

A pastoral study on gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa

KT Mofokeng



orcid.org/0000-0002-2113-1099

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Supervisor: Dr RA Denton

Co-Supervisor: Prof M Kotze

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Student number: 26457296

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this study project with the title, “*A pastoral study on gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa*”, is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it to any other university in order to obtain a degree.



KT Mofokeng

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ABSTRACT

Gender-based violence and femicide has been declared South Africa's second pandemic. It is believed that one in three (1 in 3) women has experienced some form of gender-based violence before the age of 18. The Covid-19 pandemic also had an impact on the increase of Gender-based violence cases in South Africa. It has been indicated that GBV is a violation of the basic human rights of individuals. It has also been maintained that the church is not exempt from GBV and the ill-effects it has on individuals since it has an effect on the spirit, soul and body/physical dimensions of individuals.

It is believed that the social learning and ecological systems theory can be used as a means to understand the motivations behind the perpetration of GBV- related crimes. GBV within the context of the church is rooted in sinfulness and brokenness as well as the misinterpretation of Scripture. It has been noted that the biblical text does actually address issues relating to the rape and murder of women. An exegetical analysis of Judges 19 was conducted in order to discuss GBV from a biblical perspective. It was mentioned that the notion of humanity/mankind as created in the image of God, relates to men and women being seen in equal light. Women should not be regarded as inferior to their male counterparts. It is noted that the church has a role to play in addressing GBV and femicide in society. This involves the church addressing issues of equality and challenging the misuse of Scripture within congregations. Pastoral guidelines to assist victims of GBV have been provided.

Keywords:

Church

Gender-based violence and femicide

Pastoral care

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Chapter 1: Introduction, problem statement and research method

1.1 Research title and key terms

1.1.1 Research title

A pastoral study on gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa.

1.1.2 Key terms

Church, gender-based violence and femicide, pastoral care

1.2 Concept clarification / definition of concepts

1.2.1 Church

When relating to the concept of “church”, it is vital to maintain that the Greek term *ekklēsia* is used to refer to the “church” (Emedi, 2010:17). The term *ekklēsia* is used to refer to “the called-together assemblies” or a community called out (Park, 2015:12). Caudle (2020:1) supports this statement by maintaining that the term relates to an assembly or gathering of believers who come together in a specific place (mainly the church) to worship God. According to the Westminster online dictionary (2020) the church relates to a building where Christians can publicly worship God or host “a religious service” (Mat 6:18; 1 Pet 2:5; Hag 1:8).

The concept of church should be understood from a much broader perspective. Church is not only to be regarded as a place of worship, but from a rather inclusive and biblical perspective the church refers to believers that form part of the body of Christ (Van de Beek, 2012:423). The notion of the church as the body of Christ stems from 1 Corinthians 12:27 which states “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is part of it.” The Church is called “one body” in 1 Corinthians 10:17, “the body of Christ” in 1 Corinthians 12:27 and Ephesians 4:12, and “one body in Christ” in Romans 12:5. Speaking of the church indirectly refers to a specific group of people who confess Jesus as Lord and are joined to Christ in salvation (Eph 4:15-16). This statement is supported by Dreyer (2013:2) who states that “the church is the sphere where the salvation in and through Christ is realised.” It relates to a group of people who through faith have been incorporated into the body of Christ (Allison, 2016:41) regardless of race, background or gender (Gal3 :28). Through Christ the church can, therefore, be recognised as

“a community of believers” who became sisters and brothers and disciples who desire to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and who desire to imitate His character (Dreyer, 2013:2). The church as a faith community constitutes individuals who are the “salt and light” in their communities and the world at large (Forster, 2015:11; Mat 5:13-14). Furthermore, Dreyer (2013:2) maintains that the church relates to the unity found in Christ and to a group of individuals who are one in Christ. According to Dreyer (2013:2) other relevant biblical metaphors relating to the church include viewing the church as a family of God (Gal 6:10; John 1:12-13; 1 Cor 12:26), the church as the people of God (1 Pet 2:5; Acts 20:28) and the church as a temple of the Holy Spirit (Eph 2:19-22).

The church can be distinguished by differentiating between the local church and the universal church (Emedi, 2010:20). The universal and local church are deeply connected and not separate entities of one another. The local church is one which is established within the confines of a specific community and refers to a group of believers gathered together to worship Jesus (Longman, 2013:425). Forster (2015:10) maintains that the local church constitutes values which involve:

social cohesion, faