ultimate resource (Powers et al., 2020).

The social learning theory provides a framework for assessing the development of GBV related behaviours, perceptions and ideas in South African communities. Concepts from SLT help in understanding the structure and development of gender-based violence and thus, are key in designing effective interventions or programmes to promote gender equality and challenge harmful gender stereotypes.

2.4 FUNCTIONALIST THEORY

The functionalist theory is a subject of interest to several theorists such as Émile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, Robert K. Merton, Kingsley Davis, and Wilbert E (Mooney et al, (2007). However, Émile Durkheim and Herbert Spencer contributed to the development the functionalist theory and its adaptation to multiple fields of practice. Essentially, functionalism holds that society is a collection of interconnected parts that act as a whole to keep everything in balance and sustain social equilibrium (Mooney et al, 2007). For instance, each of the social institutions contributes to the following key societal functions:

education offers a means of passing down a society's knowledge, skills, and culture to its young people; politics offers a way of governing society's members; economics facilitates the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services; and religion offers moral guidance and a venue for worship of a higher power (Mooney et al., 2007). The functionalist theory proved to marry with the results from the research findings. Its emphasis on the role of social institutions in maintaining societal stability and cohesion is highlighted in the results. From a functionalist perspective, gender norms and behaviours are learned through socialisation, primarily within families, schools, and community programmes which some learners agreed to noting that they see their friends' behaviours toward their female friends and to try and look cool they follow them. By incorporating boys into GBV awareness initiatives, the boy learners spoken with during the research agreed that the programmes helped in re-socialising them to reject harmful gender norms and support gender equality, thereby contributing to the overall functioning and stability of society. This inclusion promoted healthier gender relations and reduced violence, which aligns with the functionalist view of society as an interdependent system where each part contributes to social order and stability.

Functionalist theorists view society from a structural perspective premised on conformity to prescribed social functions or role performance (Diko, 2023). Diko (2023), also argues that functionalists analyse human beings in relation to the roles they perform in each social context. These roles are allocated for the proper functioning of the social system and are performed based on collaboration and consensus. From this perspective, violence may serve the purpose of enforcing order on delinquent or rebellious members. Abioye (2019) argues that functionalist theories also explain male dominance and violence and their corresponding female subordination and compliance as assets that serve a preservative function for the sustainability of African family life and social order. Abioye (2019) confirms this prevailing view that rape culture is effectuated by religious and cultural traditions of male supremacy and dominance, where through socialisation, men develop through processes to culturally sanctioned acts of violence towards women and men of lower status.

As argued earlier, the functionalist viewpoint highlights how interconnected society is by concentrating on how each component influences and is influenced by other components. This helps in comprehending how GBV affects various entities in the communities under investigation and how it is influenced by various causes (Para-Mallam,

2022). The impact of social components on society are described by functionalists using the phrases functional and dysfunctional (Buqa, 2022). A social component is functional if it promotes social stability, and it is dysfunctional if it causes social instability. Societies can include both useful and dysfunctional elements. For instance, crime is dysfunctional because it is connected to bodily harm, property loss, and fear (Para-Mallam, 2022). According to Durkheim and other functionalists, crime also serves a societal purpose since it promotes a greater awareness of moral ties that unite people and fosters social cohesion. Furthermore, this theory is predicated on the idea that roles for men and women are also socially constructed.

This theory maintains the view of society as a system with interconnected parts, each performing functions that contribute to the overall stability and well-being of society. This theory assumes that society is a cohesive system, where each part plays a vital role in maintaining social order and stability. The various social institutions, such as family, religion, education, and government, are seen as essential components that work together to provide functions like socialisation, moral guidance, skills development, and social control. For instance, in the family, women generally specialise in taking care of the home and raising the children. Men typically participate in the paid labour force. By socialising gender roles, each generation learns to play these complementary roles (Para-Mallam, 2022). These functions are necessary for the smooth operation of society, and each institution has a specific role to play in maintaining social order. However, modern theorists such as Steven Lukes (2013) criticise this theory for its overly optimistic view of society, neglecting the role of power and conflict in shaping social institutions.

Lukes argues that functionalists like Talcott Parsons fail to account for the ways in which social institutions can perpetuate inequality and reinforce dominant interests. Integration and consensus are also crucial components of the functionalist theory. Social integration refers to the degree to which individuals and groups are united and cooperative, while consensus refers to the shared values, beliefs, and norms that unite society (Lukes, 2018). Functionalists argue that social integration and consensus are necessary for social order and stability, as they promote cooperation and reduce conflict.

Social institutions, such as religion and education, play a key role in promoting integration and consensus by providing shared values and norms. By performing their functions, social institutions help maintain social order, integration, and consensus, which are seen as essential for societal well-being. Archer (2014) critiques the functionalist theory

for its lack of attention to human agency and the role of individuals in shaping social institutions. Archer argues that functionalists overemphasise the determinative power of social structures, neglecting the ways in which individuals can resist and transform social norms and institutions. The boy child's perception regarding their inclusion in the fight against gender-based violence programmes can be viewed through the lens of functionalism.

The researcher asked questions and analysed the data, took note of how the learners felt about GBV as functional in alerting people to be more aware of their surroundings and the moral decay that is happening around communities and the lack of UBUNTU. It also helped to see if the learners felt that their inclusion in the fight against GBV made the communities a better place, thus attributing their inclusion as functional in the communities they live in.

2.4.1 Social Functions

The functionalist theory posits that social institutions serve specific functions in society. In the context of GBV awareness programmes, the inclusion of the boy child can be seen as a means to achieve functional goals such as reducing violence, promoting gender equality, and fostering social harmony. By involving boys in these programmes, society aims to maintain social stability and address the issue of GBV effectively. The functionalist theory suggests that social institutions, such as education, family, and community organizations, serve specific functions in society (Crooks, & Wolf, .2019). In the context of GBV awareness programmes, the functionalist approach would analyse how the inclusion of the boy child contributes to the overall functioning and stability of society. It would explore the perceived benefits and roles that boys' inclusion plays in preventing GBV and promoting social order.

2.4.2 Social Integration

Ali et al. (2019) highlights that functionalism emphasises social integration and cohesion as essential for societal well-being. Including the boy child in GBV awareness programmes can promote social integration by fostering shared values, cooperation, and solidarity among community members. It can enhance social bonds and strengthen the collective efforts to prevent GBV. Functionalism emphasises the importance of social integration and cohesion. Functionalism emphasised the importance of social integration and cohesion. In this study, the theory was applied to examine how the inclusion of the boy

child in GBV awareness programmes contributed to building social unity and shared understanding. While functionalism provided a useful lens for understanding the broader societal impact of involving boys in such programmes, the research was more limited in scope. It focused on the immediate effects within a specific school community, rather than making generalisations about society as a whole.

2.4.3 Socialisation and Norms

Functionalism highlights the role of socialisation in transmitting cultural values and norms. The inclusion of boys in GBV awareness programmes contributes to their socialisation process by instilling norms of non-violence, respect, and gender equality. It helps shape their understanding of appropriate behaviour and fosters a society where GBV is not tolerated. Functionalism highlights the role of socialisation in transmitting cultural values, norms, and expectations to individuals (Parsons, 1964). From a functionalist perspective, the study explored participants' perspectives regarding including the boy child in GBV awareness programmes contributes to the socialisation process. It would explore how these programmes shape boys' understanding of gender roles, relationships, and their responsibilities in preventing GBV.

2.4.4 Social Order and Stability

Functionalism emphasises the maintenance of social order and stability. Including the boy child in GBV awareness programmes can contribute to social stability by addressing the root causes of GBV and promoting positive social change. It helps create a balanced and harmonious social structure where violence is minimised, and gender relations are more equitable. According to Merton (1957), functionalism emphasises the maintenance of social order and stability. Applying this theory to the study topic would involve examining how functional the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes is, and how it contributes to a balanced and harmonious social structure. It would explore how these programmes promote a shared understanding of gender equality, respect, and non-violence, thus reducing social tensions and maintaining social stability.

2.4.5 Manifest and Latent Functions

Functionalism distinguishes between manifest and latent functions of social phenomena. The inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes has both manifest functions, such as raising awareness and fostering gender equality, as well as latent functions, such as fostering empathy, breaking down stereotypes, and strengthening

community bonds. Functionalism distinguishes between manifest functions (intended and recognized purposes) and latent functions (unintended or unrecognized consequences) (Davis & Moore, 2018).

Applying this perspective to the study would involve examining both the intended and unintended outcomes of the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes. It would explore not only the explicit goals of these programmes but also any unintended consequences or latent functions that emerge because of boys' participation.

2.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The researcher merged the functionalist and social learning theory in formulating a conceptual framework for analysing the inclusion of the boy child in GBV programmes in Gauteng North communities. While functionalism explained how social institutions like family, education, and religion shape the boy child's socialisation and roles in South African communities, focusing on how institutions perpetuate traditional gender norms and stereotypes that contribute to GBV, and examining their functions reveals how they reinforce harmful gender roles. At the same time GBV programmes inclusive of the boychild can reinforce positive perceptions and behaviours relating to girls and women.

The SLT, on the other hand, emphasises how the boy child learns gender roles and behaviours through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within their social environment. The theory highlights the importance of role models and influencers, such as peers, family members, and community leaders, in shaping the boy child's attitudes and behaviours towards GBV. GBV programmes can provide alternative role models and reinforcement to promote positive behaviours and challenge harmful gender stereotypes. For instance, programmes can engage male role models who promote non-violent behaviours and provide positive reinforcement for boys who exhibit empathy and respect towards girls and women.

By integrating both theories, GBV programmes can leverage social institutions to promote positive socialisation and reinforcement of non-violent behaviours among the boy children. Both theories foster the identification of potential tensions or contradictions between institutional functions and social learning processes that may impact the effectiveness of GBV programmes. By understanding these complex dynamics, policy makers can develop more effective strategies to engage the boy child in GBV programmes and promote gender equality in South African communities.

2.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter critically discussed existing theories on GBV programmes as well as their application in the field of practice Theories discussed in this chapter are the social learning theory and the functionalist theory, as frameworks of understanding the development of GBV. These theories provide a rich understanding and perspectives relevant for exploring the perceptions on the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This literature review aims to explore the current body of research and scholarly works in the field of social work, focusing on key themes and theories about the inclusion of the boy child in GBV issues. Through critical examination of and engagement with existing literature, this review seeks to identify gaps, contradictions, and areas for further investigation, ultimately contributing to the advancement of social work practice and knowledge.

To that end, this chapter will start from the general moving to the particular by first taking on global perspectives, followed by regional, and national/local views on the issue of GBV prevalence statistics while highlighting the transcendent nature of the burden of GBV across countries. The chapter will also review literature on perceptions that society has on GBV and the inclusion of the boy child on GBV programmes, causes, and effects of GBV on both males and females.

3.2 GBV PREVALENCE STATISTICS

A 2018 analysis of prevalence data from 2000—2018 across 161 countries and areas, conducted by World Health Organisation (WHO) on behalf of the United Nations (UN) Interagency Working Group on Violence Against Women, found that worldwide, nearly 1 in 3, or 30%, of women have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner, non-partner sexual violence, or both (WHO, 2018). Global estimates of lifetime intimate partner violence rates range from 20% in the Western Pacific, and 22% in high- income countries and Europe. Violence against women is endemic in the world, but it has reached alarming and crisis proportions in South Africa. While GBV takes several forms such as rape, assault, domestic violence, trafficking in women, violence against women in detention, violence against women during armed conflict and others, the WHO, Global Watch Report (2023) notes that in South Africa, femicide and rape are the most common and horrendous forms of GBV problems.

WHO (2024) estimates that 38% of all female killings worldwide are committed by intimate partners. In addition to domestic abuse, which the UN (2021) also called domestic violence or intimate partner violence, which can be defined as a pattern of

behaviour in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner, globally, 6% of women said they had been sexually assaulted by someone other than an intimate partner, though information on this type of sexual assault is scarce. Men are primarily responsible for domestic and sexual violence against women (WHO, 2021). 33% of women and girls aged 15—49 in Oceania, South Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa have experienced some form of intimate partner violence (WHO, 2021).

The South African Government News Agency (2021), highlights call by several NGO groups, the President Cyril Ramaphosa, the police minister Bheki Cele on the alarming rate at which women and girls are abused, violated, and some killed in South Africa. What makes it even more worrisome and unacceptable is that many are killed by the people they know, people they love, and people they trust. There have been several studies on the relationship between GBV and the COVID pandemic indicating that the rates of GBV spiked during and immediately after the pandemic in South Africa due to prolonged isolation and other related factors (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2019, and Africa Check, 2020). However, a number of interventions aimed at managing GBV in South Africa have been undertaken.

Reports by the South African Police Service (SAPS) indicate that over 13,000 women were victims of assault with intent to cause grievous bodily harm between July and September 2022, with 277 being victims of attempted murder. Meanwhile, 989 women were murdered during this reporting period. Over 10,000 rape cases were opened with the SAPS between July and September of year 2023, with the figures projected to rise in the 1st quarter of 2024. The National Strategic Plan on GBV (NSP, 2020) also highlights that GBV violence is random, occurring to anyone regardless of class or social status as indicated by a sample of 8227 rape incidents, where it was determined that 5 083 which is 62% of these incidents, occurred at the residence of the victims or perpetrators. 1 651 of the rape incidents occurred at public places such as streets, parks, and beaches, in abandoned buildings or in several modes of public transport.

In just six months, 558 children were killed in South Africa from April to the end of September 2022. Police investigated attempted murder dockets for 294 children from July to September 2022. Again, 1895 assault GBV cases, with children as victims, were opened with the police during this reporting period. Consequently, the Minister of Police noted that the SAPS should prioritise Gender-Based Violence and femicide (GBVF) related crimes. Total contact crimes in South Africa increased by 18.5%.

3.3 SPREAD OF GBV ACROSS SOUTH AFRICA'S PROVINCES

The prevalence of GBV in South Africa is not uniform across provinces, with each region presenting distinct challenges.

3.3.1 Gauteng

Gauteng, South Africa's economic hub, consistently records some of the highest rates of GBV in the country. According to the South African Police Service (SAPS), nearly 53% of all rape cases reported in South Africa occur in this province (SAPS, 2023). In addition, the 2023 study by Gender Links found that 78% of men in Gauteng admitted to perpetrating violence against women, which is the highest rate among the provinces surveyed (UN Women, 2023). Gauteng also witnessed several high-profile GBV cases, which have ignited nationwide protests and prompted public debates about the effectiveness of current GBV laws.

While Gauteng has been at the forefront of efforts to combat GBV, such as through increased law enforcement measures and awareness campaigns, the rates of violence remain staggeringly high. This is partly due to the high population density in urban areas, which fosters an environment conducive to both interpersonal violence and economic inequalities that exacerbate GBV (Diko, 2023). Gauteng's high levels of poverty, coupled with entrenched patriarchal norms, fuel a culture of silence that prevents many survivors from reporting GBV incidents.

3.3.2 KwaZulu-Natal (KZN)

KwaZulu-Natal has also been deeply affected by GBV, with over 41% of men in the province admitting to having committed violence against women (UN Women, 2023). In 2022, it was reported that approximately 16% of all murder cases in South Africa were femicide cases, with KZN contributing significantly to these statistics (SAPS, 2023). This province is particularly challenged by its deeply rooted cultural and patriarchal structures, which normalize male dominance and violence against women.

In rural areas of KZN, cultural practices such as "ukuthwala" (the abduction of young women for forced marriages) and entrenched gender roles contribute to the perpetuation of GBV (Mabaso, 2019). Additionally, women in these communities often face limited access to support services due to the province's vast rural landscape. This geographic isolation, combined with a lack of resources, makes it difficult for survivors of GBV to seek help, thereby exacerbating the problem.

3.3.3 Western Cape

The Western Cape is another province facing high levels of GBV, with 35% of men admitting to committing violence against women (UN Women, 2023). In urban areas such as Cape Town, high rates of gang violence and substance abuse contribute to the occurrence of GBV. Many cases of domestic violence and femicide are linked to alcohol and drug abuse, particularly in impoverished townships and informal settlements where socio-economic challenges are prevalent (Pluddemann & Parry, 2018).

In response to these challenges, the Western Cape government has implemented several initiatives, including partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) aimed at providing support services to survivors of GBV. Despite these efforts, the province continues to struggle with deeply entrenched societal norms that view women as subservient to men, contributing to the normalization of violence in domestic and public spaces.

3.3.4 Limpopo

In Limpopo, 48% of men reported having committed some form of violence against women (UN Women, 2023). The province has one of the highest rates of intimate partner violence (IPV) in the country. Similar to other rural provinces, traditional patriarchal norms and cultural practices play a significant role in shaping attitudes towards women. Limpopo also faces challenges related to underreporting, as many women, particularly in rural communities, feel powerless to report instances of GBV due to fear of retaliation or ostracization by their communities.

Efforts to address GBV in Limpopo have included local awareness campaigns and partnerships with community leaders to challenge harmful cultural practices that perpetuate violence against women. However, the deeply entrenched patriarchal structures in the province present a significant barrier to the success of these initiatives (Mfecane, 2017).

3.3.5 Eastern Cape

The Eastern Cape has seen increasing rates of GBV over the years, particularly in rural areas where poverty and unemployment are rampant. The province recorded a significant number of femicide cases in 2023, with 14% of the country's total femicide incidents occurring in the Eastern Cape (SAPS, 2023). Traditional cultural practices such as arranged marriages and polygamy, which still exist in some rural communities,

contribute to the marginalization of women and the perpetuation of violence against them (Mabaso, 2019).

The Eastern Cape also faces challenges in terms of providing adequate support services to survivors of GBV, especially in rural areas where transportation and communication barriers hinder access to help. Efforts to address GBV in the province include community-based interventions and partnerships with traditional leaders to raise awareness about women's rights.

3.3.6 Free State

The Free State, while not as prominent in GBV statistics as other provinces, still faces significant challenges. Women in the Free State are more likely to experience emotional abuse from intimate partners compared to other provinces. According to the Gender Links 2023 study, the Free State has seen an uptick in cases of economic violence, where women are financially controlled or deprived of economic resources by their partners (UN Women, 2023).

The provincial government has responded to the growing concern by increasing GBV awareness campaigns and working with local community organizations to provide support to survivors. However, economic violence and emotional abuse continue to be underreported due to societal stigma, further complicating efforts to tackle the issue comprehensively.

The pervasive and universal nature of GBV is evidenced by the high prevalence of GBV-related incidents across various cultures, countries, and demographics (OECD, 2023). The statistics presented above highlight the global impact of GBV, emphasising the pressing need for effective, evidence-based, and multi-dimensional responses to address this issue, irrespective of geographical, social, or cultural boundaries. Evidently, gender-based violence is not restricted to any region or country; it is an issue affecting women and girls of different socio- cultural and economic classes to varying degrees. In many cases, the victims of gender-based violence must face many sexual and reproductive health consequences, including unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, traumatic fistulas, sexually transmitted infections, and sometimes death. GBV is a scourge that, if not dealt with, will continue causing havoc in societies and economic strain on the government, especially in South Africa, where the numbers are considerably high, as shown by the statistics above.

3.4 PERCEPTIONS ON GBV

Perceptions of gender-based violence (GBV) in Africa are shaped by complex cultural, economic, and social dynamics. Research reveals widespread prevalence and diverse attitudes toward GBV across the continent, with varying forms and intensities depending on the region. In Ethiopia, a study conducted in the Amhara region in 2023 investigated adolescents' perceptions of GBV, revealing that their awareness was closely tied to empowerment levels. Adolescents who felt more empowered exhibited a nuanced understanding of GBV, with physical and sexual violence identified as the most common forms. This study underscored the influence of societal norms and the critical role of education and family in combating GBV in such contexts (Gebremichael et al., 2023).

A broader systematic review of studies in sub-Saharan Africa, spanning from 2008 to 2019, revealed a troubling prevalence of GBV, particularly intimate partner violence (IPV). Emotional violence, experienced by 29.4% of women, and physical violence, affecting 25.87%, were the most frequently reported forms. Non-IPV violence, such as assaults by non-partners, was less common but still significant at 14%. Regional variations emerged, with Western and Eastern Africa exhibiting higher levels of emotional violence. The review attributed these disparities to entrenched patriarchal norms and socio-economic inequalities that perpetuate power imbalances and limit women's autonomy (Muluneh et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated GBV across Africa, highlighting the interplay between crises and gender inequalities. Movement restrictions, economic pressures, and heightened stress during the pandemic significantly increased reported cases of GBV. In East Africa, for instance, Kenya experienced a 35% surge in sexual offenses, while Central African nations, including Cameroon and the Central African Republic, saw spikes in domestic violence, rape, and psychological abuse. In Cameroon, 35.8% of respondents in a survey noted an increase in household violence during the pandemic. Similarly, reports from the Central African Republic indicated a 69% rise in injuries to women and children linked to domestic violence. The pandemic laid bare the systemic vulnerabilities that leave women and girls disproportionately affected during emergencies, underscoring the need for robust protective mechanisms in such situations (Peterman et al., 2020UN Women, 2020;).

South Africa presents another critical case study, where GBV is alarmingly pervasive and often normalized within communities. Research highlights historical inequalities, coupled with pervasive alcohol abuse and limited access to justice, as key factors fuelling this violence. Social norms that trivialize or excuse violence against women remain deeply embedded, creating significant barriers to addressing GBV. However, grassroots activism and educational campaigns are beginning to shift perceptions and encourage accountability, though progress remains slow and uneven. The country's experiences underscore the importance of combining systemic reforms with community-driven efforts to combat GBV effectively (Muluneh et al., 2020).

In West Africa, domestic violence, human trafficking, and widowhood practices are pervasive issues that significantly marginalize women. Countries like Nigeria and Ghana have high rates of domestic violence, often exacerbated by deeply ingrained patriarchal norms. Widowhood practices, such as property confiscation and forced remarriage, further strip women of economic autonomy and social dignity. Human trafficking is another prevalent issue, with women and girls trafficked for sexual exploitation or forced labour, often crossing national borders (Oladeji, 2021). In conflict zones, particularly in the Sahel region, sexual violence is weaponized, targeting women and girls to disrupt communities. This violence has devastating physical, psychological, and socio-economic impacts, making GBV in these areas a pressing humanitarian crisis (UN Women, 2020).

In North Africa, GBV takes forms such as harassment, domestic violence, and systemic discrimination. Countries like Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia have implemented legislative reforms to curb GBV, including stricter laws against harassment and domestic violence. However, cultural resistance to gender equality continues to undermine these efforts. Family honour and societal pressures discourage survivors from seeking justice, leaving many cases of violence unreported. For instance, in Egypt, a 2017 study revealed that nearly 99% of women had experienced some form of harassment, yet cultural norms and fear of stigma often prevent them from reporting such incidents (Elghossain et al., 2019).

Central Africa, particularly the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), experiences some of the most severe cases of GBV, largely driven by decades of armed conflict. Sexual violence is widespread, with reports of mass rapes used as a weapon of war to terrorize communities and assert control. Women and girls in refugee camps or displaced communities face extreme vulnerabilities, with limited access to protective

systems or justice. The absence of robust legal frameworks and the normalization of violence in these areas perpetuate a cycle of abuse. Additionally, humanitarian aid efforts often fall short of addressing the unique needs of survivors, leaving them without adequate medical care, psychological support, or legal recourse (Baaz & Stern, 2018).

These challenges underscore the need for a multi-faceted approach to address GBV across Africa. Legal reforms must be paired with community engagement to shift cultural attitudes that perpetuate violence. Providing survivors with access to justice, economic empowerment programmes, and comprehensive support services are essential steps toward reducing GBV, Baaz & Stern (2018). International cooperation and sustained advocacy are also critical to ensuring that survivors in conflict and post-conflict zones receive the protection and resources they need.

The diverse perceptions of GBV across Africa reflect its deeply rooted cultural and structural dimensions. In many regions, traditional gender roles and cultural practices perpetuate harmful attitudes toward women, making them more vulnerable to violence. For example, the normalization of child marriages and bride prices in some communities reinforces the idea of women as property, limiting their agency and increasing their exposure to abuse. At the same time, economic disparities often force women into dependence on abusive partners, compounding the cycle of violence (Baaz & Stern, 2018).

According to Baaz & Stern (2018), policy interventions and advocacy efforts across the continent are striving to address these challenges. For instance, several African countries have implemented legislative measures to curb GBV, such as the Domestic Violence Act in South Africa and Kenya's Protection Against Domestic Violence Act. Additionally, regional initiatives like the African Union's "Maputo Protocol" aim to promote women's rights and eliminate harmful practices. However, the enforcement of these laws remains inconsistent, and cultural resistance often hinders their effectiveness.

Educational programmes and community-based interventions have shown promise in shifting perceptions and reducing GBV. Initiatives that engage men and boys in discussions about gender equality and respect for women have been particularly impactful, as they challenge traditional notions of masculinity and encourage behavioural change. Similarly, providing safe spaces and support networks for women helps survivors rebuild their lives and empowers them to speak out against violence (Baaz & Stern, 2018).

Despite these efforts, the fight against GBV in Africa faces significant obstacles, including inadequate funding, weak institutional capacity, and persistent societal stigmas. Achieving meaningful progress requires a multi-faceted approach that integrates legal reforms, education, and economic empowerment for women, Baaz & Stern (2018). Furthermore, addressing the root causes of GBV necessitates a cultural shift that challenges patriarchal norms and promotes gender equality as a societal value.

Perceptions of GBV in Africa are shaped by a complex interplay of cultural, economic, and social factors. While progress has been made through legislative reforms, educational initiatives, and grassroots activism, much work remains to be done (Baaz & Stern, 2018) Addressing GBV effectively requires a holistic approach that not only provides immediate support to survivors but also tackles the underlying structural and cultural issues that perpetuate violence. By fostering a culture of respect and equality, African societies can create safer environments where women and girls can thrive free from violence.

Studies from North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey, Serbia, Kosovo, and Albania on public perception of GBV are overwhelming, as most people assume that there is always a reason why violence occurs and is present in different communities (UN, 2018). These studies were conducted by United Nations (UN) Women in 2018, and the results show that in Turkey, more than half of the respondents consider men to be naturally violent. This belief further perpetuates violence against women by portraying violence against women (VAW) as an inevitable by-product of biology rather than a result of social structure that systematically exclude and discriminate against women and, by making excuses or justifications for men who commit acts of violence (UN, 2018).

In Serbia, key findings show that, although few, men are more supportive of justifications for violence against women, including myths such as, ‘some women like to be beaten’ (UN, 2018). Results from North Macedonia show that a significant percentage of respondents have beliefs that justify violence against women (UN, 2018). Respondents showed relatively strong support for statements that justify violence against women and blame female victims of violence. A report by UN Women (2018) revealed concerning levels of support for gender-based violence myths, particularly in Serbia, where almost half of men and 40% of women held the belief that some women like being beaten. These beliefs reflect a normalization of GBV within a society, which may contribute to victim-blaming and societal tolerance of violence against women. This finding highlights the

pressing need for interventions that challenge pervasive cultural norms and societal attitudes that condone GBV, particularly in countries where these attitudes are deeply entrenched.

Another important finding indicates that women suffer from violence in relationships (UN, 2018). According to a survey conducted by the Southern African Development Community (SADC), "More than a quarter of surveyed men (28%) and a fifth of surveyed women (21%) believe that women should not seek police help in violent situations" (SADC, 2021, p. 2). Furthermore, the survey found that "a similar proportion of men and women (24% and 23%, respectively) agree that women should accept violence for the sake of 'the family'" (SADC, 2021, p.3). Another finding shows that beliefs that support gender norms and traditional beliefs aimed at justifying and reducing violence against women are intrinsically linked (Public Perceptions of Gender Equality and Violence Against Women, 2018). According to the UN Women Global Database on Violence against Women (2018), deeply rooted patriarchal norms and values create an environment where violence against women is seen as acceptable and justified, creating a vicious cycle of inequality and abuse. These deeply entrenched beliefs and attitudes reinforce each other, perpetuating a culture of violence against women and hindering efforts to prevent and respond to GBV (UN Women Global Database on Violence against Women, 2018). Seeing men as the legitimate holders of power over women encourages men to use physical and non-physical violence to try to exercise that power. As with other countries in the region, respondents from North Macedonia supported the view that "man's nature is violent", an excuse that seeks to portray male violence against women as normal and inevitable (Public Perceptions of Gender Equality and Violence against Women, 2018).

Findings from Bosnia and Herzegovina show a significant percentage of respondents have beliefs that justify violence against women (Public Perceptions of Gender Equality and Violence Against Women, 2018). These beliefs and myths lessen the perpetrators' responsibility and place responsibility and blame on the victims of violence. They also believe that beliefs that support gender norms and traditional beliefs that justify and reduce violence against women are intrinsically linked. These beliefs and attitudes are mutually reinforcing, and violence against women cannot be erased until women are seen and treated as equals with men. The view of men as the legitimate holders of power over

women encourages men to use physical and non-physical violence in their efforts to realise this right (Public Perceptions of Gender Equality and Violence Against Women, 2018).

In Albania, a significant proportion of respondents believe in justifying and minimising the impact of violence against women (UN, 2018). These beliefs and myths reduce perpetrators' responsibility and place responsibility and blame on victims of violence. One notable example is that 1 in 3 men surveyed and 1 in 4 women surveyed agree that being unfaithful is a "good reason" for a male partner to hit their partner. 22.8% of surveyed men and 17.0% of surveyed women also believe that even suspicion of infidelity is a "good reason" for a man to hit his partner (UN, 2018). The perpetuation of gender norms that legitimize violence against women is closely entwined with the entrenched nature of traditional beliefs and social norms that sustain these attitudes.

The acceptance of violence against women as an integral part of cultural and social norms serves to reinforce patriarchal power dynamics and maintain a status quo that privileges male dominance and undermines women's autonomy, contributing to the ongoing cycle of GBV. These beliefs and attitudes are mutually reinforcing, and violence against women cannot be erased until women are seen and treated as equals with men (Mannell & Hawkes, 2017). Seeing men as the legitimate holders of power over women encourages men to use physical and non-physical violence to try to exercise that power. Gender-based violence is considered a private issue that needs to be addressed within the family. A percentage of men and women surveyed agree that women should not ask for help from the police, while 22.6% of men surveyed and 16.5% of women surveyed believe that outsiders should not intervene in a domestic violence situation.

Research has demonstrated a significant association between experiences of physical or sexual violence and increased vulnerability to HIV infection. A study conducted by Jewkes et al. (2005) found that "women who experience physical and/or sexual violence are 1.5 times more likely to contract HIV" (Jewkes et al., 2005, p. 255). This heightened risk is attributed to the fact that violence often leads to a lack of power and control over sexual decision- making, increasing the likelihood of engaging in risky sexual behaviours. People from stigmatised groups, including LGBTQIA+, sex workers, and migrants, are particularly vulnerable to violence against them because they may not be able to access individual support networks, service providers, or health care services (Mannell & Hawkes, 2017).

Studies have consistently demonstrated that physical and sexual abuse are associated with profound negative mental health consequences, including elevated rates of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, substance use disorders, and suicidal ideation (Estefan et al., 2016). However, emerging research is beginning to shed light on the significant health consequences of other forms of violence, including emotional abuse and controlling behaviours, which are often dismissed as "lesser" forms of abuse.

3.5 CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF GBV

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a multifaceted global crisis deeply rooted in structural inequalities, social norms, and systemic barriers. Its causes span individual, familial, community, and societal levels, intertwining with cultural traditions, economic pressures, and political instability, World Bank (2019). At the heart of GBV is the unequal distribution of power between genders, where entrenched patriarchal ideologies perpetuate male dominance and restrict women's autonomy. Research reveals that these dynamics are exacerbated by factors such as low levels of education, childhood exposure to violence, early and forced marriages, and substance abuse, particularly alcohol. A husband's excessive alcohol consumption, for example, increases the risk of intimate partner violence (IPV) fivefold, highlighting the interplay between individual behaviours and systemic challenges (World Bank, 2019).

Cultural acceptance of GBV remains a major barrier to eradication. In regions like Guinea, Mali, and Timor-Leste, studies show that societal norms justify violence for reasons as trivial as burning food or leaving home without informing a husband. These attitudes are internalized not just by men but also by women, with some surveys indicating that women in such contexts are 45% more likely to experience IPV when they themselves agree with these justifications.

This normalization of abuse reinforces cycles of violence, making it a deeply entrenched social issue (World Bank Gender Data Portal, 2022). Economic conditions further complicate the picture. Poverty and unemployment can exacerbate tensions within households, increasing the likelihood of IPV. Additionally, women in polygamous marriages or those married before age 18 face an elevated risk of violence due to the lack of power and agency in these unions (WHO, 2018).

Conflict and displacement introduce unique vulnerabilities. In war-torn regions, GBV is often used as a weapon of war to terrorize communities and subjugate populations. In places like Liberia and Colombia, forcibly displaced women face significantly higher risks of IPV compared to those in stable settings. Displacement camps, which are often overcrowded and poorly policed, expose women and girls to heightened risks of sexual violence. Such settings often lack the resources to provide adequate protection or justice, further entrenching survivors' vulnerabilities (World Bank, 2022). Beyond conflict, instability due to natural disasters or economic crises can also increase the prevalence of GBV, as societal structures weaken and opportunities for exploitation grow.

The consequences of GBV are devastating and multifaceted, impacting survivors' physical, mental, and socioeconomic well-being. Physically, survivors may suffer injuries ranging from bruises to severe trauma, as well as long-term health complications such as chronic pain, disability, and reproductive health issues. IPV is also a leading cause of maternal mortality in some regions, further highlighting its public health implications. Mental health consequences, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), are pervasive, affecting survivors' quality of life and ability to participate fully in society. Children exposed to GBV are particularly vulnerable, with evidence suggesting that boys who witness violence are more likely to become perpetrators, while girls are at greater risk of becoming victims in adulthood. This perpetuates a cycle of violence that spans generations (WHO, 2018).

The economic toll of GBV is staggering. Survivors often face barriers to employment due to physical and psychological trauma, while health-related costs and reduced productivity place additional burdens on households and national economies. It is estimated that GBV- related losses can cost countries up to 3.7% of their GDP, exceeding what many nations allocate to critical sectors such as education (World Bank Gender Data Portal, 2022).

Moreover, the social costs, including stigma and ostracization, further isolate survivors and limit their access to support systems. Globally, the prevalence of GBV remains alarmingly high, with 30% of women experiencing physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia report the highest rates, at 33% and 35%, respectively, though underreporting is a significant issue. Adolescent girls aged 15–19 are particularly vulnerable, with one in four in relationships reporting IPV. Non-partner sexual violence (NPSV) also affects a significant number of women globally, with 19% of women in

Australia and New Zealand and 15% in North America reporting experiences of such violence.

However, these figures likely underestimate the true scope of GBV, as survivors often fear retaliation, societal judgment, or inadequate legal protections, particularly in patriarchal societies (WHO, 2018; World Bank, 2022). Fawole et al. (2005) and Ilika (2005) conducted research among young people, revealing that they considered rape to be the primary form of GBV and a crime due to its violation of human dignity, infringement on fundamental rights, and risks of unintended pregnancy and HIV/AIDS transmission. However, the findings also highlighted a troubling perception among young respondents that forced sex from a partner or friend did not constitute rape. This misconception reflects broader societal attitudes that may contribute to the denial of marital rape among young men (Haj-Yahia & Bargal, 2015). Additionally, Haj- Yahia and Bargal (2015) identified low income, frustration from inadequate education, and rural residency as risk factors that contribute to men's use of violence as a means of conflict resolution. These findings underscore the need for interventions targeting economic and social marginalization, which often exacerbate violent behaviours.

Darj et al. (2017) explored young men's perceptions of GBV, uncovering troubling attitudes about gender roles and violence. Their study found that young men often attributed GBV to factors such as women's dress or environment. For example, violations of perceived dress codes, like wearing a mini skirt, were seen as provocations that increased the likelihood of abuse. Male participants expressed contradictory attitudes—acknowledging the incompatibility of patriarchal norms with egalitarian gender roles but still maintaining traditional views of male dominance within households. These findings highlight the urgent need to challenge harmful gender norms through education and awareness campaigns.

Witnessing domestic violence during childhood has significant long-term impacts. Studies by Kitzmann et al. (2003) and Chandra et al. (2012) revealed that children exposed to GBV are more likely to experience symptoms of PTSD, psychological maladjustment, and a greater propensity for violent behaviours in adulthood. Gomez (2015) further emphasized how traditional gender roles perpetuate violence by socializing women to accept subservience and prioritize household responsibilities while encouraging men to assert dominance. Such social conditioning reinforces harmful patterns of behaviour and limits opportunities for transformative change.

In post-apartheid South Africa, GBV intersects with broader social challenges such as poverty, crime, and educational disruption. Gang activities in some communities create environments of fear and insecurity, hindering students' academic achievement and commitment. This reflects a broader pattern where GBV and crime undermine efforts to provide safe and nurturing spaces for learning (Clarens, 2017; Ntege, 2013). Additionally, Mosavel et al. (2012) found that young boys often felt entitled to reciprocation for material support they provided to girls, fostering toxic attitudes that can escalate into violence if expectations are unmet.

Addressing GBV requires comprehensive strategies that tackle its root causes and effects. Efforts must prioritize education to challenge harmful gender norms, strengthen legal frameworks to protect survivors, and ensure access to justice. Community-basedprogrammes that involve men and boys in GBV prevention have shown promise in shifting societal attitudes (Minerson et al., 2011). Economic empowerment initiatives targeting women, such as microfinance programmes and vocational training, can reduce their economic dependence, enabling them to leave abusive situations. In conflict and post-conflict settings, humanitarian organizations must prioritize GBV prevention, provide psychosocial support, and establish mechanisms to hold perpetrators accountable (World Bank, 2019).

Ultimately, the fight against GBV is a collective responsibility requiring sustained advocacy, international cooperation, and investment in prevention and response efforts. While progress has been made, the persistence of GBV underscores the need for systemic changes that empower survivors, challenge harmful norms, and ensure justice for all.

3.6 PERCEPTIONS ON THE INCLUSION OF BOY CHILDREN IN GBV PROGRAMME

A review of literature on gender-based violence (GBV) interventions reveal an evolving paradigm that increasingly emphasises the inclusion of men and boys as critical stakeholders in addressing the issue (Jewkes & Morrell, 2011; Nyandwi et al., 2018; Salter et al., 2016). This approach, commonly referred to as "engaging men and boys," reflects a growing recognition of the importance of gender-transformative programmes to challenge patriarchal norms and values that underpin GBV (Pulerwitz et al., 2012). The inclusion of boys in GBV awareness programmes is particularly pertinent in Gauteng North, where

patriarchal structures and cultural norms significantly influence gender relations (Crabtree 2020).

The Role of Boys in Gender Transformative Programmes Gender-transformative approaches aim to address the root causes of GBV by challenging harmful gender norms and promoting positive masculinities. These approaches go beyond addressing symptoms, instead targeting the structural and cultural drivers of inequality and violence. Evidence suggests that involving boys in such programmes can lead to meaningful changes in attitudes and behaviours, contributing significantly to the prevention of GBV.

Programmes that promote equitable and non-violent attitudes have been shown to reduce the perpetration of violence, increase empathy, and foster support for gender equality (Morrell & Jewkes, 2017; UN Women, 2017). These interventions equip boys with critical thinking skills, enabling them to question societal stereotypes and embrace alternative models of masculinity that prioritize respect, cooperation, and equality.

Effective gender-transformative programmes often combine educational components with experiential learning. Initiatives like Program H in Latin America and Sonke Gender Justice in South Africa have shown success in reshaping boys' perceptions of masculinity by engaging them in discussions, role-playing activities, and community projects that challenge traditional gender norms. Such programmes also emphasize the importance of positive role models, exposing boys to narratives of men who embody empathy, non-violence, and mutual respect in relationships (Barker et al., 2010; Jewkes et al., 2015). This approach not only reduces violence but also improves boys' mental health and relationship quality, highlighting the holistic benefits of gender equity.

In Gauteng North, such initiatives are critical for addressing the complex interplay of socio-economic factors and cultural norms that shape boys' understanding of gender roles. Many boys in the region grow up in environments where violence is normalized, often due to exposure to gang activities, economic hardship, and fragmented family structures. These conditions create a fertile ground for toxic masculinities, making it imperative for GBV awareness programmes to provide alternative narratives and mentorship opportunities.

Community-based interventions that integrate local cultural contexts can help boys navigate these challenges, offering them constructive outlets for frustration and pathways toward positive identity formation (Mosavel et al., 2012; Jewkes et al., 2015). Moreover,

integrating gender-transformative approaches into schools can amplify their impact. School-based initiatives such as Coaching Boys into Men have demonstrated success in engaging boys through sports and mentorship, fostering values of respect and accountability. This method is particularly effective in building peer-led movements, as boys are more likely to adopt new norms when they see them modelled by their peers (Miller et al., 2012). Involving teachers, coaches, and community leaders in these programmes ensures sustainability and provides boys with consistent reinforcement of equitable values.

By including boys in these initiatives, stakeholders can foster a generation of young men committed to eradicating GBV and promoting gender justice. These programmes not only benefit the participants but also have a ripple effect, influencing families, peers, and communities. To maximize their impact, it is essential for stakeholders to invest in long-term funding, robust evaluation mechanisms, and collaborative partnerships across sectors. Addressing GBV is not only a moral imperative but also a practical necessity for creating safer, more equitable societies.

3.6.1 Global Insights on Boys' Perceptions Of GBV

Research from other contexts offers valuable insights into boys' perceptions of GBV and their potential role in prevention efforts. For instance, Smith's (2018) study on Canadian Indigenous communities found that while boys recognised the prevalence of violence, they often struggled to articulate their experiences and emotions due to limited understanding and language around GBV. This highlights the need for educational interventions that equip boys with the knowledge and vocabulary to engage meaningfully in discussions about GBV.

In Rwanda, Nyandwi et al. (2018) demonstrated the effectiveness of culturally sensitive interventions that involved traditional leaders and integrated local values and religious teachings. These programmes successfully promoted positive masculinity and reduced GBV by contextualising prevention efforts within the social and cultural realities of the community. Similarly, Jewkes et al. (2017) found that boys in the United States, despite holding harmful gender stereotypes, were receptive to educational interventions that challenged these beliefs and provided comprehensive information about GBV. These findings underscore the importance of early intervention and culturally relevant approaches in shaping boys' attitudes toward gender equality.

Boys' perceptions of gender-based violence (GBV) are heavily influenced by cultural norms, societal expectations, and early exposure to rigid gender roles. In many contexts, violence is normalized as a trait of masculinity, leading boys to view it as an acceptable means of asserting dominance or resolving conflicts. For instance, studies in Uganda have shown that boys often associate GBV with violations of gender norms, such as women dressing provocatively or failing to fulfil household responsibilities, reflecting deep-seated patriarchal values (Darj et al., 2017). Peer pressure also reinforces these attitudes, as boys learn to equate control over women with social status. This dynamic is particularly evident in South Africa, where gang-influenced communities encourage violent behaviours that are framed as expressions of masculine authority (Mosavel et al., 2012).

Misconceptions about consent further complicate boys' understanding of GBV, particularly in settings where patriarchal values dominate. Research in Nigeria reveals that young boys often fail to recognize forced sex within relationships as a form of rape. This stems from societal attitudes that regard women as subordinate, with their autonomy being secondary to male desires or expectations (Fawole et al., 2005). The concept of marital rape, for instance, is widely dismissed in many patriarchal cultures, with men viewing marriage as granting implicit and perpetual consent to sexual relations. Such beliefs are reinforced by cultural narratives, family teachings, and inadequate legal frameworks, which fail to protect women or acknowledge their agency in intimate relationships.

Additionally, regional factors significantly influence boys' perceptions of GBV. In rural parts of India, where traditional gender roles are rigidly enforced, economic deprivation and poor educational attainment create environments in which frustration and aggression are expressed through violence against women (Chandra et al., 2012). Boys growing up in such settings often internalize the idea that men have a right to discipline or control women, especially in contexts where masculinity is closely tied to dominance. These perceptions are further exacerbated by peer dynamics, where boys may pressure one another to conform to behaviours that reinforce their status as "manly," often at the expense of women's safety and dignity.

To challenge these harmful views, interventions must address the cultural, educational, and economic underpinnings that shape boys' attitudes. Schools and community programmes are pivotal in introducing concepts of consent, respect, and gender equality at an early age. Media campaigns that question toxic masculinity and highlight

positive male role models can also shift societal attitudes, particularly in communities where traditional views are deeply entrenched. Legal reforms and stricter enforcement of GBV-related laws are equally critical, as they send a strong message that violence, including sexual violence in relationships, is unacceptable. By addressing these interconnected factors, societies can work toward dismantling the misconceptions that perpetuate GBV and fostering healthier, more equitable attitudes among boys (Chandra et.al, 2012).

Efforts to address these perceptions have shown promise. Initiatives such as the "Men Engage Alliance" are working globally to involve boys in educational programmes that challenge harmful stereotypes and promote gender equality. By fostering discussions on respect, healthy relationships, and non-violence, these programmes are gradually shifting attitudes and encouraging boys to reject the norms that perpetuate GBV. Such interventions underscore the importance of targeting cultural, social, and economic factors to transform perceptions and break cycles of violence (Darj et al., 2017).

3.6.2 Contextualising GBV Awareness Programmes in South Africa

South Africa presents unique challenges and opportunities for the inclusion of boys in GBV awareness programmes. The country's history of apartheid and entrenched socio-economic inequalities has fostered conditions where violence is pervasive, exacerbated by systemic poverty, unemployment, and substance abuse. These structural challenges, combined with patriarchal gender norms, have contributed to high rates of GBV, with South Africa frequently reported as having some of the highest prevalence rates globally (Jewkes et al., 2009; UN Women, 2020).

Organizations such as Masimanyane Women's Support Centre have played a pivotal role in addressing GBV by focusing on the empowerment of women and girls (Sheba-Feminine, 2021). Their efforts emphasize legal advocacy, psychosocial support, and community education, creating a robust framework for survivor-focused interventions.

However, there is a growing recognition that sustainable change requires the active involvement of boys and men in these efforts. Gender-equitable interventions cannot succeed without addressing the societal norms and behaviours perpetuated by men, which are central to the cycles of violence.

The inclusion of boys in GBV awareness programmes in Gauteng North is particularly critical given the region's socio-cultural dynamics. In Bronkhorstspruit,

traditional gender roles remain prevalent, particularly in rural and township communities, where women are largely expected to manage households while men are regarded as primary providers (Statistics South Africa, 2022). Gender-based violence continues to be a serious concern in the area, mirroring national trends. This has led to the growth of local advocacy initiatives, community dialogues, and awareness campaigns led by schools, churches, and civil society organisations (Commission for Gender Equality [CGE], 2020). Bronkhorstspruit's gender landscape reflects broader socio-cultural transitions in South Africa—a space where tradition intersects with modernity and inequality challenges aspirations for inclusive growth. Continued investment in youth development, gender justice, and social cohesion is vital for a sustainable and equitable future. Many boys grow up in environments where violence is normalized, either through exposure to domestic violence or gang-related activities. Without intervention, these experiences reinforce harmful notions of masculinity, which often manifest as dominance, aggression, and control. GBV awareness programmes tailored for boys provide a platform to counter these influences, offering a safe space to reflect on personal beliefs and behaviours. Through structured activities such as dialogues, mentorship, and community service, boys can learn about the impact of GBV, develop empathy, and gain skills to advocate for gender equality (Barker et al., 2010).

Targeting boys at an early age is a crucial strategy for disrupting the intergenerational transmission of violence. Studies show that children who witness domestic violence are more likely to perpetuate or experience violence in adulthood (Kitzmann et al., 2003). By intervening early, programmes can help boys challenge internalized norms and foster healthier attitudes toward relationships. For example, school-based initiatives like Coaching Boys into Men have successfully leveraged mentorship by coaches to instill values of respect, accountability, and non-violence (Miller et al., 2012).

Moreover, GBV awareness programmes in South Africa have the potential to address intersectional issues, including race, class, and sexuality, which further complicate gender relations. Inclusive interventions can amplify the voices of marginalized groups, ensuring that the fight against GBV is not only a gender issue but also a broader social justice effort. Programmes like Sonke Gender Justice highlight how community-based approaches can address structural inequalities while fostering solidarity among boys and men to combat GBV collectively.

Incorporating cultural and regional specificity into these programmes is essential for their success. In Gauteng North, incorporating indigenous knowledge systems and engaging local leaders can make interventions more relevant and impactful. Similarly, partnerships between schools, community organizations, and law enforcement can strengthen the overall response to GBV and create supportive ecosystems for change as seen during the data collection process. The inclusion of boys in GBV awareness programmes represents a transformative approach to addressing the root causes of violence. By fostering critical reflection, promoting gender-equitable behaviours, and creating supportive environments, these programmes contribute to building a foundation for healthier gender relations and a more just society.

3.6.3 Addressing Knowledge Gaps and Stereotypes

Research highlights that boys often have a limited understanding of the complexities of GBV, with their knowledge shaped by societal norms, cultural stereotypes, and media representations that frequently trivialize or normalize violence (Chen et al., 2016). Such misconceptions may include viewing GBV as a private matter or perceiving women's roles as subordinate to men, which reinforces harmful attitudes and behaviours. These gaps in understanding make education a critical tool for prevention and the promotion of gender equity.

Educational interventions in Gauteng North should aim to address these knowledge gaps by equipping boys with accurate information about GBV, its root causes, and its far- reaching consequences on individuals and communities. These programmes must move beyond basic awareness to foster critical thinking, enabling boys to question the structural and cultural factors that perpetuate GBV. Topics should include the role of power dynamics, the impact of socio-economic inequalities, and the intersectionality of GBV with other forms of oppression, such as racism and xenophobia (Jewkes et al., 2015).

Moreover, addressing stereotypes that associate masculinity with dominance, aggression, and control is essential. Many boys grow up internalizing patriarchal beliefs that equate masculinity with physical strength and emotional stoicism, which not only harm their relationships with others but also limit their personal growth. Interventions can use participatory methodologies such as role-playing exercises, peer dialogues, and storytelling to challenge these norms. For instance, boys can be encouraged to reflect on scenarios where non-violent conflict resolution is modelled, fostering empathy and

understanding of the perspectives and experiences of women and girls (Barker et al., 2010).

Culturally contextualized approaches are critical for such programmes in Gauteng North, where diverse cultural norms and traditions influence gender perceptions. Collaborating with local leaders and leveraging indigenous storytelling methods can make interventions more relatable and impactful. Additionally, integrating GBV education into school curriculums ensures sustained engagement, targeting boys at formative stages in their development.

Studies also suggest that incorporating media literacy into GBV education can help boys critically evaluate the often-problematic portrayals of gender and violence in popular culture (Flood et al., 2009). By unpacking these narratives, boys can be encouraged to reject harmful stereotypes and instead embrace alternative masculinities that prioritize respect, collaboration, and equality. These educational efforts must be sustained and reinforced through supportive policies and community engagement. Boys who are exposed to consistent messages that value empathy, respect, and non-violence are more likely to internalize these values and act as advocates for gender justice in their families and communities.

3.6.4 Culturally Sensitive and Age-Appropriate Interventions

The effectiveness of GBV awareness programmes hinges on their ability to resonate with diverse audiences. Culturally sensitive and age-appropriate interventions are especially critical in regions like Gauteng North, where deeply rooted cultural norms and traditions significantly influence gender dynamics (Jewkes et al., 2015). By tailoring these programmes to align with local contexts, they can address community-specific challenges and foster greater acceptance and engagement.

Engaging traditional leaders and leveraging local values can greatly enhance the relevance and impact of GBV awareness efforts. Traditional leaders often hold significant influence in shaping community attitudes and behaviours. Collaborating with these leaders allows for the integration of culturally relevant messages into the interventions, making them more relatable and credible. For example, community dialogues involving both boys and elders can serve as a bridge for intergenerational learning, enabling young participants to critically engage with and challenge patriarchal norms while respecting

cultural traditions (Jewkes et al., 2015). These discussions can also provide elders with opportunities to reflect on and support progressive shifts in gender relations.

Partnerships with schools are another critical avenue for implementing age-appropriate GBV education. Schools provide a structured environment where boys can consistently receive positive messages about gender equality and respect from a young age. Integrating GBV awareness into the curriculum ensures that these lessons are reinforced throughout their educational journey. Activities such as role-playing, storytelling, and peer-led discussions can make the content more engaging and accessible, fostering empathy and critical thinking (Barker et al., 2010). Additionally, extracurricular initiatives like mentorship programmes can provide boys with positive role models who exemplify non-violent and equitable behaviours.

To ensure interventions are both culturally sensitive and age-appropriate, it is important to involve boys in the programme design process (Barker et al., 2010). By understanding their perspectives and incorporating their feedback, initiatives can address their specific concerns and interests while remaining aligned with community values. For instance, adolescent boys might benefit from discussions on navigating peer pressure, while younger boys may respond more positively to storytelling or interactive games that illustrate principles of respect and equality.

Furthermore, addressing the broader societal factors that influence boys' perceptions of GBV is crucial. This includes incorporating media literacy to help boys critically evaluate the often-toxic portrayals of masculinity in popular culture and social media (Flood et al., 2009). By equipping them with tools to deconstruct harmful stereotypes, these interventions can empower boys to advocate for healthier gender dynamics both within their communities and beyond. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation are essential to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of these interventions. Regular feedback from participants, educators, and community leaders can help refine the programmes, ensuring they remain culturally attuned and impactful.

3.6.5 The Importance of Male Role Models

Male role models hold significant influence in shaping boys' attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions of gender relations. In Gauteng North, where traditional norms often perpetuate rigid and patriarchal ideals, GBV awareness programmes can strategically utilize positive male figures—such as teachers, coaches, community leaders, and fathers—

to model and advocate for respectful and non-violent behaviours. These figures can inspire boys to challenge harmful gender norms by exemplifying empathy, equality, and accountability in their daily lives (Jewkes, Flood, & Lang, 2015).

Mentorship plays a vital role in this dynamic. Male role models can serve as mentors, providing boys with guidance as they navigate societal pressures, peer influences, and complex social dynamics. For example, structured mentorship programmes within schools or community centres can offer a safe and supportive space where boys can openly discuss gender issues and learn non-violent approaches to conflict resolution. Studies suggest that consistent exposure to positive male behaviours can significantly reduce boys' acceptance of violence as a means of asserting masculinity (Jewkes et al., 2015).

Programmes like Men as Partners, which have demonstrated success in other parts of South Africa, provide a strong foundation for adapting similar initiatives in Gauteng North. This programme focuses on engaging men as allies in the fight against GBV, emphasizing accountability and shared responsibility for fostering gender equity. When adapted to target boys specifically, such initiatives can integrate age-appropriate and culturally sensitive content that resonates with their experiences. Activities like role-playing, peer discussions, and storytelling can deepen boys' understanding of GBV and empower them to adopt behaviours that reject violence and promote mutual respect (Peacock & Levack, 2004).

The inclusion of male role models also addresses the lack of positive masculinity often depicted in mainstream media. By introducing boys to mentors who actively dismantle toxic masculinity and champion alternative forms of manhood, programmes can counteract stereotypes that equate masculinity with dominance and aggression. For instance, sports coaches who promote teamwork, empathy, and respect during training sessions can subtly yet effectively instill values that contribute to healthier gender relations (Ricardo & Barker, 2008).

Moreover, leveraging community leaders and local influencers as role models can amplify the reach and impact of these programmes. Religious leaders, for example, can contextualize messages of equality within faith-based teachings, while cultural leaders can reinterpret traditional practices to align with contemporary understandings of gender justice. Such approaches can resonate strongly in contexts like Gauteng North, where cultural and religious norms heavily influence social behaviour (Peacock & Levack, 2004).

Incorporating male role models into GBV awareness programmes not only provides boys with tangible examples of non-violent and equitable masculinity but also fosters a broader cultural shift toward collective accountability. This ensures that boys grow up in an environment where challenging harmful norms is supported and celebrated (Jewkes et al., 2015; Ricardo & Barker, 2008).

3.6.6 The Role of Civil Society and Policy

The inclusion of boys in GBV awareness programmes requires robust support from civil society and strong policy frameworks. Organisations like Masimanyane Women's Support Centre have made significant strides in addressing GBV through community-based interventions. However, to effectively integrate boys into these efforts, there is a pressing need for more targeted initiatives that acknowledge their unique needs and potential as agents of change (Sheba-Feminine, 2021). Civil society organisations play a pivotal role in implementing grassroots programmes that provide boys with safe spaces to discuss and challenge harmful gender norms while cultivating positive masculinities.

Policymakers also have a critical responsibility to institutionalise these efforts. South Africa's National Strategic Plan on GBV and Femicide (2020–2030) provides an overarching framework for addressing gender violence and has the potential to include more specific provisions for engaging boys in prevention initiatives. By allocating dedicated funding and resources to these programmes, the government can ensure their scalability and sustainability (Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2020). For example, the plan's Pillar 3, which focuses on prevention and social cohesion, can be expanded to incorporate education and mentorship programmes for boys that challenge patriarchal norms and advocate for gender equality.

Moreover, public-private partnerships can further enhance the reach and effectiveness of these programmes. Collaborations between government bodies, non-governmental organisations, and corporate stakeholders can provide the financial and logistical support necessary to implement large-scale initiatives. By aligning these efforts with existing educational policies, such as the Department of Basic Education's Comprehensive Sexuality Education framework, boys can be reached within school settings, where consistent and structured messaging about GBV can have a transformative impact (UNESCO, 2018).

Incorporating boys into GBV awareness programmes is not only a preventive measure but also a step toward creating inclusive and equitable communities. By embedding these interventions within national policy and civil society efforts, stakeholders can foster a more comprehensive approach to eradicating GBV while empowering boys to contribute meaningfully to this mission (Jewkes, Flood, & Lang, 2015).

The inclusion of boys in GBV awareness programmes represents a critical step towards achieving gender equality and eradicating violence in Gauteng North and beyond. By drawing on evidence-based practices and leveraging the principles of gender-transformative approaches, these programmes can equip boys with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to challenge harmful norms and promote positive change. The active involvement of boys in these efforts not only benefits women and girls but also contributes to the creation of a more just and equitable society.

3.6.7 Initiatives Meant To Fight GBV In Africa

This section will focus on the initiatives that are being taken to fight GBV in Africa. A comparative analysis across countries provides valuable insights into the successes and challenges of GBV interventions, shedding light on factors that may facilitate or hinder the effectiveness of policies and programmes. By exploring the experiences and perceptions of boy children, societal attitudes, and institutional responses in other countries, the South African context can be more comprehensively understood, informing the development and implementation of tailored, evidence-based strategies for preventing and addressing GBV. Furthermore, this analysis fosters knowledge sharing and cross-cultural collaboration, enabling the global community to learn from one another's efforts in the struggle against GBV.

Efforts to combat gender-based violence (GBV) in Africa are multifaceted, with initiatives tailored to the unique cultural, social, and economic contexts of different countries. South Africa has been at the forefront of addressing GBV, implementing both governmental and non-governmental interventions. The Victim Empowerment Programme (VEP), led by the Department of Social Development in South Africa, exemplifies the government's commitment to eliminating all forms of violence against women and children by providing support systems such as counselling, shelter, and legal aid (Department of Social Development, 2017). This initiative adopts a victim-centred approach, ensuring survivors receive holistic care addressing immediate safety concerns and long-term

recovery and empowerment. People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA), a South African non-profit organisation, has played a pivotal role in addressing GBV through transitional housing and long-term support for survivors.

Established to provide referral services and shelter to women experiencing domestic violence, POWA launched its shelter and transitional housing programme in 2009, empowering survivors to rebuild their lives (POWA, n.d.). Similarly, the National Institute for the Support and Safety of Women (NISSA), based in Lenasia, Johannesburg, focuses on preventing violence and equipping survivors with tools for independence, addressing root causes like economic dependency and social isolation (Sheba-Feminine, 2021). Despite these efforts, most initiatives have primarily targeted women and girls, with limited engagement of boys and men. Recognising this gap, recent programmes in South Africa are beginning to include boys in GBV awareness campaigns to challenge harmful norms and promote positive masculinity.

Jewkes et al. (2017) conducted a study in South Africa revealing diverse perspectives among boys regarding GBV, influenced by cultural norms, socioeconomic factors, and exposure to violence. While some boys adhered to traditional patriarchal norms condoning male dominance, others embraced progressive, gender-equitable views. These findings underscore the need for multidimensional, evidence-based interventions to challenge harmful misconceptions and promote positive attitudes toward gender equality among boys. Programmes that engage boys from a young age, challenging societal norms that perpetuate violence, are essential for instilling values of respect and equality.

Across the continent, other countries have implemented innovative approaches to address GBV, offering valuable lessons for South Africa. In Nigeria, educational programmes have been central to GBV prevention, targeting boys to challenge gender stereotypes and foster empathy. Ogunwale and Ndubueze (2020) found that many Nigerian boys exhibited limited awareness of the various forms of GBV, underscoring the need for interventions that provide accurate information and promote respect. Schools serve as critical platforms for these programmes, with the potential to transform societal attitudes by integrating GBV education into curricula. These interventions aim to equip boys with the knowledge and values needed to become advocates for gender equality.

Tanzania has made significant progress in engaging boys as allies in GBV prevention through initiatives led by the Children Dignity Forum (CDF). The organisation

promotes the active involvement of boys and men in eliminating gender stereotypes, adopting safe sexual and reproductive behaviours, and participating in GBV prevention efforts (Muunguja, 2018). The involvement of religious and community leaders in these initiatives has proven effective in shifting entrenched societal norms. Targeting adolescents, the programme instils long-term positive attitudes towards gender equality and respect. CDF also evaluates the effectiveness of its initiatives, refining its strategies based on observed changes in boys' attitudes and behaviours towards GBV.

In Uganda, the Gender, Labour, and Social Development Strategy highlights the critical role of men as decision-makers in promoting gender equality and empowering women. This policy prioritises interventions that engage men to reduce maternal mortality, address HIV/AIDS, and eliminate violence against women, framing these goals as essential components of national development (Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development [MGLSD], 2017). The strategy aligns GBV prevention with broader public health and economic objectives, ensuring widespread support and sustainability. Capacity-building programmes for men further equip them with the knowledge and skills to advocate for gender equality within their communities, fostering systemic change.

In Zambia, GBV prevention efforts adopt a family-centred approach, demonstrating how avoiding GBV can enhance family relationships, reduce incarceration risks, and promote overall well-being. Programmes facilitated by organisations like USAID highlight how GBV prevention fosters household harmony and economic stability, resonating with men's sense of responsibility towards their families (Alemu, 2015; USAID, 2015). By focusing on the practical benefits of non-violence, these initiatives appeal to men and boys, encouraging their active participation in fostering gender equality.

Comparative analysis of these initiatives reveals several key insights. First, cultural relevance is paramount. Tanzania and Rwanda, for instance, incorporate local cultural and religious values into GBV interventions, resonating with community norms while challenging harmful practices. Programmes aligned with cultural values are more likely to gain community acceptance and sustainability. Second, adolescence is a critical period for shaping attitudes and behaviours, as demonstrated in Nigeria and South Africa. Interventions targeting boys during this formative stage can have lasting impacts on their perceptions of gender and violence (UN Women, 2020).

Third, Uganda's policy-driven approach highlights the significance of integrating GBV prevention into national development goals, ensuring long-term sustainability and systemic change. Policies that embed GBV prevention into broader frameworks, such as public health or education, attract consistent funding and political support. Fourth, initiatives across Africa emphasise redefining masculinity, promoting respect and equality over dominance and control. This involves challenging entrenched notions of masculinity and fostering alternative models that are non-violent and supportive of gender equality. Finally, the integration of schools, community organisations, religious leaders, and government agencies enhances the reach and impact of GBV programmes. Multi-stakeholder collaboration enables a comprehensive approach, addressing the issue from various angles and ensuring well-coordinated interventions (UN Women, 2020).

Several initiatives across Africa aim to combat Gender-Based Violence (GBV) by addressing its root causes, supporting survivors, and advocating for stronger legal frameworks. One such effort is the African Union (AU) Campaign to End Child Marriage, which targets the widespread issue of child marriage, a significant form of GBV in many African countries. This initiative, established in 2015, aligns with the AU's broader agenda to end child marriage by 2030, particularly in countries like Niger, Mali, and Chad, where child marriage rates are high (African Union, 2015). Another critical global effort with a strong African presence is UN Women's HeForShe Campaign, which encourages men and boys to take an active role in ending GBV. The campaign has garnered support from African leaders and institutions, particularly in countries like South Africa and Uganda, aiming to reshape societal norms and promote gender equality (UN Women, 2020).

In addition, the African Network to End FGM has been instrumental in combating Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), a harmful practice affecting millions of African women and girls. The network's efforts are seen across countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia, where FGM prevalence remains high. Through community education, advocacy, and legal reform, this initiative seeks to eliminate FGM and protect women from violence (UNICEF, 2020). The Maputo Protocol (2003), which serves as a legal framework for protecting women's rights in Africa, plays a central role in addressing GBV. Adopted by many African nations, including South Africa and Senegal, the protocol advocates for the elimination of all forms of GBV, but implementation has faced challenges due to cultural norms and inconsistent enforcement (Kanhiya, 2025).

Nigeria's National Gender-Based Violence Referral and Response System is another example of a targeted initiative, which coordinates medical, legal, and psychological support for survivors of GBV across the country. This system is particularly important in urban centres like Lagos and Abuja, where GBV rates are higher, and it involves a collaboration between government bodies and NGOs to provide comprehensive services (UN Women, 2021). Similarly, South Africa's National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide, introduced in 2020, is a comprehensive national policy designed to tackle GBV at all levels. It focuses on prevention, protection, and provision of services to survivors, with specific initiatives being rolled out in Johannesburg and Cape Town, where GBV is a pervasive issue (South African Government, 2020).

In Kenya, the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign brings attention to GBV through community engagement and advocacy activities during the global 16-day period. This campaign is actively promoted in cities like Nairobi and Mombasa, where urbanization has exacerbated gender violence. It aims to mobilize citizens and institutions for change (Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, 2020). Additionally, the 50/50 Campaign in Uganda seeks to increase women's political participation, understanding that women's leadership can play a crucial role in creating policies to address GBV. This initiative focuses on areas such as Kampala and Gulu, where women's representation in leadership roles has traditionally been low (Uganda Women's Network, 2020).

Despite these successes, challenges persist in combating GBV across Africa. Deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and cultural practices often hinder the acceptance of gender equality initiatives. Resistance to change is particularly pronounced in communities where traditional gender roles are strongly upheld, requiring sustained advocacy and education to shift perceptions. Resource constraints limit the scale and sustainability of programmes, affecting their ability to reach all population segments. Many organisations rely on external funding, which is often unpredictable and insufficient to meet the demand for services. Additionally, the lack of standardised tools for monitoring and evaluation hampers the measurement of impact, particularly for interventions targeting boys. Without reliable data, assessing the effectiveness of programmes and identifying areas for improvement becomes challenging (Uganda Women's Network, 2020).

Addressing these challenges requires innovative solutions, such as public-private partnerships to enhance funding, and the development of robust monitoring frameworks to

assess the effectiveness of initiatives. Partnerships between governments, NGOs, and private sector actors can provide the resources and expertise needed to scale successful programmes. Investing in research and data collection is also critical for understanding the dynamics of GBV and designing evidence-based interventions. For South Africa, the experiences of other African countries offer valuable insights that can inform the development and implementation of GBV prevention strategies, particularly in regions like Gauteng North. Incorporating culturally sensitive approaches, engaging boys early, and fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration are critical for creating inclusive and effective programmes. Addressing resource constraints and investing in robust monitoring systems will also be essential for sustaining impact and driving long-term change. By learning from diverse approaches, South Africa can enhance its GBV prevention efforts and serve as a model for other countries in the region. Furthermore, integrating lessons from initiatives such as Tanzania's community-based programmes and Uganda's policy-driven strategies can help South Africa refine its approach and address the unique challenges it faces (Uganda Women's Network, 2020).

By fostering a culture of gender equality and engaging all members of society, including boys and men, Africa can make significant strides in reducing GBV. This requires a commitment to challenging harmful norms, providing support for survivors, and empowering individuals to become agents of change. With sustained effort and collaboration, the continent can move closer to a future free from gender-based violence.

3.7 THE INCLUSION OF THE BOY CHILD IN FIGHTING AGAINST GBV

The inclusion of the boy child in trying to combat GBV has been a subject of discussion and difficulty in many countries in Africa, including countries like Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Zambia, and South Africa, as well as most countries in the European Union (EU) (UN, 2019). Many tasks that have been carried out have been proven to be incapable of alleviating GBV, its effects, and the consequences thereof. Governments and NGOs have come to the belief that it isn't sufficient to simply train ladies on how to guard themselves and combat GBV, but that the ones who are deemed perpetrators should be additionally knowledgeable about the effects of their movements and actions in opposition to the alternative gender (Motse, 2019). As such addressing the struggles and challenges faced by the boy child is an important strategy in fighting GBV in African communities.

The Chief Director answerable for Social Inclusion and Partnerships in the Department of Education, Patricia Watson, in her presentation on the Cyril Ramaphosa Foundation`s first biennial Thari Programme Conference at Kopano Nokeng Conference Outdoor Bloemfontein, cited that the Department of Basic Education is of the view that the focal point has to shift closer to the boy children within the ongoing drive to combat the scourge of sexual violence (P. Watson, personal communication, September 7, 2019).

She highlighted that patriarchy impacts boys too and creates completely violent surroundings for a younger boy to shape his identity (P. Watson, personal communication, September 7, 2019). She stated that patriarchy leaves little or no room for boys to speak as sufferers of sexual abuse that may perpetuate violence in our society (P. Watson, personal communication, September 7, 2019). In concluding, she cited that the authorities have in the preceding years located fantastic consciousness in the lady toddler, developing packages for her, but now they realise that they have seen a decline in the overall performance of male beginners as a result (Motse, 2019). Thus, equal energy and attention must be directed at the boy child.

One of the key initiatives aimed at involving boys in the fight against GBV is the HeForShe Campaign by UN Women, which encourages men and boys to take active roles in challenging GBV. Launched in 2014, this global movement has gained significant traction in Africa, with male leaders, activists, and youth organizations mobilizing in countries like South Africa, Uganda, and Kenya. The campaign seeks to engage boys in redefining masculinity by emphasizing respect, empathy, and shared responsibility for combating violence (UN Women, 2020). This approach helps dismantle the traditional notions of masculinity that condone violence and replaces them with healthier expressions of male identity that do not rely on domination or aggression.

In addition, several African countries have integrated the involvement of boys into their national strategies to address GBV. South Africa's National Strategic Plan on Gender- Based Violence and Femicide (2020) emphasizes the need for boys and young men to be involved in efforts to end violence. The plan advocates educational programmes that promote gender equality and teach boys to reject violence as a means of resolving conflicts. Such programmes have been rolled out in schools and community settings, where boys are encouraged to participate in discussions and activities that focus on respect, consent, and healthy relationships (South African Government, 2020). Similarly, Uganda's 50/50 Campaign, which focuses on increasing women's political

participation, also highlights the importance of engaging boys in supporting gender equality and challenging violence , particularly in rural areas where traditional views on gender roles are more entrenched (Uganda Women's Network, 2020).

In Zimbabwe, as numerous improvement gamers and activists posit, the shift ought to now be from sixteen days to three hundred and sixty-five days of motion, and organisations like Padare Enkundleni Men`s Forum on Gender have driven for the engagement of boys and guys in preventing GBV, as they are in large part taken into consideration as the perpetrators of this scourge. Youth Interactive Writer (2021) Padare Enkundleni Men`s Forum on Gender Programmes Development and Fundraising Supervisor Thando Makubaza, in an address to the young people, cited that attracting younger boys within the combat in opposition to GBV, is a noble and strategic mission because it enables elevating enlightened gentlemen who regard ladies as equals with rights. Young boys need to be socialised to become companions within the combat in opposition to GBV and that making guys a part of this quit GBV campaign is a strategic and noble mission because as soon as guys respect the significance of gender justice and uphold the rights of ladies, we're on the proper path to equality and gender parity. In his presentation, he commented that instances have changed, and it is no longer the protection of ladies that should be the most effective, but boys should be equally educated and protected, as this helps in providing a balanced way of managing the prevalence of GBV. (Youth Interactive report, 2021).

In Zimbabwe again, the Step-Up Campaign seeks to engage boys and young men in ending GBV by addressing the root causes of violence and challenging traditional masculine norms. The campaign uses various platforms, including sports, music, and theatre, to involve boys in discussions about consent, power dynamics, and gender equality. It also focuses on educating boys about the impact of GBV on families and communities. This initiative is being implemented in several Zimbabwean cities, including Harare and Bulawayo, and collaborates with local NGOs to provide educational resources and conduct workshops (UNICEF Zimbabwe, 2021).

In Tanzania, gender-primarily based total violence (GBV) is a well-known hassle and initiative that is especially driven with the aid of guys, network individuals, and people who tolerate poor masculine practices (Muunguja, 2021). Ending violence within the groups is a duty of the complete network, and it is tremendous that boy children are energetic contributors and promoters of extrude to eliminate the modern status quo. On an

equal scale, it is also essential to fight not only the individual forms of violence but additionally the systemic types of violence, as violence does no longer arise in a vacuum but instead in a society that condones and encourages it (Muunguja, 2021).

An examination carried out in Tanzania confirmed that GBV is directed at ladies. However, ladies with the aid of guys have come up with push back strategies to fight conventional and cultural norms (patriarchal societies). In addition, their low financial repute (poverty) exposes them to perpetual male energy and manipulation (Muunguja, 2021). There is, likewise, sufficient proof that gender inequality and the ensuing financial deprivation and dependency are fueling GBV and abuse in Tanzania. For Tanzania to achieve its financial, social, and improvement desires, which include the SDGs 2030, individuals, authorities, and civil society want to construct an extra gender-equitable society with more healthy gender roles for women and men, the boy child and the girl child. To be effective, techniques must no longer be limited to empowering ladies but also ought to interact with boys. This will result in tremendous adjustments in boys' attitudes and practices, which can be frequently discouraged with the aid of poor notions of masculinity (Muunguja, 2021). In lots of groups, it is not unusual for ladies and children to be subjected to gender -primarily based total violence and different types of violence, which include harassment and dangerous conventional practices.

There have been some planned efforts to deal with this hassle. Nevertheless, the efforts have tended to use and prioritise the ladies themselves to the exclusion of men and boys. Records display that such a technique no longer produces preferred results as GBV keeps influencing many groups in Tanzania (Muunguja, 2021). Consequently, adjustments have been made such that gender transformative programmes now are taking into account the involvement of boys in fighting patriarchal norms, gender inequality, and GBV. There has been a variety of programmes like selling the fantastic engagement of fellows in fantastic parenting (Muunguja, 2021).

The Positive Masculinity Campaign in Uganda is another important initiative targeting boys and men to reduce GBV. This campaign works to challenge the harmful stereotypes of masculinity that contribute to GBV, such as the idea that men must be dominant or aggressive. The program emphasizes the importance of respect, communication, and emotional expression. It engages boys in schools and community settings, focusing on how to build non-violent relationships and prevent gender-based violence. In areas like Kampala and Mbarara, boys are encouraged to become ambassadors

for positive masculinity and lead discussions about respect and equality (Uganda Men's Network, 2020).

In Nigeria, educational initiatives targeting boys have become a cornerstone of GBV prevention. Research by Ogunwale and Ndubueze (2020) found that many boys in Nigerian schools lacked knowledge about the various forms of GBV, which contributed to the perpetuation of harmful gender stereotypes. This gap in understanding underscores the importance of integrating gender education into school curricula to raise awareness and challenge traditional views. In addition to educational reforms, several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have implemented programmes that engage boys in dialogues about respect, empathy, and non-violence. These initiatives have proved particularly effective when facilitated through peer groups, where boys can learn from one another and share personal experiences. One such initiative, the Boys' Education and Empowerment Project, focuses on teaching boys about the consequences of GBV and the value of mutual respect in relationships. This effort aims to foster empathy and inspire boys to become advocates for gender equality (Ogunwale & Ndubueze, 2020).

In India, the Men Against Violence and Abuse (MAVA) programme stands as a notable example of engaging boys in the fight against GBV. Through its schools and community-based initiatives, MAVA works to challenge traditional norms of masculinity and patriarchal values that often perpetuate violence. MAVA's approach involves boys in open discussions about their personal experiences with gender-based violence, allowing them to reflect critically on societal pressures to conform to aggressive or domineering behaviours. These workshops also teach boys about the importance of empathy and equality in their relationships with women. MAVA has expanded its efforts to engage male students in universities and other educational institutions, aiming to cultivate a new generation of young men who are conscious of gender issues and committed to ending violence. Studies indicate that MAVA's programmes have been successful in reducing harmful attitudes toward women and encouraging boys to intervene in violent situations (MAVA, 2019).

In the United States, the Coaching Boys Into Men (CBIM) programme has become an influential tool in engaging boys in GBV prevention. Developed by Futures Without Violence, this initiative involves high school coaches mentoring male athletes about respect, consent, and healthy relationships. Coaches, often seen as father figures or role models, play a pivotal role in shaping boys' attitudes toward violence and gender norms.

The programme has been shown to significantly reduce incidents of dating violence among boys who participate, as it empowers them to take responsibility for their actions and intervene when they witness harmful behaviours. By integrating lessons on respect and gender equality into sports training, CBIM capitalises on the influence of sports in boys' lives and fosters a culture of non-violence. The success of this model has prompted similar initiatives across various sports organisations and educational institutions, contributing to a national movement to engage boys in the prevention of GBV (Miller et al., 2012).

Australia's White Ribbon Campaign is another example of an initiative focused on engaging boys and men in GBV prevention. This campaign uses a combination of school-based education and community outreach to challenge harmful stereotypes and promote gender equality. The White Ribbon Campaign works with schools to deliver workshops that encourage boys to question traditional views of masculinity, such as dominance and control, and instead promote healthy relationships based on mutual respect. The campaign also involves boys in community events where they can publicly pledge to never commit or condone violence against women. Research has shown that these types of campaigns are successful in creating lasting behavioural changes, as boys who participate in the White Ribbon Campaign are more likely to intervene in situations involving violence and to speak out against sexist behaviours (White Ribbon Australia, 2021).

In the United Kingdom, the A Call to Men UK initiative works to engage boys and men in redefining masculinity and ending GBV. This programme aims to challenge ingrained ideas about manhood, which often link masculinity to dominance, aggression, and control. A Call to Men UK offers workshops and training to both boys and male adults to help them understand how these stereotypes contribute to GBV and how they can model respectful behaviours instead. The organisation's educational approach focuses on encouraging boys to be allies in the fight against GBV by empowering them to recognise the signs of abusive behaviour and to intervene when they witness it. By working with schools, sports teams, and community groups, this initiative has made significant strides in shaping the attitudes of young men and boys, fostering a future generation committed to equality and non-violence (A Call to Men UK, 2020).

3.8 CONCLUSION

The efforts to include boys in the fight against GBV across different countries share several key features, such as the importance of engaging boys at a young age, the influence

of role models, and the integration of these efforts into educational and community-based settings. Whether through school programmes, sports, or community outreach, the inclusion of boys in GBV prevention has proven to be an effective strategy in shifting societal attitudes toward gender equality. While challenges remain, such as resistance to change and resource limitations, the ongoing efforts to engage boys are making significant progress in transforming attitudes and behaviours across the globe.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research methodology applied to direct data collection and analysis concerning the inclusion of the boy child in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) awareness programmes in South Africa. It provides a detailed explanation of key methodological elements such as the research paradigm, approach, and design, as well as the methods and procedures used for data collection and analysis. Additionally, the chapter outlines the sampling techniques employed and concludes with a discussion of the study's ethical considerations and identified limitations.

4.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM: THE INTERPRETIVIST PARADIGM

This study is grounded in the interpretivist paradigm as both its research approach and framework, aiming to explore social phenomena by examining the meanings and interpretations provided by the individuals involved (Creswell, 2016). This paradigm is based on the belief that reality is socially constructed, with people's experiences and perceptions shaping how they understand their environment (Easterby et al., 2017). A key strength of using this paradigm lies in its emphasis on revealing the subjective meanings and personal interpretations individuals associate with their experiences.

As such, it uses qualitative research tools which are less structured and allow for the exploration of subjective experiences. Saunders et al. (2012) comment that this approach recognises that individuals' experiences are shaped by their cultural, historical, and social contexts, and seek to understand how these contexts influence their interpretations and meanings.

Within this study, the interpretivist paradigm was particularly suited as it enabled a thorough exploration of the lived experiences and perceptions of boys aged 12–18 years, as well as programme implementers involved in GBV awareness initiatives. Through this paradigm, the researcher was able to uncover the personal meanings and interpretations that participants attach to their experiences within these programmes, gaining insight into how such understandings influence their views on the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness efforts. This approach supported the achievement of the study's aim, which was to explore perceptions surrounding the inclusion of the boy child in gender-based violence

awareness programmes within Gauteng North province, South Africa. Furthermore, it allowed the researcher to meet the study's specific objectives: to investigate how boy children perceive GBV, to examine their views on their inclusion in GBV awareness programmes, and to understand educators' perceptions regarding the involvement of boy children in these initiatives.

Through this approach, the researcher was able to generate a rich and nuanced understanding of the complex social phenomena surrounding GBV awareness programmes, and to identify the ways in which these programmes can be improved to better meet the needs of all stakeholders. This paradigm is known for allowing researchers to establish in-depth perceptions and experiences of individuals concerning a certain social phenomenon such as the inclusion of a boy child in GBV awareness programmes. This was particularly important because the researcher had no preconceived ideas on the subject matter, which provided room for an in- depth exploration on how the participants perceive the inclusion of a boy child in GBV awareness programmes.

4.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

According to Creswell (2019), a research approach serves as a blueprint that outlines the steps and procedures to be followed when collecting, interpreting, and drawing conclusions about a specific subject under investigation. In a similar vein, Patton (2023) explains that the research approach involves establishing an ideological framework designed to ensure full adherence to the requirements of producing knowledge that is accurate, objective, and credible. In this study, the chosen research approach was guided by the focus on exploring perceptions regarding the inclusion of the boy child in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) awareness programmes in South Africa.

This required adopting a qualitative research approach, which offers the flexibility needed to explore participants' perceptions and experiences regarding the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes. A qualitative approach is recognised as a naturalistic method of inquiry aimed at gaining a deep understanding of social phenomena within their real-life contexts (Neuman, 2013). It operates on the principle that social reality is subjective and is most accurately understood by gathering the perceptions, opinions, and lived experiences of those directly involved (Creswell, 2019). As Neuman (2013) points out, qualitative research primarily focuses on uncovering the "why" behind social phenomena. Creswell (2009) further emphasizes that this approach views human

beings as agents who create meaning, making it essential to engage them through open, reflective conversations in order to fully grasp the issues that affect them.

Concurringly, Koul (2019) avers that given that in qualitative research, social reality is socially engineered, the researcher is deemed an indispensable ingredient in the meaning making process. To this end, Creswell (2019) writes that the central ideology behind the qualitative research paradigm is hinged on the view that there are several versions of the truth, which constitute social reality according to different individuals. The approach underscores that people cannot be made to be bystanders in the creation of meaning regarding their issues – an argument that resonates with the interpretivist research paradigm discussed earlier (Gast, 2019).

In this study, the adoption of a qualitative research approach was both necessary and methodologically appropriate, as it enabled the collection and interpretation of participants' perceptions regarding the inclusion of the boy child in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) awareness programmes in South Africa. The qualitative approach afforded the researcher the flexibility to capture nuanced insights and to identify unanticipated factors that surfaced during the data collection process—elements that may have been overlooked within the confines of a more rigid quantitative framework. Furthermore, this approach facilitated direct engagement with participants within their natural environments, fostering richer, contextually grounded interactions. This, in turn, allowed for a comprehensive and in-depth exploration of the subjective experiences, beliefs, and interpretations participants held concerning the inclusion of the boy child in GBV programmes.

4.4 *RESEARCH DESIGN: THE CASE STUDY RESEARCH DESIGN*

Guided by the qualitative research approach, this study adopted a case study research design to direct both the collection and analysis of data. A research design serves as a structured framework that specifies the type of data to be collected and the instruments or methods to be employed in the study. As Kumar (2011) asserts, a research design offers clear provisions, guidelines, and strategic actions that the researcher follows in order to obtain data from the selected sample. In this context, the case study design was particularly suitable as it allowed for a focused, in-depth investigation into participants' perceptions and experiences regarding the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes.

Case studies are particularly appropriate when the researcher aims to gain a deep understanding of a phenomenon within its specific context. In this study, the focus was on exploring participants' perceptions regarding the inclusion of the boy child in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) awareness programmes in South Africa. This objective made the adoption of an intrinsic case study design especially relevant, as the research sought to uncover and interpret the experiences and viewpoints of participants specifically within the framework of the iNSPIRE programme.

The intrinsic case study, sometimes referred to as a descriptive case study, is aimed at describing, analysing, and interpreting a distinct phenomenon in detail (Yin, 2003, as cited in De Vos et al., 2017). This form of case study prioritises a comprehensive understanding of the case itself, delving into its unique context, underlying complexities, and the meanings attached to it. It is particularly valuable within the social sciences, where researchers investigate unique individuals, groups, organisations, or events to reveal deeper insights into human behaviour and societal processes. In this study, the intrinsic case study approach allowed for an in-depth, context-sensitive exploration of how boy learners and programme implementers experience and interpret the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes.

This design was important as it offered the researcher the opportunity to look at the perceptions among the participants concerning the inclusion of the boy child in GBV programmes on subjective and in-depth basis prioritising individual narrations of these experiences. Still on the justification of the case study design, Yin (2008) advances that when using case studies, data is collected and examined in the exact environment of the phenomenal occurrence, which validates the study at hand.

As a result, by using a case study research design, the researcher was able to generate first-hand information from participants in their natural setting or context. In addition, by using case study research design, the researcher was able to gather data that helped provide a detailed qualitative understanding of the dynamics, experiences, perceptions, beliefs and varied views of actual life scenarios concerning the inclusion of the boy child in GBV programmes in South Africa.

4.4.1 Population

The target population refers to all the members who meet the criteria specified for a research investigation (Alvi, 2016). This includes all individuals, families, groups,

organizations, communities, and events that participated in the study. The target population included high school boys who had undergone and completed seven dialogues offered by the Valued Citizens Initiative (VCI) in the iNSPIRE boys' programme in Bronkhorstspruit in the Ekangala area in Gauteng North between 2020 and 2022. The study targeted 4 schools in the area. These included Cultural High School, Ekangala Comprehensive School, Zithobeni High School, and Sthenjiwe High School. A total of 28 boy learners, that is 7 from each school were targeted to participate in the study. The reason for the chosen population was because of its accessibility and feasibility. The basis for participant selection was availability and willingness where the researcher scheduled interviews with learners taking into consideration their learning schedules

4.4.2 Sampling

A sample refers to a subset comprising a relatively smaller number of individuals drawn from a larger population for the purpose of investigation. Alvi (2016) conceptualizes sampling as the process of selecting a portion or fraction of an entire population, thereby constituting a representative segment chosen by the researcher to partake in a study. Fundamentally, a sample consists of carefully selected elements or units extracted from a clearly defined population. Cooper and Schindler (2009) define sample size as the specific subset of the population targeted for examination. They emphasize that, for a sample to serve as an accurate reflection of the broader population, the researcher must explicitly delineate the defining characteristics of the population, ascertain an appropriate sample size, and employ the most suitable sampling technique to select participants from the larger population pool.

The researcher used the purposive sampling technique to gather relevant information from the learners in different schools, and from programme implementers. According to Creswell (2013), purposive sampling facilitates the selection of informative respondents who enable the study to answer its research objectives. Therefore, purposive sampling was employed with key informants who are knowledgeable concerning the issue under study. Due to accessibility and feasibility, the sample size was positioned at 28 participants, where 28 were learners from the selected 4 schools and 4 were programme implementers at various levels.

The determination for this sample size was determined by the principle of saturation point. According to Flick (2004: 282), "Of course, it should not be forgotten here

that it is not 'sample size' that is the main criterion in qualitative sampling but 'case contrast', in other words, the possibility of identifying patterns employing multiple comparisons between deliberately chosen individual cases". For this study, since interactive sampling was utilised, the initial sample size changed because the saturation point was used to determine the ultimate sample size. As such, after interviewing 28 participants, the researcher realised that the information being sought was similar. This was due to the similarity of their experiences, attitudes, perceptions and opinions regarding the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes. It could also be because of the heterogeneity of the sample in terms of age, location, and livelihoods.

4.4.3 The Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion and exclusion criteria constitute critical parameters employed to ascertain the eligibility of participants for a research study. These criteria are instrumental in ensuring that the selected sample corresponds closely with the research objectives, thereby enhancing the relevance and generalizability of the study findings to the intended population. Inclusion criteria comprise a set of explicitly defined attributes that determine the suitability of individuals for participation in the research (Velasco, 2010). In the context of the study exploring perceptions regarding the inclusion of the boy child in gender-based violence (GBV) awareness programmes, carefully delineated criteria were applied to select a sample that accurately reflects the aims and scope of the investigation. The aim was to capture a diverse range of perspectives while ensuring that participants were directly relevant to the study's goals.

- **Inclusion Criteria**

` Inclusion criteria for this study involved purposefully selecting 28 boys or individuals who identify as male within the age range of 14—19 years old. This age group was chosen because it represents an important developmental stage, where perceptions of gender roles, relationships, and violence can be shaped or influenced. The participants were selected from four schools that have actively implemented the iNSPIRE programme. These schools were chosen because they provided a structured environment where GBV awareness initiatives were already in place, thus ensuring the participants' exposure to relevant content. Additionally, participants who had direct to GBV awareness programmes were included, as their unique experiential views could provide valuable insights into the negative effects of GBV. The study aimed to understand not just their awareness but also

how such programmes influence their perceptions of gender equality, violence, and respect for others.

Furthermore, the research included 4 programme implementers such educators who played a role in ensuring that the iNSPIRE change programme was delivered to the different schools. These stakeholders were key to understanding how the programme was rolled out, what content was emphasized, and the challenges faced in engaging boys in GBV awareness. The selection process involved including at least one individual from each school, ensuring that perspectives from various schools and regions were represented, and that the sample was diverse in terms of implementation experiences.

- **Exclusion Criteria**

On the other hand, exclusion criteria were used to determine which individuals are not eligible to participate in the study. For this research, exclusion criteria included excluding girls or individuals who do not identify as male, as the focus of the study was on the male experience and perceptions in relation to GBV awareness. Participants who fall outside the designated age range of 14—19 years old were also excluded because this age group was deemed most relevant for examining adolescent boys' responses to GBV awareness efforts. Moreover, individuals without prior exposure to GBV awareness programmes, such as the iNSPIRE programme, were excluded as they would not provide the required perspective on the impact or effectiveness of such initiatives.

Non-stakeholders, such as individuals who do not hold a relevant role in GBV prevention and awareness, were also excluded, as their involvement in the study would not contribute to understanding the specific perspectives needed for this research. Lastly, parents who were unable to provide informed consent or lacked the capacity to participate in the study due to cognitive limitations, or other reasons were excluded, ensuring that all participants could fully understand and engage in the research process. These criteria ensured that the study focused on the intended demographic and the most relevant individuals, maximizing the validity and reliability of the findings.

By applying these inclusion and exclusion criteria, the study was able to obtain a focused sample, which contributed to the clarity and relevance of the findings related to the perceptions of boys regarding GBV awareness programmes. These criteria helped streamline participant selection and ensured that the results would provide meaningful insights into the effectiveness and reach of such programmes.

4.4.4 Research Instruments

According to Arikunto (2010), A research instrument is employed as a facilitative tool for data collection. According to Ary (2010), the most prevalent instruments in qualitative research include observation, interviews, and document analysis. In this study, the researcher utilized interviews as a primary data collection method.

To address each unit of analysis effectively, two distinct interview guides were developed as research instruments. Bird (2016) defines an interview guide as a structured list of overarching topics and corresponding key questions that the researcher intends to explore during the interview. The use of an interview guide offers the advantage of instituting a systematic framework, thereby minimizing the risk of omitting critical questions or important details throughout the data collection process (Bird, 2016). Additionally, it lessens the possibility of bias because the format of the interview questions and the interview guide will be the same for all participants. The interview guide also has certain drawbacks, such as the possibility of bias on the part of the interviewees, who may know the format of the interview from their peers and thus give responses that may not accurately reflect their experiences.

4.4.5 Data collection

Data collection in this study was conducted using a cross-sectional design, indicating that data were gathered at a single point in time. To enhance the reliability, trustworthiness, and validity of the study's findings, methodological triangulation was employed. Creswell (2014) describes methodological triangulation as the integration of multiple data collection methods within a single study to corroborate findings. Consistent with this approach, the study utilized both in-depth interviews and key informant interviews as complementary data collection techniques. The subsequent sections provide a detailed overview of these specific methods and their associated instruments, accompanied by a rationale for their selection.

4.4.6 In-depth Interviews

This study employed in-depth interviews as a primary data collection method. Interviews are a qualitative research technique involving intensive, face-to-face engagement with one or a few participants to elicit detailed insights into their perspectives on a given topic (Rubin & Babbie, 2012). In-depth interviews are particularly appropriate when the research aims to explore participants' perceptions, beliefs, opinions, attitudes,

values, and lived experiences (Creswell, 2014). In this study, the interviews were conducted using a pre-established interview guide. Specifically, semi-structured in-depth interviews were carried out with selected learners who participated in the iNSPIRE programme, aiming to investigate their perceptions regarding the inclusion of the boy child in gender-based violence (GBV) awareness initiatives.

It is worth reiterating that in-depth interviews were crucial as research data collection for this study because of their many advantages. In-depth interviews enabled data collection from a wide range of participants, including those who were illiterate and might not have been able to engage if written methods were used (Rubin & Babbie, 2012). Furthermore, these interviews offered a high level of flexibility, allowing both interviewer and interviewee to seek clarification on points that were unclear (Creswell, 2009, as cited in Creswell, 2014). The format also allowed the researcher to follow up on emerging themes, which was crucial for gathering rich, dynamic information that might have been limited by other data collection techniques (Rubin & Babbie, 2012). Additionally, the interviews were conducted in English, as both parents and participants understood and felt comfortable communicating in this language, thereby preventing linguistic challenges that could have arisen with other methods (Creswell, 2009, as cited in Creswell, 2014).

To validate and enrich the data obtained from in-depth interviews, the study also employed key informant interviews. Although some scholars question the distinctiveness of key informant interviews as a separate data collection method, there is broad agreement that they constitute a form of in-depth interviewing (Flick, 2004). Ritchie and Lewis (2003) describe key informants as individuals whose social, economic, professional, or other societal roles grant them specialized knowledge about people, processes, or events that is more comprehensive, detailed, or privileged than that possessed by typical laypersons.

The selected key informants in this study were programme implementers selected for their experience and knowledge of GBV. The selected participants were deemed to have expert knowledge and experience regarding the role of the boy child in GBV programmes. In- depth interviews were pertinent in this study as they allowed the study to triangulate the views of the community members with those of service providers. More so, the in-depth interviews were deemed important because they added the richness of the data by providing an opportunity for the researcher to clarify some operational and technical issues surrounding the inclusion and participation of the boy child in GBV programmes, which

could only be done through GBV experts. The in-depth key informant interviews were conducted using a key informant guide, which served as a structured tool to assist the researcher throughout the data collection process. However, as new themes emerged organically during the interviews, additional questions related to these themes were incorporated dynamically to enrich the data gathered.

4.5 PRE-TEST OF RESERCH TOOL

Pre-testing is defined as the formal simulation of small-scale data gathering to detect actual issues with data collection tools, sessions, and procedures. Pre-testing is valuable because it can help identify flaws in survey variables as well as faults in cross-cultural language relevance and word ambiguity. According to Polit and Beck (2017), prior testing plays a crucial role in identifying instances where research protocols may not be adhered to or prove impractical, offering early insights into potential reasons for the failure of a primary research endeavour. In this study, a pre-test interview was conducted before the main data collection phase to establish the face validity of the research instrument. This process involved a peer review of selected items and questions within the interview guide. Evaluating the interview guide allowed the researcher to refine and adjust the questions where necessary, while the pre-test data helped in detecting and addressing potential issues that could affect the effectiveness of the data collection process.

To ensure the reliability of the interview guide, it was pretested with two learners from Ekangala High School and one for key informants. Information generated as part of the pre-test was analysed and used to improve the interview guide. In writing up the final report, these data were excluded. Conducting a pre-test is essential as it is used as a forerunner to assess and evaluate former and later processes of research, determining the feasibility of the research. It was collected at a chosen school, and the data were collected at any time that is the heads of the schools allowed for a few learners to come and meet with the researcher during study hours. Pre-examination of an interview guide also helped identify problems with the language, tone, structure, and design of the questionnaire also gives the research team a brief overview of the type of data they can expect at the end of the field investigation. The language used in the interview was localised, accommodating the diverse and multicultural South African community. Ideally, conducting a thorough culture test is essential in promoting the credibility of the study results.

4.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis, which is applicable to all activities in qualitative methodology, was used by the researcher to present and analyse qualitative data. Coding, according to Punch and Qancea (2014), is the process of associating names, labels, and tags with specific pieces of data. A qualitative data analysis technique called thematic analysis reads over a data set (such as the transcripts of in-depth interviews) and looks for patterns in meaning to derive themes. Thematic analysis involves an active, reflexive process in which the researcher's personal experience is crucial to extracting meaning from the data (Delve & Limpaecher, 2020).

The six steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) for performing a thematic analysis serve as guidelines for data analysis. Getting acquainted with the data is the initial step, which calls for the researcher to be completely immersed and actively involved in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To do this, the researcher must first transcribe the interactions, read and re-read the transcripts, and/or listen to the recordings. Initial thoughts ought to be written down. It is crucial for the researcher to have a thorough comprehension of the interaction's content and to be well-versed in all facets of the data. To understand all the responses from the boy learners, the researcher examined all the data that was gathered from them during the interview process. The researcher first engaged in an immersion process to become thoroughly familiar with the complete dataset, comprising all interviews conducted across the four selected high schools in Gauteng North. During this initial phase, the researcher documented notes and recorded preliminary impressions of emerging patterns and insights. This step served as a critical foundation for the subsequent stages of data analysis.

The researcher began finding preliminary codes, or the aspects of the data that seem intriguing and significant, after being comfortable with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher proceeded to systematically organise the data, ensuring it was arranged in a coherent and meaningful manner. This involved comparing, reviewing, and refining the initial codes, engaging in discussions around the identified codes, and making necessary adjustments before continuing with the analysis of the remaining transcripts. Throughout this process, the researcher carefully revisited existing codes, generated new ones where applicable, and modified those previously established. Initially, this coding was conducted manually using hard copies of the interview transcripts, marked with pens and highlighters. Bree and Gallagher (2016) outline the use of Microsoft Excel as a tool for coding and

theme identification; accordingly, the researcher supplemented manual coding by utilising Microsoft Excel for further organisation and categorisation. The third stage of the procedure marked the beginning of an interpretive analysis, where the researcher began examining the collected codes in-depth to identify underlying themes and patterns.

Relevant data extracts were grouped or divided based on broad concepts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the following stage, the researcher examined the themes that the boy learners repeatedly brought up while also sorting the data according to their applicability. The researcher looked at the different codes while examining them to see which one fits into a theme. The relationship between codes, sub-themes, and themes were hinted at in the researcher's cognitive process.

Following a more in-depth evaluation of the identified themes, the researcher made decisions on whether to merge, refine, separate, or discard initial thematic ideas, as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006). While each theme should be clearly distinct and easily differentiated from others, the data grouped within each theme must demonstrate internal coherence. This process involves two key phases: first, reviewing the themes in relation to the coded extracts, and second, assessing them against the entire data set to ensure consistency and relevance. This stage often leads to the development of a thematic "map," visually illustrating the relationships between themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this study, both the research question and the responses from boy learners across the four selected schools in Bronkhorstspruit guided this phase of analysis.

The themes and potential sub-themes contained within the data were "refined and defined" in the following stage (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher looked at the identified topics and further worked towards developing them by doing an ongoing analysis. The researcher then used vivid and persuasive examples that linked themes, research questions, and literature to turn her analysis into a readable piece of writing (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The report's presentation of the study's findings must persuade the reader of the report's value and accuracy. It must do more than just list the themes; it must present an analysis backed by data to answer the research question. Evidence from the interviews and questionnaires was empirical at this stage, as it was used to substantiate the study and support the themes generated from the data collected.

4.7 ESTABLISHING THE QUALITY OF THE STUDY RESULTS

4.7.1 Trustworthiness

The degree of confidence in the data, interpretation, and methods employed to assure the quality of a study is referred to as the study's trustworthiness or rigour (Pilot & Beck, 2014). Researchers should specify the protocols and practices required in each study for them to be considered by readers (Amankwaa, 2016). Although most professionals concur that trustworthiness is vital, disagreements about what exactly constitutes trustworthiness have been raised in the literature (Leung, 2015). Many qualitative researchers adhere to the standards set forth by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which will be the subject of this column.

Credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability are some of these characteristics. Later, authenticity was included (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). These criteria, as well as the typical practices, will be described. Not every technique is used in each study. Trustworthiness and validity are essential aspects of research methodology that ensure the reliability and credibility of study findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the context of the exploration of perceptions on the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes, it was crucial to address trustworthiness and validity to ensure the accuracy and meaningfulness of the research.

Trustworthiness refers to the extent to which the research findings can be considered credible and dependable. It establishes confidence in the integrity of the study and the trustworthiness of the data collected and analysed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To enhance trustworthiness, several strategies were employed.

Triangulation, which is the use of multiple data sources, such as interviews, focus groups, and observations, helps validate the findings by corroborating information from different perspectives (Cresswel, 2016). This method increased the reliability and credibility of the research that was used to gather data from the boy learners and key informants. Participant validation was considered in research involving participants in the research process. This was done by sharing the findings with them and seeking their feedback, which in turn enhanced trustworthiness. Participants verified the accuracy and interpretation of the findings, ensuring that their voices were accurately represented and adding credibility to the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Validity, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which a study measures what it intends to measure and accurately reflects the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). It ensures that the conclusions drawn from the research are accurate and meaningful. Several strategies were employed to enhance validity. The first thing that was looked at is validity. This means ensuring that the research instruments and measures that were used aligned with the research objectives and accurately capture the variables of interest clearly defining concepts to avoid ambiguity in collecting and Interpreting Results (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

4.7.2 Credibility:

Demonstrating that the research findings are plausible and supported by the collected data. This involves providing evidence of data saturation, using member checking, and conducting peer debriefing to validate the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was very important in ensuring that data collected is credible and that it was collected in conventional ways.

To improve credibility, the researcher collected data from multiple perspectives. This was done through both learners and facilitators as research participants. This strengthened the rigour and reliability of the study on the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes. This, in turn, enhanced the credibility and applicability of the research findings, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of perceptions and informing effective interventions in combating gender-based violence.

4.7.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency and stability of data over time and across varying research conditions (Polit & Beck, 2014). While it is conceptually similar to reliability in quantitative research, qualitative research recognises that the stability of research settings is influenced by the nature of the study itself. Procedures such as maintaining an audit trail through process logs and engaging in peer debriefings with a colleague are essential for ensuring dependability.

Process logs serve as a detailed record of all decisions and actions taken throughout the research process, including choices about participant selection and observational focus. Many qualitative scholars contend that once dependability is established, there may be no need to further demonstrate credibility. Nevertheless, if the

researcher distinguishes between these terms, dependability is seen as more closely aligned with reliability and credibility than with validity (Polit & Beck, 2014).

A data audit may occasionally be used to evaluate the validity of data. If the data set is rich and thick, a data audit can be done to see if the study situation relates to the auditor's situation, according to Polit and Beck (2014). This is not feasible without adequate specifics and background knowledge. In any case, it's critical to keep in mind that the goal is not to extrapolate outside the sample.

The concept of dependability is crucial when exploring perceptions of the inclusion of boys in gender-based violence (GBV) awareness programmes, as it ensured that the study's findings remain stable and consistent over time and across different contexts (Polit & Beck, 2014). Given that qualitative research in this context sought to understand the perceptions of boy learners and people who implemented the programme, maintaining a high level of dependability ensuring that the study accurately captured the nuances of how boys are perceived their inclusion in GBV awareness efforts.

To maintain dependability, the study on the inclusion of boys in GBV programmes included an audit trail documenting all decisions, processes, and actions taken during the research, such as the selection of participants, interview procedures, and observational strategies. This is particularly relevant since perceptions around the inclusion of boys in GBV awareness campaigns can be influenced by various cultural, social, and institutional factors. Process logs helped ensure that the research is transparent and replicable, allowing others to understand how and why certain conclusions were drawn.

Moreover, establishing dependability aligned closely with credibility in understanding how societal perceptions of boys' inclusion in GBV awareness campaigns are constructed. A data audit evaluated whether the data collected was sufficiently rich and comprehensive, helping to determine whether the findings are applicable to broader contexts where similar GBV programmes takes place.

Overall, ensuring dependability in studying the inclusion of boys in GBV awareness programmes provided a robust foundation for addressing the lack of their involvement in such initiatives, offering insights into how boys can be effectively integrated into efforts aimed at combating GBV and supporting the development of more inclusive and effective programmes.

4.7.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is the degree to which findings may be reproduced and are neutral (Polit & Beck, 2014). Methods include keeping track of an analytical audit trail and methodological log memos. The decisions they make and the developments in their analysis are all carefully documented by qualitative researchers. These notes may be evaluated by a colleague in some studies, or they might be the subject of peer-debriefing sessions with a reputable qualitative researcher in other studies. These debates guard against the prejudices that come from merely one person's viewpoint on the study.

The concept of confirmability is essential in ensuring that the findings of a study on the inclusion of boys in gender-based violence (GBV) awareness programmes are objective, neutral, and free from researcher bias (Polit & Beck, 2014). Confirmability ensures that the results are a genuine representation of the participants' perspectives, rather than influenced by the researcher's preconceptions or interpretations.

In conducting the research on the inclusion of boys in GBV awareness campaigns, maintaining an analytical audit trail was a critical step. This process involved meticulously recording all decisions, observations, interpretations, and analytical processes throughout the study, ensuring transparency, (Polit & Beck, 2014). Furthermore, the use of methodological log memos provided a structured way to document the researcher's thoughts, decision-making processes, and analytical developments. These memos captured changes in direction, emerging themes, and adjustments to the research approach, contributing to greater transparency and rigor in the study.

By upholding confirmability, the study produced findings that are not only reproducible but also reflect an impartial analysis of how the inclusion of boys in GBV awareness programmes is perceived, valued, and can be effectively enhanced. This commitment to confirmability ensures that the study’s insights contribute meaningfully to the development of more inclusive and effective strategies for addressing GBV.

4.7.5 Transferability

In contrast to other parts of research, the nature of transferability, or the degree to which findings are beneficial to people in other settings, differs in that readers decide how applicable the findings are to their conditions (Polit & Beck, 2014). Although member checks and triangulation are believed to be equivalent to generalisation in quantitative research, they help establish credibility and add to trustworthiness. Long-term interaction

with and persistent monitoring of research subjects are other elements that are also important.

Participants generally appreciate the member check process because it gives them a chance to verify their statements and fill in any gaps from earlier interviews. Trust is an important aspect of the member screening process. Transferability aims to generalise study results and apply them to different contexts and circumstances. Researchers can establish that it is likely, but they cannot prove conclusively that results based on the interpretation of the data are transferable. Utilising purposeful sampling, a type of nonprobability sampling, allows for the maximisation of certain data in relation to the environment in which it was gathered. This is distinct from the information that would be collected in aggregate in a quantitative study. The features of the sample participants are considered by purposeful sampling since they are directly related to the research topics (Polit and Beck, 2014).

In the context of researching the inclusion of boys in gender-based violence (GBV) awareness programmes, transferability was crucial for understanding how the insights and conclusions drawn from one setting can inform practices in other similar settings. For this study on boys' inclusion in GBV awareness programmes, transferability means that the insights gathered can be applied to other communities, regions, or contexts where similar challenges exist regarding the exclusion of boys from GBV programmes. To achieve this, the study must provide detailed descriptions of the research context, participant experiences, and the societal factors influencing the inclusion or exclusion of boys in these programmes, (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations are fundamental to ensure that research is conducted in a responsible and respectful manner. According to Anderson (2004), ethical issues in research include confidentiality, informed consent, voluntary participation, dignity, and respecting the worth of each individual. In the context of this research, permission to conduct the study was sought from all participants, ensuring that they fully understand their role in the research and their rights. The researcher l also adhered to the requirements of the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPI Act), ensuring that participants' personal data is protected and kept confidential.

Informed consent is a crucial aspect of ethical research. This means that participants were fully informed about the research purpose, methods, and potential risks before they agreed to participate. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and participants can withdraw at any time without any consequences. Confidentiality was maintained by not revealing participants' personal information or identities in any research findings or publications. The researcher also ensured that no harm comes to the participants throughout the study, whether psychological, physical, or emotional.

Ethics, as a philosophical inquiry, originated in ancient Greece and focuses on what is right and wrong in human life (Singer, 2025; The Sunday Mail, 2019). Ethics is not just a set of principles but a way of critically evaluating choices and actions, ensuring that they align with moral standards. In the context of research, ethics governs what is acceptable and permissible when working with humans, animals, or the environment (Johnstone, 2009). Research ethics also concerns the honesty and integrity of the researcher, ensuring that the research is carried out transparently and without bias.

As Mouton (2018) asserts, researchers have a responsibility to act in a manner that is accountable to society, maintaining high ethical standards throughout the research process. This accountability extends not only to the participants but also to society at large, ensuring that the research serves a greater purpose and contributes to knowledge that benefits others. In studies involving human participants, researchers must consider the perspectives of the researcher, the participants, and the wider community who will be impacted by the findings (Oates, 2016; Rule et al., 2017). This three-fold consideration ensures that the research is ethical, transparent, and socially responsible.

In summary, ethical considerations are essential for ensuring that research is conducted with respect to participants' rights and well-being. By following ethical principles such as informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality, the researcher ensures that the study upholds the dignity and worth of every participant while contributing valuable insights into the topic of gender-based violence (GBV) awareness.

4.8.1 Informed Consent and Assent

According to Flick (2016), ethical research practices require that studies be conducted under conditions where informed consent is obtained, and participants are protected from harm. Informed consent is a cornerstone of research ethics, ensuring that participants are fully aware of the research process, its purpose, risks, and their right to

withdraw at any point without facing negative consequences. The American Psychological Association (2012) also underscores that participants must sign a consent form as evidence of their voluntary participation, free from coercion. This principle of informed assent was rigorously followed in the research study on the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes, where participants were provided with clear and comprehensive information about the study before agreeing to take part.

The consent and assent forms used in the study clearly outlined the purpose, procedures, potential risks, and time commitments involved. They also stressed the voluntary nature of participation and informed participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalties. By offering this information upfront, the researcher ensured that participants could make informed decisions, knowing exactly what their involvement entailed.

In the context of research involving minors, obtaining informed consent becomes even more complex. It is not enough to simply gain the assent of the minors themselves; parental consent was also required to ensure the ethical protection of young participants. This additional layer of consent ensures that parents or guardians are fully informed about the research, including its goals, procedures, and risks, before agreeing to allow their children to participate. This is particularly important in studies involving sensitive topics such as GBV awareness, where children may be exposed to potentially distressing content (Gilbert & Widom, 2010; Knopf, Park, & Mulye, 2015).

Seeking parental consent acknowledges the role of parents as advocates for their children's well-being and protects their rights to make decisions on their behalf. It also ensures that ethical principles such as autonomy, beneficence, and respect for persons are upheld. Autonomy is respected by giving minors and their parents the power to make an informed decision about participation. Beneficence ensures that the study aims to benefit the participants without causing harm, while respect for persons ensures that the dignity and rights of the participants are protected and that they are not exploited (Gilbert & Widom, 2010; Knopf et al., 2015). Through these steps, the researcher maintained high ethical standards, safeguarding the well-being of all participants involved in the study.

In summary, informed consent, the inclusion of assent forms for minors, and the ethical conduct of the study were essential in ensuring that research is conducted in a manner that respects participants' rights, autonomy, and well-being. By following these

ethical guidelines, the researcher ensured that the study adhered to the highest ethical standards, promoting both the integrity of the research and the protection of participants.

4.8.2 Voluntary Participation

In the research study on the exploration of perceptions of the inclusion of the boy child in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) awareness programmes, the principles of voluntarism and respect for persons were essential to ensure ethical conduct and protect participants' autonomy. Cohen et al. (2011) emphasize that voluntarism involves participants making a free and informed decision to participate, with a clear understanding of any potential risks involved. This principle underscores the importance of allowing participants to voluntarily choose whether or not to take part in the study, without coercion or undue influence. By respecting participants' autonomy, the researcher not only adhered to ethical standards but also promoted trust and transparency in the research process.

Respect for persons, as articulated by Brink et al. (2018), further emphasizes that individuals should have the right to make decisions about their participation based on informed consent, free from coercion or prejudicial treatment. This principle is critical in research involving children, who typically possess diminished autonomy compared to adults. Given the sensitive nature of GBV awareness programmes, where children may have personal experiences or be exposed to potentially distressing content, it was crucial to respect their choices regarding participation and ensure that their rights were upheld throughout the research process.

The researcher was diligent in ensuring that participation was voluntary, with no pressure placed on the children to take part in the study. In addition, it was made clear that participants had the right to withdraw at any point without facing any negative consequences. This respect for autonomy extended to providing participants with ample information about the study's purpose, and they were encouraged to ask questions to ensure a clear understanding. When conducting research involving children, it is especially important to create a safe and supportive environment, where children feel comfortable sharing their experiences and opinions without fear of judgment or repercussion (Brink et al., 2018).

By upholding the principles of voluntarism and respect for persons, the researcher demonstrated an ethical commitment to protecting participants' rights. These principles contributed to the creation of an environment conducive to genuine participation, where

children could engage freely in the research study. The emphasis on voluntary participation, the right to withdraw, and ensuring informed consent helped maintain ethical standards and reinforced the integrity of the research findings. Additionally, these ethical considerations contributed to the validity and reliability of the study, as the participants' genuine and uncoerced responses provided a more accurate reflection of their perceptions regarding the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes.

4.8.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a crucial aspect of social research, as emphasized by Hill (2009). It refers to the protection of participants' information, ensuring that it is not disclosed or shared beyond the research context without permission. In the exploration of perceptions regarding the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes, maintaining confidentiality was particularly important to respect the privacy and anonymity of the participants. Given the sensitive nature of the topic, confidentiality helped to create a safe environment where participants could express their thoughts and experiences openly without fear of exposure or judgment.

To uphold confidentiality, the researcher employed a range of strategies. One of the key measures was the use of aliases or pseudonyms instead of participants' real names. This approach helped dissociate participants' identities from their responses, ensuring that their personal information remained protected. The researcher explicitly communicated to the participants that all information shared during the study would be treated with strict confidentiality. This reassured participants that their involvement would not result in any negative consequences and encouraged them to speak candidly about their experiences and views.

Additionally, the researcher assured participants that their responses would not be linked back to their identities or any identifying details. This was critical in helping to build trust with the participants, as they could feel confident that their personal information would not be exposed. By protecting their privacy in this way, the researcher fostered an atmosphere of openness, which was essential for gathering honest and meaningful data. It was vital for the participants to understand that their information would be used solely for the purposes of the research and not for any other aims, which further reinforced the importance of confidentiality.

The researcher also implemented secure data storage practices to ensure that the information collected remained protected throughout the study. This included password-protecting electronic files, which were stored on secure, encrypted devices. Any physical documents, such as consent forms, were stored in locked cabinets that were accessible only to the researcher. These precautions were necessary to prevent unauthorized access and ensure the continued protection of participants' data.

By adhering to these confidentiality practices, the researcher not only fulfilled ethical obligations but also ensured that participants felt safe and respected throughout the research process. Maintaining confidentiality contributed significantly to the willingness of individuals to participate and share their perspectives on the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes. It demonstrated a commitment to safeguarding the privacy of participants, reinforcing their trust in the researcher, and ultimately contributing to the integrity of the study.

4.8.4 Avoidance Of Harm

The principle of nonmaleficence, as emphasized by Hardwick and Worsley (2011), is crucial in ensuring ethical conduct in research. It requires researchers to take proactive measures to avoid causing harm or adverse consequences to participants, either directly or indirectly. In the context of research on sensitive topics like the inclusion of the boy child in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) awareness programmes, this principle becomes especially important due to the potential for emotional or psychological harm.

The researcher's responsibility is to safeguard the well-being and safety of participants throughout the entire research process. This means not only ensuring that participants are fully informed about the nature of the study but also that their participation does not place them at risk of harm. For example, in the case of GBV awareness, some participants might have personal experiences with violence, and the researcher must take steps to avoid re-traumatizing them. This could involve providing emotional support or directing participants to appropriate services if necessary. A social worker's number was provided to the participants as well as her email.

Adhering to nonmaleficence also involves obtaining informed consent, ensuring that participants fully understand what their participation entails and confirming that their involvement is entirely voluntary. The researcher must make sure that participants know they have the right to withdraw at any point without any consequences. Protecting

confidentiality is another critical aspect of nonmaleficence, as any breach could lead to harm, such as stigma or discrimination.

By adhering to these measures, the researcher ensures that the research process does not harm the participants, thus upholding ethical standards. The principle of nonmaleficence serves as a cornerstone in promoting the safety and welfare of participants, thereby contributing to the credibility and ethical integrity of the research

4.8.5 Debriefing

Debriefing is a procedure that takes place at the end of a human subject's participation in a study. In some cases, a full debriefing may only occur once the entire study is concluded. During debriefing, the participant is given the opportunity to discuss the details of the research with the researcher. Accordingly, a debriefing statement is a statement that is given (or read) to the research participants at the conclusion of their participation in the study (Gilston, 2021). In cases in which revealing the purpose or other details of the research may possibly compromise ongoing data collection, researchers may debrief research subjects fully after the completion of the data collection.

Researchers debrief research participants to help ensure that the participants are fully restored to the condition in which they were prior to their involvement in the study, are informed of details they may not have known prior to participating in the study; for example, deception that may have been employed and why, and are provided with appropriate resources and contact information (Gilston, 2021).

Debriefing constitutes a vital component of any research or psychological study involving human participants, typically conducted upon the conclusion of the study. It entails a structured or semi-structured verbal exchange between the researcher and the participants, during which various topics related to the study are addressed, clarified, and discussed. Participants are also afforded the opportunity to ask questions and seek further understanding of the research process and purpose (Gilston, 2021). There are multiple components of the debriefing process.

4.8.6 Process Of Debriefing

The process of debriefing is a critical component of ethical research, as outlined in the Code of Ethics. Once a study has been completed, researchers are required to provide participants with accurate and thorough information about the nature of the study, the

research objectives, and the intended use of the findings. Debriefing serves to ensure that participants fully understand the purpose of the study and clarify any misunderstandings that may have arisen during the research process. This practice is essential for maintaining transparency and upholding the ethical principle of respect for persons.

In the context of the study on perceptions of the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes, participants were informed during the debriefing about the study's goals, the methods used, and the ways in which the findings would be applied. This helped participants gain a clearer understanding of their role within the research and the value of their contributions. It also addressed any potential concerns or misconceptions, providing an opportunity for participants to ask questions and seek clarification regarding the study's design and findings.

As part of the debriefing process, the researcher also provided participants with information about how they could access the study results, further promoting transparency. This transparency is crucial in maintaining participants' trust and demonstrating respect for their involvement in the research. In addition, the researcher clarified the potential long-term use of the study results and explained how the data would be stored and used responsibly.

Ensuring participants were fully informed about these aspects helps foster a sense of closure and allows them to reflect on the study's impact.

Moreover, if any misconceptions about the study were identified, the researcher took steps to correct them during the debriefing. This involved providing more context or clarification on certain aspects of the research that may not have been fully understood during the participation phase. By addressing these concerns, the researcher helped ensure that participants left the study with an accurate understanding of their role and the research process.

The debriefing process also played a role in the psychological well-being of participants, particularly in studies involving sensitive topics, such as GBV awareness. It ensured that participants are not left with any negative emotions or confusion about their involvement, contributing to their overall sense of safety and trust. Ultimately, debriefing aligned with ethical guidelines by respecting participants' rights and offering them closure, while also improving the integrity of the research process (Gilston, 2021).

4.8.7 Follow-Up Care and Information

During the debriefing process, participants were provided with contact information, that is a phone number and an email for individuals they could reach out to if they had any questions or comments about the research (Gilston, 2021). This step ensured that participants had access to support and could address any concerns they might have had after completing the study. It also provided them with a clear avenue to seek further clarification or assistance if needed. This practice was integral in maintaining transparency and fostering a sense of trust between the researcher and participants.

An important aspect of the debriefing process was ensuring that participants were aware of their ethical right to withdraw their data from the study, even after participation had concluded. This is in line with ethical research standards, which uphold the principle that participants should retain control over their involvement and the use of their data at all stages of the research process (Gilston, 2021). Allowing participants this right provided an additional layer of respect for their autonomy and ensured that they did not feel coerced or uncomfortable in any way during or after the research.

In cases where participants experienced any physical or emotional harm as a result of their participation in the study, the debriefing process served as a critical opportunity for the researcher to identify and address these issues. The researcher took all reasonable steps to minimize any potential harm by creating a safe and supportive environment for the participants throughout the study. This included monitoring the emotional and physical well- being of participants before, during, and after the study, as well as being vigilant for any signs of distress that may have arisen.

If harm had occurred, the debriefing process allowed the researcher to provide the necessary support and to ensure that participants received the care they needed, fortunately there was no harm that occurred. The researcher worked alongside a social work colleague to assist with any emotional or psychological issues that may have emerged during or after the study. This collaboration with a trained professional was important for addressing participants' needs and ensuring that they received appropriate support.

Additionally, the researcher provided contact information for support services that participants could reach out to if they needed further assistance after the study. This was especially important in research involving sensitive topics like GBV awareness, where participants may be exposed to distressing content. By ensuring that participants had

access to these resources, the researcher demonstrated a commitment to their well-being and ensured that their participation was as ethically sound as possible (Gilston, 2021).

4.8.8 Permissions

The researcher adhered to the ethical principles and codes of conduct set by the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) and the Department of Basic Education (DBE) while conducting research in schools, in accordance with the National Education Policy (Act No. 27 of 1996), as amended; the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act No. 2 of 2000), as amended; the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008; and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996), as amended. These policies guide the ethical standards for conducting research within educational settings, ensuring that the rights of participants, especially minors, are respected and upheld throughout the study.

To initiate the research, the researcher completed and submitted a Research Request Form to the GDE. This form is designed to ensure that all relevant details about the proposed study are provided, which helps the GDE assess the feasibility and ethical considerations of the research. Along with the Research Request Form, the researcher submitted an ethics clearance form, which had been approved by the relevant ethics review board. The approval of this clearance form was essential to ensure the study adhered to ethical standards and regulations.

Furthermore, the researcher included the approved research proposal and draft interview guides, which provided transparency and a clear outline of the research methodology and data collection process. Given that the study involved minors, the researcher obtained parental consent and child assent before any participation in the study. Parental consent was required as a safeguard to protect the rights of minors and ensure that their guardians were fully informed of the research's objectives, procedures, and potential risks. Additionally, child assent was obtained from the learners themselves to ensure that they understood the purpose of the study and willingly agreed to participate. This dual consent process ensures the protection of the participants, upholding ethical standards while also allowing for the voluntary participation of minors in the research.

By following these procedures, the researcher ensured that the study was conducted in full compliance with legal and ethical guidelines, prioritizing the safety, rights, and well-being of all participants. The ethical considerations were particularly important for this

research, as it involved minors and required extra care to ensure that all aspects of the study were conducted in an ethically responsible and legally compliant manner.

4.9 LIMITATIONS

While conducting research on the exploration of perceptions on the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes, it is important to consider the potential limitations that may impact the study. These limitations can affect the generalisability and integrity of the findings. They are characteristics of the research methodology that are out of the researcher's control but influence the overall research findings. Because of this, they determine the internal and external validity of your study and are considered potential weaknesses (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). One of the major limitations that affected the research was the issue of time, that is the study was conducted during school hours during either break or lunch periods which proved to be difficult.

Another limitation is the potential for social desirability bias. Participants might feel pressured to provide responses that align with societal expectations or that portray them in a favourable light. This bias could impact on the accuracy and authenticity of their perceptions and opinions regarding the inclusion of boys in GBV awareness programmes. The researcher took measures to establish a supportive and non-judgmental environment to mitigate this bias. The researcher made use of private spaces to conduct the research where the boy earners could express themselves freely.

Furthermore, the study's reliance on qualitative research methods, such as interviews or focus groups, may introduce limitations. Qualitative data collection is subjective in nature and can be influenced by the researcher's interpretation and biases. Despite efforts to maintain objectivity, there is a possibility of researcher subjectivity impacting the data analysis and interpretation, which may affect the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

Lastly, ethical considerations may impose limitations. The study involves a sensitive topic of GBV, and the researcher must prioritise the well-being and safety of the participants. This may limit the extent to which certain topics or experiences can be explored in-depth, especially if they are distressing or triggering for the participants.

While these limitations should be acknowledged, they do not invalidate the research study. By addressing them proactively and transparently, the researcher enhanced the study's credibility and reliability. Additionally, the findings provided valuable insights

into the perceptions of the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes within the specific context and limitations of the study.

4.10 DELIMITATION

According to Theofanidis and Fountouki (2019), delimitations are the boundaries set by the researcher to define the scope of the study, specifying what is included and excluded from the research. These decisions are made to ensure that the study remains focused, manageable, and relevant to the research objectives. By establishing clear delimitations, researchers can narrow their study to a particular context or population, thus enhancing the feasibility and relevance of the research.

In the context of the study on the perception of the inclusion of the boy child in the fight against Gender-Based Violence (GBV), delimitations were applied to focus on a specific population of learners. The study was conducted in four schools in Gauteng North, which helped to define the geographic scope and ensure that the sample was representative of this specific area. Additionally, the research targeted learners from these schools, which narrowed the study's focus to a particular age group and demographic, ensuring that the perceptions gathered were specific to the youth population.

These delimitations were necessary to make the study more manageable and to focus on a clear, targeted group of participants. By excluding other regions or populations, the study-maintained relevance to the specific research title: exploring the perceptions of boy learners regarding the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes. This focus allowed the researcher to gather in-depth data that was directly applicable to the context of the schools in Gauteng North, without the overwhelming complexity of broader regional or national data collection. Thus, the decisions about what to include and exclude—such as the selection of specific schools and learners—helped refine the study's focus, making it more feasible and ensuring that the findings would be directly applicable to the research objectives.

4.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the methodology used in this study to explore the perception regarding the inclusion of the boy child in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) programmes, with a specific focus on the iNSPIRE programme. The study employed a qualitative case study approach, using a multi- method data collection approach that combined interviews, and expert interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 32 participants who

were part of the iNSPIRE programme, The data were analysed using thematic analysis, and the findings are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

5 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of the study, which aimed to explore the perceptions of boy children towards Gender-Based Violence (GBV), their reception of inclusive GBV awareness programmes, and the effectiveness of these programmes in changing their attitudes and perceptions towards GBV. Data were collected through semi- structured interviews with 28 boy learners, and expert interviews with the educators who were part of the iNSPIRE programme are analysed and presented in this chapter. The findings provide valuable insights into the thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes of boy children regarding GBV, as well as the impact of inclusive GBV awareness programmes on their perceptions and behaviours.

5.1 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

A total of 32 participants took part in this study, comprising 28 boy learners, 4 program implementers from the iNSPIRE team. A total of 28 boy learners who were selected 7 from each of the 4 schools: Cultural High School, Ekangala Comprehensive School, Zithobeni High School, and Sthenjiwe High School participated in the study. Table 1 provides the sample distribution across schools.

Table 5.1 Boy Learners Participant Distribution

Age (Years)	Cultural High School	Ekangala Comprehensive School	Zithobeni High School	Sthenjiwe High School	Total Participants
14	1	1	1	0	3
15	1	1	2	2	6
16	1	2	1	2	6
17	2	1	2	2	7
18	1	1	0	1	3
19	1	1	1	0	3

Total	**7**	**7**	**7**	**7**	**28**

To buttress the study results interviews were conducted with 4 program implementers who provided key insights on the reception and success of the program. These participants had between 4 years and 15 years of experience in dealing with boy learners, this group of participants was made up of professionals in education, social work and psychology. Table 2 provides a summary of the key characteristics of the iNSPIRE program implementers who were involved in this study

Table 5.2 The Demographics of Project Implementors

Key characteristic	**Statistics**
Number of Participants (n)	2
Gender	1 female, 1male
Age range	25-30 years
Professional Background	Education, Psychology
Experience with boy learners	4-15years of experience

Table 5.3 Project Implementors Characteristics

Key Characteristics	Statistics
Number of Participants	2
Gender	1 male and 1 female
Age Range	30-45

To abide by the ethical consideration of anonymity and confidentiality, the researcher will use pseudo names when putting out the verbatims from the study participants. To that end, for the in-depth interviews, the researcher will used LP1 up to LP28 since the study used 28 learners. For the key informant interviews with the program implementers the researcher will used KIP1 up to KIP4 since only 4 key

informants were interviewed.

As for the themes, using qualitative data gathered from the study participants, several themes were established in regard to the study objectives. These themes have sub-themes as indicated in the table below.

Table 5.4 Themes and Sub Themes for boy learners and educators

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Perceptions of Boy learners regarding GBV Awareness Programmes	i. Important as it increases their understanding of GBV ii. GBV programmes reveal the dangers of GBV to people in communities iii. Provides Solutions to GBV in Communities iv. GBV Awareness Programmes has less impact because GBV is considered normal. v. GBV Awareness Programmes Instils the Desire to change in learners
2. The perceived effectiveness of the iNSPIRE Change GBV awareness programme in changing the knowledge and attitudes of boy learners towards GBV.	i. Increased knowledge of the causes and types of GBV ii. Improved attitudes of boy learners to participate in GBV awareness programmes iii. Formed partnerships with boy learners
3. The Role of Community in Supporting the Inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes	i. Alliances with organisations implementing GBV programmes ii. Allowing children to participate in GBV awareness programmes iii. Schools and communities to form GBV awareness groups

5.1.1 An Overview of How Data Was Analysed

Before presenting the themes in Chapter Five, the researcher applied a rigorous and systematic data analysis process grounded in the thematic analysis framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The data analysis approach detailed in Chapter Four of the methodology section was consistently followed to ensure coherence, reliability, and alignment with the study's overall purpose and objectives—namely, to explore the effectiveness of GBV awareness programmes and the inclusion of the boy child in these initiatives.

Thematic analysis, suitable for analysing rich, qualitative data, was used to examine the interviews conducted with boy learners from four high schools in Gauteng North. The process began with the researcher immersing herself in the data to become thoroughly familiar with the content. This step included transcribing audio recordings, reading and re-reading interview transcripts, and listening to recordings multiple times. Initial observations and notes were made to capture early patterns and insights. These preliminary engagements laid the foundation for deeper analysis by allowing the researcher to internalise the narratives and perspectives shared by the participants.

The second phase involved the generation of initial codes. The researcher used both manual techniques (highlighting and annotating printed transcripts) and digital tools (Microsoft Excel) to systematically identify and organise meaningful data segments. Codes were not only applied but were also refined and expanded upon through repeated engagement with the transcripts. This iterative coding process facilitated the identification of recurring issues, behaviours, and perspectives that were relevant to the research objectives.

In the third phase, the researcher shifted from coding to theme development by grouping codes into broader conceptual categories. These emerging themes were closely examined and tested for coherence, consistency, and relevance. Themes were compared with the original research questions and the broader literature to ensure that they reflected both the data and the theoretical framing of the study. In the fourth phase, the themes were reviewed and refined through a two-step validation process: first, by checking the coherence of data within each theme, and second, by assessing how well each theme represented the dataset as a whole. This led to the construction of a thematic "map" to visually capture the relationships among themes, sub-themes, and codes.

The fifth and sixth stages involved clearly defining and naming the themes, followed by writing up the findings. The researcher carefully reviewed each theme to ensure it accurately captured the essence of the boy learners' perspectives. She then developed an analytic narrative that linked empirical data to the research objectives and literature. Each theme was supported by direct quotes from participants, offering credibility and depth to the analysis. This phase moved beyond mere description, as the findings were presented as critical insights that directly addressed the research questions—specifically, how GBV awareness programmes influence boys' attitudes and what role the community plays in their inclusion.

In summary, the thematic analysis process was not only methodologically sound but also instrumental in producing findings that were deeply connected to the study's purpose: to understand the transformative potential of GBV awareness programmes on boy learners and the structural factors that enable or inhibit their participation. The data analysis was therefore not a separate exercise but an integrated, reflective process that illuminated the voices of the participants and provided a grounded basis for the themes presented in the following chapter.

5.2 THEME 1: PERCEPTIONS OF BOY LEARNERS TOWARDS GBV AWARENESS PROGRAMMES

Concerning the perceptions of boy learners towards GBV awareness programmes, the study findings revealed several themes pointing to both positive perceptions and areas where increased awareness is needed. GBV awareness programmes aim to educate and sensitize individuals, particularly boys, about the importance of gender equality and the harmful effects of gender-based violence. These programmes are vital in addressing the cultural and societal norms that perpetuate violence, fostering a sense of responsibility among boys as allies in the fight against GBV.

5.2.1 Important As It Increases Their Understanding Of GBV

The findings from in-depth interviews revealed that boy learners perceive the current GBV (Gender-Based Violence) awareness programmes as critically important, as they significantly enhance their understanding of what GBV entails. At least fifteen of the participants consistently emphasised that these programmes provided them with foundational knowledge and nuanced insights into the dynamics of GBV. This

understanding not only empowered them to identify and define GBV but also contextualises it within their lived experiences and immediate environments.

The study participants acknowledged the transformative impact of these programmes, highlighting that the knowledge gained fosters a positive and conceptual understanding of GBV and its related issues. This understanding enables the learners to articulate clear definitions of GBV that resonate with their family and social realities.

For instance, LP4, during an in-depth interview, stated: *"I know GBV is when someone hurts a girl or a woman, like my sister or mother. It's not, right?"*

Another participant, LP12, supported this view by sharing:

> *The GBV awareness programmes are important because now I understand what GBV is. Gender-based violence is when someone hurts another person because of their gender, like a man thinking he's stronger and can control or harm a woman. It can be physical, emotional, or even things like saying bad stuff to make someone feel small. It's wrong and unfair.*

These testimonies underscore the essential role of GBV awareness programmes in shaping learners' perspectives. the GBV awareness programmes help them understand what GBV is. The programmes equip learners with the ability to recognize and challenge harmful attitudes and behaviours linked to GBV. By fostering a deep understanding of the issue, these initiatives create a foundation for meaningful change within communities. The increased awareness among boy learners is pivotal as it encourages them to critically reflect on their actions and attitudes, ultimately contributing to a shift toward a more equitable and respectful society.

Moreover, the findings suggest that the enhanced understanding gained through these programmes contributes significantly to the efficacy of GBV interventions. When learners are well-informed about what GBV is and how it manifests, they are better positioned to support and participate in preventative measures and interventions. This knowledge ensures that GBV programming is grounded in informed communities, which is critical for long-term success in addressing and mitigating GBV.

In essence, the increased awareness and understanding facilitated by GBV awareness programmes are vital for empowering young learners. These programmes not only educate but also inspire a commitment to addressing GBV, creating a ripple effect that

can lead to broader societal change. The narratives of the participants strongly advocate for the continued implementation and enhancement of such programmes to build a more informed and proactive generation.

5.2.2 GBV Programmes Reveals The Dangers Of GBV To People In Communities

The study findings underscored the importance of GBV awareness programmes in revealing the dangers of gender-based violence (GBV) to communities. These programmes serve as critical tools in reshaping community perceptions, helping individuals recognize GBV as a harmful practice that poses significant threats to societal well-being. By providing communities with the "lenses" to see the realities of GBV, these initiatives are fostering a shift away from the normalization of such practices.

One study participant, LP6, highlighted this transformative impact during an in-depth interview:

"GBV programmes are important here because they have helped us understand that it is a bad practice that has been normalized for long. Now, we start to see it as it is—a bad practice—and people no longer normalize it as was the case before."

The statement reflects a critical shift in societal perceptions resulting from the implementation of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) awareness programmes. Historically, GBV had become so deeply embedded in social and cultural practices that it was often normalized or rendered invisible within everyday life. However, through sustained educational interventions, these programmes have begun to deconstruct such normalization by reframing GBV as a human rights violation rather than a private or culturally permissible matter. The reflection illustrates an emerging consciousness in the community, one that challenges previously internalized norms and repositions GBV as a harmful and unacceptable practice. This attitudinal transformation is indicative of the broader potential of GBV programmes to influence normative change, promote accountability, and foster a culture of zero tolerance toward violence.

This sentiment was echoed by LP9, who shared:

> *GBV is a horrible act of taking out your anger on the opposite gender, and I got to see this through GBV awareness programmes. I think many people can also benefit from these programmes and get to see that GBV is a wrong practice that needs to be addressed.*

These reflections indicate that GBV awareness programmes are perceived as crucial in changing perspectives within the high schools where the research was conducted. They challenge long-held cultural justifications for GBV and encourage individuals to reevaluate their beliefs and attitudes toward this form of violence. The findings suggest that these programmes play a vital role in fostering a collective understanding of GBV as a harmful and unacceptable act.

Furthermore, the study revealed that more than half of the boy learners who participated in the research hold positive perceptions of GBV awareness initiatives, viewing them as powerful tools for societal change. By equipping communities with knowledge and understanding, these programmes empower individuals to reject GBV and engage actively in efforts to address and prevent it.

The significance of these initiatives extends beyond awareness—they lay the groundwork for sustainable change by altering community norms and inspiring proactive participation in GBV-related programmes. Other research findings indicates that community-driven initiatives play a crucial role in transforming harmful social norms and fostering engagement in GBV prevention efforts. For instance, the Communities Care program integrates primary prevention strategies with existing response programmes to address the root causes of violence in humanitarian settings (Ellsberg et al., 2018). Similarly, studies on violence prevention emphasize the effectiveness of community mobilization in encouraging individuals to reflect on gender inequalities and actively participate in GBV- related programmes (Jewkes et al., 2014). These examples illustrate how sustained community engagement can lead to meaningful societal change in addressing GBV. As learners and communities increasingly recognize GBV as a violation of human dignity and rights, the momentum for addressing it grows stronger.

In conclusion, the findings highlight the necessity of expanding and intensifying GBV awareness programmes. Reaching more communities and individuals will amplify their impact, fostering a broader shift in beliefs and attitudes regarding GBV. By scaling these efforts, society can work collectively to dismantle harmful practices and build a culture of respect, equality, and safety for all.

5.2.3 Provides Solutions To GBV In Communities

The submissions by most study participants indicated that GBV awareness programmes are perceived as exercises that provide insights and solutions for addressing

GBV in communities as indicated by the reports below. The study findings highlighted that these programmes are crucial in equipping communities with practical strategies to combat GBV.

During an interviewLP4 emphasized the role of these programmes in educating communities:

"GBV awareness programmes are done in a way that educates communities on what GBV entails, and from that understanding, communities are equipped with skills to address GBV within families and the community as a whole."

This perspective underscores the significance of GBV awareness initiatives in building the skills and resilience required to combat GBV effectively. A key finding is that these programmes empower communities to recognize and address GBV, which is often perpetuated due to a lack of awareness and deep cultural embedding.

Additionally, the study found that these initiatives are particularly important in helping learners understand the harmful nature of GBV and teaching them actionable ways to address it. LP2, in an in-depth interview, shared:

> *GBV awareness is important because it made me realize that some of the practices that we consider to be normal here at school, home, and in communities are not normal as they are part of GBV. I was able to learn my role in addressing GBV.*

These reflections reveal that GBV awareness programmes help participants identify harmful practices that were previously normalized and encourage them to take an active role in addressing GBV. The results also showed that boy learners who had witnessed or experienced some form of GBV had developed a strong understanding of its negative effects.

In alignment with these findings, Dixon (2018) posited that GBV awareness is a powerful tool, providing solutions by empowering both perpetrators and victims with the knowledge and resources necessary to address the issue.

Another learner shared his perspective, LP2:

> *I think GBV awareness programmes are good because they show us what's wrong and how to fix it. For example, if a boy bullies a girl just because he thinks she's weak,*

now I know that's not right, and I can stop it or speak out about it. It's like teaching us to help make things better at home and school.

This response highlights the simplicity and practicality with which young learners perceive GBV awareness, focusing on actionable solutions that they can implement within their immediate environment.

In conclusion, the findings strongly indicate that GBV awareness programmes are essential for empowering individuals and communities to combat GBV. By challenging cultural norms and equipping participants with the tools to address GBV, these initiatives lay the foundation for a more informed and proactive society. Expanding these programmes is therefore critical for fostering widespread change and building safer, more equitable communities.

5.2.4 GBV Awareness Programmes Have Less Impact Because GBV Is Considered Normal.

The findings from this study established that GBV awareness programmes are perceived as less impactful due to the normalization of GBV in many parts of South Africa. Cultural norms and patriarchal ideologies have deeply embedded the belief that men are superior to women, resulting in the acceptance of gender-based violence as a routine aspect of life.

During an in-depth interview, LP8 explained:

GBV awareness programmes have been there for long, and still, GBV remains high with several cases unreported in communities because it is generally seen as a normal practice for a husband to beat his wife during marriage, and it will not be reported.

This sentiment reflects the societal challenge wherein patriarchal dominance fosters the notion that men have the right to discipline women through violence. Due to prolonged exposure to these cultural norms, both men and women have internalized GBV as a " normal" occurrence. Women, as victims, are often socialized to accept such behaviour, while men, as perpetrators, feel entitled to enforce these norms.

The study further revealed that this normalization affects boy learners, contributing to negative perceptions and behaviours that undermine the impact of GBV awareness programmes. For instance, LP9 shared:

"It is not wrong for a man to beat his wife if she does something wrong. Respect is needed, so it is the husband's duty to discipline her."

This view aligns with traditional gender roles and reinforces harmful attitudes that perpetuate GBV. Many boy learners perceive domestic violence as an acceptable disciplinary action when women and girls "misbehave." Such attitudes are shaped by societal norms, cultural practices, and gender stereotypes.

The normalization of GBV among boys is consistent with findings from Mankowski and Maton (2017), who demonstrated that exposure to traditional masculine norms increases the likelihood of perpetuating GBV. Bandura's (2016) social learning theory also supports this notion, emphasizing how behaviours are learned and reinforced through observation and socialization. By promoting positive gender relations, it is possible to counteract these harmful patterns and reduce GBV in South African communities.

Additional responses from learners further illustrate these dynamics: LP10 reflected:

> *Sometimes it's hard to see GBV as bad because it's what we've grown up seeing. When my dad shouts at my mom or even hits her, it's just what happens in families. I don't think GBV programmes can change that.*

LP11 shared a slightly different perspective:

> *I think GBV awareness programmes are trying, but they don't work much because people don't take them seriously. In our community, people believe that a man must control his wife, and if she doesn't listen, he has to make her listen. It's not seen as a problem.*

These responses highlight the entrenched cultural barriers that hinder the success of GBV awareness programmes. While some learners recognize the negative effects of GBV, many still perceive it as a justified or normalized practice, rooted in cultural and societal norms.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that the success of GBV awareness programmes is limited by deeply ingrained patriarchal beliefs and societal norms that normalize violence. To increase their effectiveness, these programmes must address the underlying cultural and societal factors that perpetuate GBV. Initiatives should focus on reshaping

perceptions, challenging traditional gender roles, and promoting positive gender relations through education and community engagement.

5.2.5 GBV Awareness Programmes Instils The Desire To Change In Learners

The results also indicated that GBV awareness programmes instill a desire to change among boy learners. The study revealed that most boy learners, due to exposure to GBV awareness initiatives, now have a growing desire to address GBV in their homes and communities.

On this issue, LP5 shared during an in-depth interview:

"GBV awareness programmes are important to us as boys still growing up because with all the information, they provide concerning GBV, we end up having the desire and the need to change things at home and in communities."

This highlights that continuous education and the provision of relevant information about GBV enlighten communities and, as a result, inspire boy learners to take action in their households and localities. The social learning theory suggests that consistent exposure to stimuli, such as GBV education, can foster behavioural change. In this context, persistent awareness programmes encourage learners to challenge harmful norms and attitudes.

Although some boy learners did not agree with all the principles of these programmes, they still expressed a desire to transform their communities and were motivated by the frequent GBV awareness campaigns in their areas. Many learners indicated their willingness to participate in GBV-focused projects in schools and nearby communities.

LP6, in an in-depth interview, noted:

"GBV awareness has shown us that we need to do something. As a boy, I feel like if we can start small by talking to other boys and getting them involved, it can make a difference at school and even at home."

LP7 echoed this sentiment, saying:

"The programmes help us see that what we thought was normal is not okay. I now want to teach my younger brothers and friends that GBV is not acceptable, and we can do better as boys."

These responses resonate with findings from Bruce (2019), which showed that boys who participate in gender-sensitive programmes and discussions are more likely to question traditional masculine norms and attitudes that perpetuate GBV. Furthermore, a study by the University of Cape Town's Gender, Health, and Justice Research Unit (2018) indicated that boys involved in gender-transformative programmes are more likely to support gender equality and condemn GBV.

In conclusion, the findings underscored that GBV awareness programmes played a pivotal role in instilling a desire for change among boy learners. By encouraging them to challenge harmful norms and take active roles in promoting positive behaviours, these programmes contributed significantly to reducing GBV in homes and communities. However, the study also revealed that some learners continued to view GBV as 'acceptable' due to deeply rooted cultural norms and practices, highlighting the need for ongoing education and culturally sensitive interventions.

Overall, the findings clearly demonstrate that GBV awareness programmes play a significant role in shaping young learners' understanding of gender-based violence. These programmes contribute to a shift in attitudes by challenging harmful gender norms and encouraging critical reflection among participants. The voices of the learners reflect a growing awareness and willingness to engage in conversations that promote respect, equality, and non-violence.

While many participants embraced the messages of the programmes, the persistence of beliefs that normalize GBV among some learners highlights the deep-rooted influence of cultural and societal norms. This contrast reveals the complexity of addressing GBV within different contexts and underscores the ongoing impact of these programmes in initiating dialogue and change. The narratives gathered illustrate both the progress made and the work that remains in building a society that collectively rejects violence and values human dignity.

5.3 THEME 2 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INSPIRE GBV AWARENESS PROGRAM IN CHANGING THE KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES OF BOY LEARNERS TOWARDS GBV.

The effectiveness of the Inspire GBV program was indicated by the responses from the learners as shown by how it helped in improving the knowledge, attitudes, and

behaviours among boy learners towards GBV. Educators, boy leaners from the iINSPIRE team reported significant success of the program in changing the knowledge and attitudes of boy leaners.

5.3.1 Increased Knowledge of the Causes and Types Of GBV

The submissions made by study findings revealed that the iNSPIRE GBV awareness program has been effective as it managed to increase the knowledge of boy learners on the causes of GBV in their communities. On that note, the study findings suggested that the iNSPIRE awareness program has been effective in raising awareness and knowledge regarding what causes and sustains GBV in communities. On that note, one participant, LP4, reported that:

"It was through this programme that I was able to understand that culture causes and supports GBV in our communities. I thought it is very normal."

This highlights that the iNSPIRE program has been effective as it managed to educate the boy learners on the factors that cause and sustain GBV in families and even in communities at large. Such factors as culture perpetuate GBV in families and in communities since most African communities are grounded in patriarchal norms that emphasise male dominance.

Still on the same issue, the study further highlighted that ignorance by communities regarding GBV is another reason why GBV has been on the rise in South Africa as a country. On that note, the study findings indicated that the program was designed to ensure that boy learners understand that their participation is crucial in addressing GBV and that failure to be proactive sustains it. To that effect, KIP 3 narrated that:

> *The program was effective in educating the boy learners on the causes of GBV in communities, highlighting that the failure of communities to participate in GBV-related programmes is one factor that is sustaining GBV. Similarly, these learners, if they do not participate in GBV awareness programmes, they will also sustain GBV…*

The above narrations indicate that communities need conscientisation for them to move from traditional and cultural norms and practices that aid or support GBV in families and mainstream society. This conscientisation can be done through their participation in these programmes, and if they do not participate, they will be socialised to normalise GBV.

By participating, they will be aware of the dangers of these practices. In general terms, it is the lack of participation by communities, especially males, in GBV awareness programmes that has been sustaining GBV in South Africa as people and communities keep clinging to their cultural beliefs and norms. Participating in these programmes opens a window of opportunities for communities to receive information on the causes, dangers, and ways to address GBV in their communities.

Most learners indicated that the iNSPIRE program has been effective among boy learners because it managed to educate the boy learners also on the types of GBV. the study findings revealed that through the program, the study participants were able to receive information on the various forms of GBV. Concerning that, LP9 reported that:

> *The program has been effective because, for me, it managed to educate us on the forms of GBV such as beating women, be it your sister or wife, issues such as denying women opportunities in communities to work equally as men, among other several issues that I did not know were forms of GBV.*

This is important because, for communities to effectively address GBV, there is a need for communities, especially the boy child, to know all the causes and forms of GBV so that they know what to address and how. The argument is that GBV is driven by culture, and because of that, it is deemed normal in most parts of South Africa. This is the reason why there is a need for the boy child to be integrated into GBV awareness programming. This is important because by participating, the boy learners will be able to debunk the socialisation they have had that normalises GBV with the information from the program.

Adding to this, LP11 noted:

The program helped me see how small actions, like interrupting women or not listening to their opinions, are part of GBV. I never thought these were wrong because everyone around me did the same.

This statement illustrates how the program expands the understanding of boy learners, helping them identify behaviours that were previously considered acceptable but contribute to GBV. Such insights are crucial for shaping a new generation that recognizes and acts against GBV in all its forms.

Another participant, LP13, added:

"Through this program, I now understand that some traditions we follow, like forcing girls into early marriages, are forms of GBV. I've started talking to my friends about these issues."

This highlights how the program empowers learners not only to understand GBV but also to act as agents of change within their peer groups and communities.

In conclusion, the iNSPIRE program has proven effective in increasing knowledge among boy learners on the causes and types of GBV. By tackling cultural norms, ignorance, and the lack of community participation, the program fosters a more informed and proactive generation. Through continuous education and awareness, the boy learners are equipped with the tools to challenge and address GBV, making them crucial allies in the fight against this pervasive issue.

5.3.2 Improved Attitudes of Boy Learners to Participate in GBV Awareness Programmes

The findings of this study revealed that the iNSPIRE GBV awareness programme has been effective in improving the attitudes of boy learners regarding their participation in GBV awareness initiatives. Historically, boys and men have often been hesitant or outright resistant to engaging with GBV awareness programmes. This study, however, shows that through consistent and structured education on the forms, causes, and effects of GBV, the iNSPIRE programme has positively influenced boy learners, encouraging them to rethink their perceptions and take active roles in combating gender-based violence (GBV) within their homes and communities.

The study highlighted that many of the boy learners initially showed little interest in participating in GBV awareness programmes. Acknowledging the deep-rooted cultural and social norms that often condition boys to view gender roles rigidly, many of these learners had been socialized to believe that certain forms of GBV, particularly male dominance over women, were not only acceptable but also normal. This cultural normalization of GBV within communities contributes to boys' reluctance to engage in programmes aimed at addressing it.

However, the iNSPIRE programme's approach to education—specifically, its focus on informing learners about the negative impact of GBV—has led to a noticeable shift in attitudes. LP3, a participant in the programme, shared the following during an in-depth interview:

> *I was usually not interested in participating in GBV awareness programmes, but after being part of the iNSPIRE programme, I have realised that GBV is common in our communities and has several negative impacts on women. Now I am more concerned, and I want to participate and make a change in my community.*

This response illustrates the transformative potential of consistent GBV education.

Prior to the programme, LP3 may have been indifferent to the issues surrounding GBV. However, after engaging in the iNSPIRE programme, he expressed a genuine desire to change his attitude and actively contribute to the reduction of GBV in his community. This shift was largely due to the programme's ability to provide him with valuable information that helped him recognize the widespread nature of GBV and its devastating consequences for women.

Further supporting the effectiveness of the iNSPIRE programme, KIP1 noted:

> *The programme has managed to ensure that there is a change in attitudes among boy learners. They are now ready and interested in participating in GBV awareness programmes, which was not the case when we started. Initially, many of them refused or withdrew after a few days.*

This comment underscores how the programme has successfully navigated the initial resistance from boy learners. What started as reluctance and disengagement has now shifted to active participation and enthusiasm. The effectiveness of the programme can be attributed to its comprehensive structure, which not only focuses on raising awareness but also ensures that boys understand their role in combating GBV and promoting gender equality.

KIP2 added:

"The programme was well-structured and effective in engaging boy learners. We saw a positive change in their attitudes and behaviours."

These reflections indicate that the iNSPIRE programme's method of delivering GBV education has been impactful, leading to a significant shift in the attitudes and behaviours of boy learners. Through continuous engagement and the provision of relevant information— such as the forms and dangers of GBV, the impact on both victims and perpetrators, and ways to address it—the programme has fostered an environment conducive to positive change.

The study also revealed that the initial negative perceptions held by boy learners towards participation in GBV awareness programmes were largely due to a lack of awareness. In South African communities, where GBV is often normalized and ingrained in cultural beliefs, boys are typically unaware of the harmful nature of such violence. For many, GBV is seen as a routine aspect of life. Through awareness initiatives like iNSPIRE, these boys are taught to question these normalized practices and understand their role in preventing and addressing GBV.

Moreover, the programme's success is attributed to the way it clearly communicated to boys the importance of their involvement. When boys understand the significance of them participation and are provided with practical ways to contribute to the fight against GBV, they are more likely to take ownership and engage actively. The clear message that they play a crucial role in changing harmful attitudes and behaviours has been vital in improving their willingness to participate.

In conclusion, the iNSPIRE GBV awareness programme has proven to be effective in transforming the attitudes of boy learners, encouraging them to participate more actively in efforts to combat GBV. This shift in attitudes, rooted in education and community engagement, demonstrates the significant impact that well-structured and informative programmes can have on boys' perspectives. By challenging cultural norms and empowering boys with knowledge, the iNSPIRE programme is not only addressing the issue of GBV but also fostering a generation of boys who are motivated to make positive changes in their communities. The findings highlight the importance of continuing to promote awareness, education, and dialogue around GBV in order to sustain these positive changes and encourage further involvement from boys in these critical efforts.

5.3.3 Formed Partnerships With Boy Learners

The iNSPIRE program has proven to be an effective initiative in fostering meaningful partnerships with boy learners in schools, which is crucial in the fight against gender-based violence (GBV). The study’s findings revealed that the programme has not only managed to build collaborations between the programme and the learners but has also successfully integrated these learners into GBV awareness efforts in schools and communities. This integration has helped the programme reach broader audiences and increase its impact on reducing GBV in South Africa.

A key finding from the study emphasized the effectiveness of these partnerships in empowering the boy learners to take an active role in addressing GBV. In an in-depth interview, FGDP2 noted:

"The program has managed to form a collaboration between the program and the boy learners by integrating into the programmes as they have several roles in GBV awareness programmes efforts in schools and in their communities."

This statement illustrates the successful integration of boy learners into GBV awareness efforts, showing that they are no longer passive recipients of education but are actively contributing to raising awareness in their schools and communities. The inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness initiatives is essential, as traditional GBV programmes in South Africa have often been criticized for excluding boys. Although these programmes have had significant investments, their success has been limited, as evidenced by the persistent high rates of GBV. This exclusion of boys has often hindered the long-term effectiveness of these initiatives.

The iNSPIRE programme, however, stands as an example of a more inclusive approach. By actively engaging the boy child, the programme ensures that boys become part of the solution, helping to challenge and transform the traditional gender norms that perpetuate GBV. As such, the programme's success lies not only in its educational content but also in its ability to build these crucial partnerships between the boy learners and programme implementers.

Further supporting the effectiveness of the iNSPIRE programme in fostering these partnerships, the study also revealed that the programme has successfully helped create structures where boys can actively participate. The programme has provided the resources necessary to help boy learners form social groups dedicated to promoting GBV awareness. In a conversation with one of the participants, LP10 shared:

"*The program has helped us create social groups working together with programmers to improve GBV awareness in our communities through various programmes such as community dialogues with community members."*

These social groups play an essential role in empowering boys to take ownership of the fight against GBV. They provide a space for boys to collaborate, share ideas, and take initiative in addressing the problem in their communities. By giving the boys, the

opportunity to be involved in practical efforts such as community dialogues, the programme ensures that they are not only learning about GBV but also actively contributing to changing the social environment that allows it to thrive.

Moreover, the programme's partnership approach is consistent with the social learning theory, as proposed by Bandura (2016). According to this theory, learning occurs through observing others, and through the iNSPIRE programme, boy learners have the opportunity to observe and interact with GBV awareness programme implementers. This observational learning model allows boys to understand the impacts of GBV on victims, the dynamics of power and control in abusive relationships, and the role they can play in addressing and preventing violence. By equipping the boys with the skills and knowledge necessary to challenge harmful gender norms, the programme fosters a sense of responsibility and encourages them to take proactive steps in their communities.

The programme's success in fostering partnerships is also evidenced by the positive responses from participants. LP13, shared his thoughts on the programme's impact:

> *At first, I didn't understand why we needed to talk about GBV. But after participating in the iNSPIRE programme, I realised that I have a responsibility to be part of the change. I've joined a group with my classmates where we discuss what we've learned and share it with our families. I now know that GBV isn't just a women's issue; it's something that all of us need to address.*

This statement highlights a significant transformation in the learner's perspective. Initially indifferent or unaware, he has come to understand the importance of his role in the fight against GBV. This shift in attitude is a direct result of the programme's efforts to engage him meaningfully and give him the tools to actively contribute.

Additionally, LP12, provided a different but equally important perspective on the programme:

> *I didn't know much about GBV until we had the programme at school. Now, I'm learning that boys also need to speak up when they see something wrong. I've started telling my friends at school that it's not okay to make jokes about hitting girls. I feel like I can make a difference.*

The response from LP12 underscores the importance of starting GBV awareness efforts early in a young person's life. By teaching learners at a younger age about respect,

equality, and the dangers of GBV, the programme is instilling positive attitudes and behaviours that can last a lifetime.

The creation of these partnerships between the iNSPIRE programme and the boy learners is vital to the programme's success. By integrating the boy learners into GBV awareness initiatives, the programme not only raises awareness but also creates a sense of collective responsibility. The social groups, dialogues, and collaborative efforts fostered by the programme empower the learners to take an active role in addressing GBV. This shift in mindset and behaviour is crucial, as it challenges long-standing cultural norms and encourages the next generation to break the cycle of violence.

In conclusion, the iNSPIRE programme has been successful in forming valuable partnerships with boy learners, contributing to a more inclusive approach to addressing GBV. Through social groups, collaborative efforts, and a focus on observational learning, the programme has empowered boys to become key agents of change. As these learners engage with and take responsibility for addressing GBV, they are not only transforming their communities but also shaping a future where GBV is no longer normalized but actively prevented.

In Summation, the iNSPIRE programme has proven to be a powerful tool in raising awareness and deepening the understanding of gender-based violence among boy learners. The programme effectively addresses not only the definitions, causes, and types of GBV but also engages learners in critically examining the cultural norms, societal expectations, and behavioural patterns that sustain violence. Through targeted educational sessions, dialogue-based learning, and community-rooted discussions, the programme has helped demystify GBV and equip learners with the vocabulary, confidence, and knowledge needed to challenge harmful ideologies. The boys' evolving perspectives reflect a shift from passive observers to active participants in promoting respectful relationships and safer communities.

Furthermore, the programme's ability to create safe and inclusive spaces for learning has allowed for honest conversations, peer support, and reflection on personal values and beliefs. The iNSPIRE initiative not only increased the boys' knowledge but also nurtured empathy, responsibility, and a sense of agency in addressing GBV. As boys began to see themselves as part of the solution, their participation in group activities, social learning, and community engagements signalled a meaningful transformation in attitude

and behaviour. These findings highlight the programme's success in building a generation of boys who are not only informed but are also emotionally and socially invested in creating a culture that rejects violence, respects human dignity, and upholds gender equality.

5.4 THEME 3: THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY IN SUPPORTING THE INCLUSION OF THE BOY CHILD IN GBV AWARENESS PROGRAMMING

In addressing gender-based violence (GBV), it is crucial to adopt an inclusive approach that involves all members of society, especially the boy child. Historically, GBV awareness programmes have focused primarily on women and girls as victims and often excluded boys and men from the conversation, either as potential allies or as key stakeholders in the fight against violence. However, increasing recognition of the role that boys and men play in either perpetuating or preventing GBV has highlighted the necessity of involving them in these educational programmes. The importance of including the boy child in GBV awareness efforts lies not only in changing harmful behaviours but also in fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the issue within communities.

The study aimed to explore how communities can support the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programming. Communities play a vital role in shaping the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of individuals, particularly young people, through social norms, cultural practices, and communal values. By engaging the community, GBV awareness programmes can be more impactful, ensuring that boys are equipped with the knowledge and tools to challenge harmful gender norms, understand the significance of respect and equality, and take an active role in addressing violence. The findings of the study reveal that the community can play several critical roles in supporting the inclusion of the boy child in these efforts. These roles encompass various forms of community involvement, from altering social perceptions and challenging cultural norms to providing practical support for programming and encouraging active participation among boys. The following section discusses these findings in greater detail.

5.4.1 Alliances With Organisations Implementing GBV Programming

The study findings revealed that it is crucial for communities to form alliances and collaborations with organisations that are actively engaged in GBV programming. These partnerships are vital not only for the success of the programmes but also for integrating

the boy child into GBV awareness efforts. The study participants underscored the importance of building strong, long-lasting partnerships with organisations, as this enables the community to benefit from shared knowledge, resources, and strategies that can help address GBV effectively.

As one participant, LP6, noted:

> *It is important that communities prioritise forming collaborations with the organisations active in GBV programmes as a window for the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programming. Through these collaborations, communities will be able to understand how the boy child can participate in GBV programming.*

This statement highlights the importance of collaboration between the community and GBV program agencies. Such partnerships can bridge gaps in understanding about how boys can be included in awareness campaigns and can ensure that these programmes are more relevant to the specific needs of boys in the community.

The study findings also pointed to the essential role of community leadership in forming and nurturing these partnerships. Community leaders act as gatekeepers who can help to create an environment conducive to the boy child's participation in GBV awareness programmes. This is particularly important in South African communities where cultural norms often dictate the roles of boys and men. When community leaders are supportive of GBV awareness programmes, they set a positive example for others in the community, encouraging participation and cooperation from all members.

In support of this, LP3 explained:

> *If we are to effectively participate in GBV programmes, it is very important that the community, through its leadership, forms partnerships with GBV programmes organisations. This will make it easier for us to be involved in these programmes because they will have the trust of the community.*

This sentiment reinforces the idea that trust is a crucial element in ensuring that boys feel safe and supported in these programmes. When the community is aligned in its support of GBV initiatives, it fosters an atmosphere of openness, where boys can feel encouraged to engage in these programmes without fear of judgment or rejection.

Moreover, creating these partnerships ensures that the community gains a deeper understanding of the roles and responsibilities that both the boy child and the community

as a whole can play in preventing and addressing GBV. As the community works alongside organisations, they are better equipped to challenge and dismantle harmful cultural practices that contribute to the perpetuation of GBV, such as the normalization of violence within relationships. These partnerships, therefore, can help to shift societal attitudes, making it easier for future generations to grow up in environments where respect for gender equality and non-violence is the norm.

Another important point raised by the study is the necessity for the community to take an active role in these partnerships. Without this involvement, the effectiveness of GBV programmes is limited, as they cannot succeed in a vacuum. The community's active participation in these initiatives is integral in ensuring that the programmes are embraced and that positive behavioural changes are encouraged. LP4 further emphasized:

It's vital that we, as a community, form partnerships with these organisations because it allows us to guide the boys and show them that there is a better way to treat women and girls. It also helps us to educate ourselves on what is acceptable behaviour and what isn't.

This statement reflects a growing recognition in communities that addressing GBV is not solely the responsibility of women or victims but requires active involvement from all community members, especially boys and men. By forming these partnerships, the community becomes an active participant in the solution, thus contributing to the larger goal of creating a violence-free society.

Furthermore, the study participants noted that successful collaborations would allow the community to better understand the cultural and social underpinnings of GBV, which are often deeply ingrained. Through these partnerships, boys are given the opportunity to observe positive role models and learn appropriate behaviours, as outlined by Bandura's (2016) Social Learning Theory. Observational learning allows boys to see firsthand how healthy relationships function, how men and boys should treat women, and how they can be allies in fighting GBV. This would enable them to challenge outdated norms and eventually transform how GBV is perceived within their communities.

In conclusion, the role of the community in supporting the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programming cannot be overstated. By fostering partnerships with organisations implementing GBV programmes, communities can create an environment that is supportive of change, provides the necessary tools and resources, and encourages active participation from the boy child. Through these collaborations, communities can

work together to eliminate the cultural justifications for GBV and build a society where all individuals, regardless of gender, are treated with respect and dignity.

5.4.2 Allowing Children To Participate In GBV Awareness Programmes

The study participants emphasized the crucial role of the community, particularly parents and school leadership, in granting permission for the boy child to participate in GBV awareness programmes in South Africa. The inclusion of boys in these programmes is seen as a critical step in addressing the root causes of GBV and promoting gender equality. However, the findings revealed that many barriers still exist, primarily stemming from the need for community approval and support.

One participant, LP7, elaborated:

> *The boy child needs permission from the community—that is, from parents, guardians, and school authorities—for them to participate in GBV awareness programming. We have had challenges for the participation and inclusion of the boy child because they are denied permission to participate in these programmes since most of them are still minors.*

This statement underscores the dependency of minors on their immediate support systems to engage in such programmes. Without explicit consent from parents, guardians, or school authorities, boys' participation remains limited, stifling their ability to contribute to the fight against GBV effectively.

It was further highlighted that parents and community leaders often fail to understand the significance of including boys in GBV awareness efforts. By withholding permission, they inadvertently perpetuate the cycle of violence and gender inequality. Therefore, the findings stress the importance of educating these stakeholders about the benefits of boy-child participation in these programmes.

Another key insight from the study was the need for communities to create an enabling environment that encourages and facilitates the inclusion of boys in GBV awareness initiatives. LP7 shared:

> *The community through schools should provide the platform for us to freely and conveniently participate in GBV awareness programmes in schools, and similarly, our local communities should provide the needed tools and environment for us to be free to get involved in GBV awareness programmes.*

This highlights that beyond permission, communities must actively support these initiatives by creating safe spaces and resources for boys to engage meaningfully. In schools, for example, authorities should champion these efforts by integrating GBV awareness into extracurricular activities or formal education systems.

The study further revealed that, in addition to schools, local communities also have a responsibility to equip boys with the tools and knowledge necessary to participate in GBV awareness. By doing so, they reduce barriers to engagement, ensuring boys feel secure and empowered to take part. This approach also helps dismantle traditional norms that may discourage boys from addressing GBV issues.

In support of this, LP12, stated:

My parents were hesitant at first to allow me to attend GBV awareness sessions, but once the school explained the importance of these programmes, they agreed. Now, I feel more confident to speak up about these issues, even at home.

This narrative reflects the importance of collaborative efforts between schools and families in granting boys the opportunity to participate in these transformative programmes. It demonstrates how providing accurate information and emphasizing the benefits can shift perspectives and encourage greater involvement.

Similarly, LP13 added:

> *Before I joined the GBV awareness programme, my family was not sure it was safe for me. But after learning about the program through the community leaders, they supported me. I now educate my peers and younger boys about respecting women and addressing GBV.*

This further illustrates the potential ripple effect of boys' inclusion in GBV programmes. When boys are supported by their communities, they become agents of change, influencing their peers and contributing to a broader cultural shift.

The study findings also suggest that the involvement of community leaders can help bridge the gap between families and GBV awareness initiatives. By endorsing these programmes and highlighting their benefits, leaders can encourage parents and guardians to support their children's participation. Additionally, schools and community organizations must work collaboratively to provide structured and accessible programmes tailored to boys' unique needs and circumstances.

In summation, the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes is heavily reliant on community support, particularly from parents, guardians, and school authorities. Communities play a pivotal role in granting permission and creating a conducive environment for boys to participate in these initiatives. By addressing cultural and institutional barriers, fostering trust, and providing resources, communities can empower boys to become active participants in the fight against GBV, ultimately contributing to long- term social change.

5.4.3 Schools And Communities To Form GBV Awareness Groups

The study participants suggested that for the effective inclusion of the boy child in GBV programmes, it is imperative that schools and communities form GBV awareness groups. These groups would play a vital role in fostering the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes across the country. Through their activities, these groups could promote awareness by engaging boys in meaningful ways. Highlighting this, LP8 reported:

"To facilitate effective inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programming, it is crucial that schools and communities form groups that will be influential in GBV awareness programmes through games, drama, and even poems."

The integration of such activities into these groups makes them appealing and engaging for boys. Games, debates, drama, and poetry offer interactive and creative ways to impart critical knowledge about GBV while encouraging active participation. These activities serve as a form of reinforcement, as proposed by the social learning theory, which posits that rewards can motivate and sustain desired behaviours. By making participation enjoyable and rewarding, the likelihood of boys becoming actively involved in GBV awareness programmes increases.

Furthermore, these groups serve as platforms for boys to share their thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes about GBV. LP5 emphasized:

> *These groups in communities are important as they will provide a mode of communication for the boy child to express their attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions concerning GBV to the mainstream society. This will empower these children to stand up for their beliefs even if they deviate from the cultural norms.*

Providing a safe space for boys to voice their opinions and ideas fosters a sense of empowerment. By expressing their views, boys can challenge harmful societal norms and promote a culture of respect and equality. Through such interactions, boys can also influence broader societal attitudes and become key advocates in the fight against GBV.

Another participant, LP9, highlighted the importance of peer-led initiatives in these groups:

"When we see our friends leading debates and discussions about GBV, it motivates us to join because we feel like it's something we can all relate to. It feels less intimidating than when adults try to teach us."

This underscores the effectiveness of peer influence in promoting participation. Boys are more likely to engage in activities when they are organized and led by their peers, as it creates a more relatable and less hierarchical environment.

Additionally, the use of such groups provides a sense of community and collective responsibility. LP6 shared:

> *Our community leaders encouraged us to form a GBV awareness group at school. Now, we meet every week to discuss different topics, and we also create plays and poems to educate others. It has helped us understand the issue better and feel like we are making a difference.*

This shows how structured and consistent engagement within these groups can lead to better understanding and awareness among participants. By organizing regular meetings and activities, these groups ensure that boys remain actively involved and invested in the cause.

The study also revealed that the inclusion of boys in these groups enables them to take ownership of their role in addressing GBV. LP10 mentioned:

"These groups help us see how we can play a role in stopping GBV. When we work together on projects, we realize that even small actions can make a big difference in changing how people think."

This reflects the empowering nature of these initiatives, as boys recognize their ability to drive change within their communities. By participating in collaborative projects, boys learn the value of teamwork and see the impact of their contributions firsthand.

Moreover, these groups not only educate boys but also encourage them to engage with the larger community. LP10 stated:

"Our group went to a nearby community to perform a drama about GBV. People appreciated it and even asked questions after the performance. It made me feel proud to be part of something that can help others understand this issue."

This illustrates how these groups can serve as bridges between schools and communities, spreading awareness beyond their immediate environment. Activities such as performances and outreach events allow boys to interact with diverse audiences and advocate for change on a broader scale.

In conclusion, the formation of GBV awareness groups in schools and communities is powerful strategy for including the boy child in GBV programmes. These groups provide boys with safe spaces to express their ideas, engage in creative and rewarding activities, and learn from their peers. By fostering communication and collaboration, these groups empower boys to challenge societal norms, advocate for gender equality, and contribute to ending GBV in their communities. Through consistent support from schools, community leaders, and parents, these groups can become instrumental in shaping a future where boys play an active role in combating GBV.

In summary, the meaningful inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes is deeply interconnected with the level of support and involvement offered by the broader community. Parents, guardians, educators, and community leaders serve as vital enablers who shape boys' access to and engagement with these programmes. Their willingness to challenge harmful cultural norms, endorse gender-equitable values, and prioritise the well-being of both boys and girls lays the groundwork for impactful, long-term change. Without this foundation of support, boys may remain excluded or disengaged, limiting the potential reach and effectiveness of GBV awareness initiatives.

Moreover, the establishment of school- and community-based GBV awareness groups has emerged as a crucial mechanism for encouraging boys to participate meaningfully in anti-violence efforts. These groups offer boys a structured yet flexible platform to voice their experiences, learn collaboratively, and redefine what it means to be a young man in a society still grappling with patriarchal legacies. Within these safe, inclusive spaces, boys are exposed to alternative role models, peer dialogue, and values of empathy, accountability, and equality. The continued presence and encouragement of

supportive adults reinforce these messages and help transform them into consistent actions. Collectively, these efforts demonstrate that the inclusion of the boy child is not an isolated task but a shared community responsibility critical to the success of GBV prevention.

DISCUSSIONS

The normalisation of violence is a concerning theme that emerged from the data, highlighting the need for comprehensive interventions to address GBV. This finding is linked to the Social Learning Theory (SLT), which posits that individuals learn behaviours and attitudes through observation and imitation (Bandura, 1977). The boy child is exposed to violent behaviours and attitudes, which are reinforced by societal norms and cultural beliefs, leading to the normalisation of violence. This is evident in the participants' responses, where they described violence as a normal part of life.

The victim-blaming attitudes expressed by the participants are also a cause for concern, as they perpetuate harmful gender norms and contribute to GBV. This finding is connected to the Just World Hypothesis (JWH), which proposes that individuals believe the world is just and that people get what they deserve (Lerner, 1980). The participants' responses, which often blamed the victim for the violence they experienced, reflect a belief that the victim must have done something to deserve the violence. This attitude is damaging, as it shifts the focus from the perpetrator's actions to the victim's perceived shortcomings.

The gender stereotypes that emerged from the data are also a significant concern, as they perpetuate harmful gender norms and contribute to GBV. This finding is linked to the Gender Role Theory (GRT), which suggests that individuals conform to traditional gender roles and expectations (Eagly, 1987). The participants' responses, which often reinforced traditional gender stereotypes, highlight the need for inclusive and gender-sensitive approaches to addressing GBV.

The findings also highlight the importance of engaging with the boy child in GBV prevention and response efforts. This is supported by the Theory of Gender and Power (TGP), which posits that gender is a social construct that perpetuates inequality and violence (Kimmel, 2007). By engaging with the boy child and challenging harmful gender norms, we can work towards creating a more equitable and just society.

The data also revealed a lack of understanding of the impacts of GBV before the programme, among the participants, which is a significant barrier to addressing GBV. This finding is linked to the Empathy- Altruism Hypothesis (EAH), which proposes that empathy is a key motivator for altruistic behaviour (Batson, 1991). By promoting empathy and understanding, we can encourage individuals to take action to prevent and respond to GBV.

The findings also highlight the need for comprehensive interventions that address the root causes of GBV. This is supported by the Ecological Model (EM), which posits that GBV is the result of a complex interplay of individual, relationship, community, and societal factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). By addressing GBV through a comprehensive and inclusive approach, we can work towards creating a society that values and respects all individuals, regardless of gender or background.

Finally, the findings highlight the importance of inclusive and gender-sensitive approaches to address GBV. This is supported by the Intersectionality Theory (IT), which posits that individuals experience multiple forms of oppression and discrimination (Crenshaw, 1991). By promoting inclusive and gender-sensitive approaches, we can address the unique needs and experiences of diverse populations and work towards creating a more equitable and just society.

5.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The foregoing chapter had the impetus to provide a presentation, analysis and discussion of the study findings. To that effect, the chapter elaborated on the perceptions of the boy learners and the educators on GBV awareness programming, the effectiveness of the iNSPIRE GBV awareness program, and the role of the community in the inclusion of the boy child in the GBV awareness programming. It also looked at the discussion of the study. The next chapter will provide a summary of the study findings, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a synthesis and analysis of the key findings from the study, highlighting the dominant themes that emerged from the data and discussing their implications for future research and practice in the field of GBV. The discussion elaborates on the diverse and complex perceptions of the boy child on GBV, as well as the societal and cultural factors that shape these perceptions. The chapter concludes with a set of recommendations for intervention strategies, policy initiatives, and future research directions that can support efforts to prevent and respond to GBV in South Africa.

The main aim of the study was to explore perceptions about the inclusion of the boy child in awareness programme of gender-based violence in Bronkhornspruit, Gauteng province of South Africa. The objectives of the study were to explore how boy children perceive GBV, to explore the perceptions of boy children regarding their inclusion in GBV awareness programmes and lastly to explore the perceptions of educators regarding the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes. These were met and this is shown by the results of the study which will be discussed below.

This study subscribed to the interpretivist paradigm as a research approach and research framework that sought to understand social phenomena through the meanings and interpretations of the individuals involved (Creswell, 2016). This paradigm is rooted in the idea that reality is socially constructed, and that individuals' experiences and perceptions shape their understanding of the world (Easterby et al.,2017). The major advantage of adopting this paradigm was that it focused on uncovering the subjective meanings and interpretations that individuals bring to their experiences. As such, it uses qualitative research tools which are less structured and allow for the exploration of subjective experiences.

Saunders et al. (2012) comment that this approach recognises that individuals' experiences are shaped by their cultural, historical, and social contexts, and seek to understand how these contexts influence their interpretations and meanings. In the context of this study, the interpretivist paradigm was particularly relevant because it allowed for an in-depth exploration of the experiences and perceptions of boys aged 14—18 and

programme implementers involved in GBV awareness programmes. By adopting an interpretivist approach, the researcher was able to uncover the meanings and interpretations that participants bring to their experiences of GBV awareness programmes, and to understand how these meanings and interpretations shaped their understanding of the inclusion of the boy child in these programmes. Through this approach, the researcher was able to generate a rich and nuanced understanding of the complex social phenomena surrounding GBV awareness programmes, and to identify the ways in which these programmes can be improved to better meet the needs of all stakeholders.

This paradigm is known for allowing researchers to establish in-depth perceptions and experiences of individuals concerning a certain social phenomenon such as the inclusion of a boy child in GBV awareness programmes. This was particularly important because the researcher had no preconceived ideas on the subject matter, which provided room for an in- depth exploration on how the participants perceive the inclusion of a boy child in GBV awareness programmes.

6.2 KEY FINDINGS

The study findings revealed several themes pointing to both positive perceptions and areas where increased awareness is needed. GBV awareness programmes aim to educate and sensitize individuals, particularly boys, about the importance of gender equality and the harmful effects of gender-based violence. These programmes are vital in addressing the cultural and societal norms that perpetuate violence, fostering a sense of responsibility among boys as allies in the fight against GBV.

The findings from in-depth interviews revealed that boy learners perceive the current GBV (Gender-Based Violence) awareness programmes, specifically the iNSPIRE programme as critically important, as they significantly enhance their understanding of what GBV entails. The study participants acknowledged the transformative impact of these programmes, highlighting that the knowledge gained fosters a positive and conceptual understanding of GBV and its related issues. This understanding enables the learners to articulate clear definitions of GBV that resonate with their familial and social realities.

The findings also underscored the importance of GBV awareness programmes in revealing the dangers of gender-based violence (GBV) to communities. These programmes serve as critical tools in reshaping community perceptions, helping individuals recognize GBV as a harmful practice that poses significant threats to societal well-being. By

providing communities with the "lenses" to see the realities of GBV, these initiatives are fostering a shift away from the normalization of such practices.

The submissions by most study participants indicated that GBV awareness programmes are perceived as exercises that provide insights and solutions for addressing GBV in communities as indicated by the reports below. The study findings highlighted that these programmes are crucial in equipping communities with practical strategies to combat GBV. The findings from previous studies also established that GBV awareness programmes are perceived as less impactful due to the normalization of GBV in many parts of South Africa. Cultural norms and patriarchal ideologies have deeply embedded the belief that men are superior to women, resulting in the acceptance of gender-based violence as a routine aspect of life.

The results from the research also indicated that GBV awareness programmes instill a desire to change among boy learners. The study revealed that most boy learners, due to exposure to GBV awareness initiatives, now have a growing desire to address GBV in their homes and communities. The submissions made by study findings revealed that the iNSPIRE GBV awareness program has been effective as it managed to increase the knowledge of boy learners on the causes of GBV in their communities. On that note, the study findings suggested that the iNSPIRE awareness program has been effective in raising awareness and knowledge regarding what causes and sustains GBV in communities

The iNSPIRE program has proven to be an effective initiative in fostering meaningful partnerships with boy learners in schools, which is crucial in the fight against gender-based violence (GBV). The study's findings revealed that the programme has not only managed to build collaborations between the programme and the learners but has also successfully integrated these learners into GBV awareness efforts in schools and communities. This integration has helped the programme reach broader audiences and increase its impact on reducing GBV in South Africa.

The findings of the study also revealed that the community can play several critical roles in supporting the inclusion of the boy child in these efforts. These roles encompass various forms of community involvement, from altering social perceptions and challenging cultural norms to providing practical support for programming and encouraging active participation among boys. The following section discusses these findings in greater detail.

They also revealed that it is crucial for communities to form alliances and collaborations with organisations that are actively engaged in GBV programming. These partnerships are vital not only for the success of the programmes but also for integrating the boy child into GBV awareness efforts. The study participants underscored the importance of building strong, long-lasting partnerships with organisations, as this enables the community to benefit from shared knowledge, resources, and strategies that can help address GBV effectively.

The study findings also pointed to the essential role of community leadership in forming and nurturing these partnerships. Community leaders act as gatekeepers who can help to create an environment conducive to the boy child's participation in GBV awareness programmes. This is particularly important in South African communities where cultural norms often dictate the roles of boys and men. When community leaders are supportive of GBV awareness programmes, they set a positive example for others in the community, encouraging participation and cooperation from all members.

The study participants emphasized the crucial role of the community, particularly parents and school leadership, in granting permission for the boy child to participate in GBV awareness programmes in South Africa. The inclusion of boys in these programmes is seen as a critical step in addressing the root causes of GBV and promoting gender equality. However, the findings revealed that many barriers still exist, primarily stemming from the need for community approval and support.

The study findings also suggest that the involvement of community leaders can help bridge the gap between families and GBV awareness initiatives. By endorsing these programmes and highlighting their benefits, leaders can encourage parents and guardians to support their children’s participation. Additionally, schools and community organizations must work collaboratively to provide structured and accessible programmes tailored to boys' unique needs and circumstances.

The study participants suggested that for the effective inclusion of the boy child in GBV programmes, it is imperative that schools and communities form GBV awareness groups. These groups would play a vital role in fostering the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes across the country. Through their activities, these groups could promote awareness by engaging boys in meaningful ways.

6.3 CONCLUSION

The current study makes a unique contribution to the GBV literature by shedding light on the understudied perspective of the boy child. The findings underscore the importance of adopting an intersectional approach to understanding GBV, as the phenomenon is shaped by a complex array of factors including cultural norms, socioeconomic conditions, and individual experiences. In doing so, this study provides valuable insights into the attitudes and perceptions of boys, which can inform the development of more effective interventions aimed at preventing and responding to GBV in the future.

The study findings highlight the critical role of GBV awareness programmes in shaping perceptions, fostering proactive engagement, and challenging the deeply entrenched cultural and societal norms that perpetuate gender-based violence. The research revealed that these initiatives significantly enhance boy learners' understanding of GBV, equipping them with the knowledge necessary to define and address gender-based violence within their familial and social contexts. However, while these programmes have demonstrated success in raising awareness and fostering attitudinal change, their overall impact remains constrained by the normalization of GBV in certain South African communities.

The findings emphasize that GBV awareness programmes, particularly the inspire initiative, have been effective in educating boy learners about the causes of GBV and instilling in them a desire to effect change within their communities. By integrating these learners into school and community-based GBV initiatives, the program has contributed to broader awareness and increased participation in efforts to reduce gender-based violence. However, the research also underscores the necessity of forming strong alliances between communities and organizations engaged in GBV programming. Such partnerships are essential for ensuring the long-term success and sustainability of these initiatives.

Furthermore, the study identifies community leadership as a crucial factor in the successful implementation of GBV awareness programmes. Leaders serve as gatekeepers who can either facilitate or hinder the active participation of boys in these initiatives. Their endorsement and active involvement can bridge the gap between families and GBV programmes, fostering a supportive environment for the inclusion of the boy child in GBV prevention efforts.

To enhance the effectiveness of GBV awareness programmes, the study suggests the establishment of structured GBV awareness groups within schools and communities. These groups would provide a platform for continuous engagement, education, and mentorship, ensuring that boys are not only exposed to GBV-related knowledge but are also empowered to become active allies in combating gender-based violence. Additionally, the involvement of Parents, educators, and community members is essential in securing the necessary approval and support for these programmes.

In conclusion, while GBV awareness programmes have made significant strides in educating and engaging boy learners, their long-term success depends on sustained community involvement, institutional support, and cultural transformation. Addressing the deeply rooted gender inequalities that sustain GBV requires a multifaceted approach that integrates education, community leadership, and collaborative partnerships. By strengthening these key areas, South African communities can move towards a future where GBV is no longer normalized, but actively challenged and eradicated.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop inclusive and gender-sensitive approaches to address the root causes of GBV. Strengthen Community Engagement and Support
- Community leaders, parents, and educators should be actively involved in GBV awareness programmes to foster an environment that encourages the participation of boys.
- Integrate GBV education and awareness programmes into school curricula and community initiatives.
- Engage with the boy child in GBV prevention and response efforts, promoting positive masculinity and challenging harmful gender norms.
- Awareness campaigns should be tailored to challenge cultural and societal norms that normalize GBV and hinder boys' inclusion in these programmes.
- Develop Targeted GBV Awareness Programmes for Boys
- GBV awareness programmes should be specifically designed to address boys' unique experiences, perspectives, and roles in GBV prevention.
- Programmes should focus on fostering positive masculinity, teaching conflict resolution, and emphasizing respect for gender equality.
- Enhance School-Based GBV Initiatives

- Schools should integrate GBV awareness into the curriculum and establish structured discussion forums where boys can engage in critical conversations about gender roles, violence, and equality.
- Teachers and school counsellors should receive training on gender-sensitive approaches to effectively involve boys in GBV awareness efforts.
- Foster Meaningful Partnerships with Organizations
- Partnerships between schools, community organizations, and NGOs should be strengthened to provide resources, mentorship, and capacity-building for boys involved in GBV awareness programmes.
- Collaboration with men's groups and male role models can help reinforce positive gender attitudes and provide mentorship for young boys.
- Encourage Active Participation and Leadership Among Boys
- Boys should not only be included as participants in GBV awareness programmes but also be given leadership roles to champion change in their schools and communities.
- Peer-led initiatives should be encouraged to allow boys to educate and influence their peers positively.
- Address Cultural Barriers and Patriarchal Beliefs
- Programmes should include dialogues with parents, traditional leaders, and community elders to address harmful cultural beliefs that sustain GBV and exclude boys from prevention efforts.
- Culturally sensitive approaches should be developed to integrate boys into GBV prevention while respecting local traditions and values.
- Develop inclusive and gender-sensitive approaches to address the root causes of GBV.
- Increase Accessibility and Sustainability of Programmes
- GBV awareness programmes should be made more accessible to boys in both urban and rural areas through schools, community centres, and digital platforms.
- Continuous monitoring and evaluation should be implemented to assess the effectiveness of these programmes and make necessary improvements.
- Promote Policy Support and Institutional Commitment

- Policymakers should develop and implement policies that mandate the inclusion of boys in GBV awareness programmes within educational and community structures.
- Adequate funding should be allocated to ensure the sustainability and expansion of these initiatives.
- Conduct further research to explore the perceptions and experiences of diverse populations, enhancing our understanding of GBV and informing effective interventions

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APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENT

Exploration of perceptions of the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes: a case study of Gauteng north.

Dear parent,

My name is Newlane Svova. I am a Masters student in Social Work by Research at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisor is Dr L. Petersen. I am conducting a research study about gender-based violence in South Africa. The study title is Exploration of perceptions of the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes: a case study of Gauteng north.

I would like to ask your permission for your child to participate if he is willing.

Participation will involve that they partake in an individual face to face interview conducted by me. The interview will be about one hour. The interview will be conducted at the school and the time will be advised as directed by the school principal. I would like to ask for your permission to record and transcribe the interview with your child and use informal notes. This recording of information will be done to ensure that your child's responses and personal experiences are captured accurately. All information transcribed will be kept safe where only my supervisor and I will have access. Transcripts will be destroyed after two years should publications arise or after Five years should no publications arise in that period.

Anonymity of all the responses by the participants will be ensured, if a direct quote is used, your child's identity will be protected using a pseudonym. Also, anonymized data will be stored for future secondary analysis.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary: therefore, there will be no monetary benefits if you choose to participate. Your child has the right to withdraw from the study at any time they may feel like they do not want to continue, and they will not be penalized for their decision. You may get feedback on the group trends

that were discovered in this study: a summary can be made available to you upon request. This will be available approximately one year after the date of the interview you may request the summary by contacting me on the email address provided below.

The results of this study will be included in a research report which will be submitted to my supervisor, the faculty of Humanities and external supervisors at the University of the Witwatersrand. The report may also be used for publication, education seminars and conference presentations.

Should any emotional discomfort be experienced during or following the interview, for which counselling may be required please notify me and I will refer your child for counselling. The name of the social worker is **Gugu Zama Hlengiwa** and the contact details for the counselling service are **073 900 1950**

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

Principal **Researcher:**

Name: Newlane Svova,

Wits email: 2551510@students.wits.ac.za

Phone number: 063 924 5984

Supervisor:

Name: Dr Laetitia Petersen

Wits email: laetitia.petersen@wits.ac.za

Wits phone number: (+27) 011 717 4474/2



APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR TEENAGE BOYS

Exploration of perceptions of the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes: a case study of Gauteng north.

Dear potential participant

My name is Newlane Svova. I am a Masters student in Social Work by Research at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisor is Dr L. Petersen. I am conducting a research study about gender-based violence in South Africa. The study title is Exploration of perceptions of the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes: a case study of Gauteng north.

I am inviting you to take part in an interview as a participant. If you decide to take part, your participation in this research study will last about 60 mins. The interview will take place at your school at the time will be advised as directed by the school principal.

I would like to audio record the interview with your permission. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the transcriptions, and all material will be kept confidential. If publications are released after two years, or five years if none are, transcripts will be destroyed. Also, your anonymized data will be stored for future secondary analysis.

I'll need to find out some details about you personally during the interview, including your age. The interview will be anonymous and confidential. Your name or any other information that could be used to identify you won't be included in the research study's findings when I share them. Your name and any other personal information will not be used or disclosed, but other researchers may use the data from this study with your agreement.

You should choose to participate in the research study out of a desire to volunteer. You are not required to participate. You always have the option to leave the study. If

you choose not to, you are not required to respond to any questions. If you decide to participate in the research study, there are no immediate rewards for you. If you choose not to join, you won't lose any of the services, advantages, or privileges you would otherwise enjoy. There is no fee associated with participating in the study. For participating in this research project, there will be no payment.

The risks for this research study are no more than what happens in everyday life. Or if some of the questions asked may make you feel sad or upset, I will stop the interview and continue another time. If you need some support or counselling services following the interview, these are available free of charge telephonically. The name of the social worker is **Gugu Zama Hlengiwa** and the contact details for the counselling service are **073 900 1950.**

This research study will be written up as a research report. The report will be available on the university library website. If you would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you. If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,

Newlane Svova

Researcher: Name: Newlane Svova,

Wits email: 2551510@students.wits.ac.za

Phone number: 063 924 5984

Supervisor:

Name: Dr Laetitia Petersen

Wits email: laetitia.petersen@wits.ac.za

Wits phone number: (+27) 011 717 4474/2

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APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR KEY INFORMANTS

Exploration of perceptions of the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes: a case study of Gauteng north.

Dear Sir / Madam

My name is Newlane Svova. I am a Masters student in social work by research at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisor is Dr L. Petersen. I am conducting a research study about gender-based violence in South Africa. The study title is Exploration of perceptions of the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes: a case study of Gauteng north.

I am inviting you to take part in an interview as a participant. If you decide to take part, your participation in this research study will last about 30 mins. The interview will take place at your school at [time to be advised].

During the interview, I will need to ask for some personal information about you, including your age. The personal interview will be confidential. When I share the results of the research study, I will not include your name or anything else that could identify you. With your permission, other researchers may use the data collected from this research study, but your name and any personal information will not be used or passed on.

With your permission, I would like to audio record the interview. This recording of information is done to ensure that your responses and personal experiences are captured accurately. All information transcribed will be kept safe and only my supervisor and I will have access. Transcripts will be destroyed after two years should publications arise or after six years should no publications arise in that period.

If you decide to take part in the research study, it should be because you want to volunteer. You do not have to take part. You can stop being in the study at any time. You do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. You will not get any

direct benefits if you choose to join the research study. You will not lose any services, benefits, or rights you would normally have if you decided not to join. Taking part in the research study will not cost you anything. You will not be paid for being in this research study.

This research study will be written up as a research report. The report will be available on the university library website. If you would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

Principal Researcher:

Name: Newlane Svova,

Wits email: 2551510@students.wits.ac.za

Phone number: 063 924 5984

Supervisor:

Name: Dr Laeticia Petersen

Wits email: laetitia.petersen@wits.ac.za

Wits phone number: (+27) 011 717 4474/2

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APPENDIX F: PARENT INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Exploration of perceptions of the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes: a case study of Gauteng north

I, _____, give permission for my child _____ to participate in the research project entitled, "EXPLORATION OF PERCEPTIONS OF THE INCLUSION OF THE BOY CHILD IN GBV AWARENESS PROGRAMMES: A CASE STUDY OF GAUTENG NORTH." The study has been explained to me and my questions answered to my satisfaction. I understand that my child's right to withdraw from participating or refuse to participate will be respected and that his/her responses and identity will be kept confidential. I give this consent voluntarily.

If I require further information or become concerned about any aspect of this study, I am free to speak to any of these contacts. **Principal Researcher:** Name: Newlane Svova, Wits email: 2551510@students.wits.ac.za, Phone number: 063 924 5984; **Supervisor:** Name: Dr Laeticia Petersen, Wits email: laetitia.petersen@wits.ac.za , Wits phone number: (+27) 011 717 4474/2

Parent/Guardian Signature:

_____ _____

Signature *Date*

Investigator Signature:

_____ _____

Signature *Date*

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APPENDIX G: TEENAGE BOYS ASSENT FORM

Exploration of perceptions of the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes: a case study of Gauteng north.

(Please circle the relevant options below)

Name of researcher: Newlane Svova

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//other activity may be used by the researcher in their research report. **YES** **NO**

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name or other identifying data 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 as anonymized data for secondary analysis. **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: _____

Date: _____



APPENDIX H: KEY INFORMANT CONSENT SHEET

Exploration of perceptions of the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes: a case study of Gauteng north.

Name of researcher: Newlane Svova

I, ……..……..., give permission for my child…… to participate in the research project titled, "EXPLORATION OF PERCEPTIONS OF THE INCLUSION OF THE BOY CHILD IN GBV AWARENESS PROGRAMMES: A CASE STUDY OF GAUTENG NORTH."

And 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 my child 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 child's interview may be used by the researcher in their research report. **YES NO**

I agree that my child's participation will remain anonymous (their name or other identifying data 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: _____

Date: _____

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APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEENAGE BOYS

Section A: Participant demographics

Age:

School: Grade:

Section B: Interview questions

1. What are your views on Gender-Based Violence?
2. What are your opinions on the inclusion of the boy child in the fight against Gender- Based Violence?
3. How has gender-based violence affected you how you relate with people?
4. What are some specific examples where gender-based violence has affected you in your everyday decision making?
5. Have you or someone close to you experienced gender-based violence?
6. Has your knowledge of gender-based violence caused any challenges in your ability to build and maintain friendships/relationships? If yes, how?
7. Do you feel boys/young men have a role to play in the hope of eradicating gender- based violence in South Africa?
8. What skills do you feel are important for boys/young men need to have to control the spread of gender-based violence in your community?
9. How has your family, extended family members and community influenced you on how you view gender-based violence?
10. What are the possible interventions your families and the communities you come from may implement to mitigate the negative impacts of gender-based violence in teenagers specifically young boys like you?

Thank you for your time.

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APPENDIX J: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANT

Section A: Participant demographics

Questionnaire Educator

Qualifications: _____

Employment sector: _____

Experience as an educator (in years): _____

Section B: Interview questions

1. As an educator what do you see as the effects of including the boy child in addressing Gender-Based Violence issues in South Africa?

2. For the years that you have worked as an educator what knowledge do you feel that the boy child has when it comes to gender-based violence?

3. What is the role of the boy child in fighting against gender-based violence in South Africa?

4. In your own understanding and experience do you feel that the inclusion of the boy child in gender-based violence awareness campaigns will help your community in fighting against gender-based violence?

5. Do you feel that families and the community have an influence on how the boy child part of the programme's understanding as well as how they view gender-based violence?

6. What are some experiences you have observed that the boys' part of the programme is faced with when it comes to gender-based violence?

7. In your own opinion, what do you feel is the major influence of gender-based violence in this community?

8. Do you feel that gender-based violence has an influence on how learners behave and act around people and their colleagues?

9. As an educator have you or someone close o you experienced gender-based violence? If yes, how has it influenced how you relate with people and your learners?

10. What are the possible interventions that families and communities may implement to mitigate the negative impacts of gender-based violence in teenagers specifically
young boys?

11. What are the perceptions of society regarding the inclusion of the boy child in GBV awareness programmes?

Thank you for your time.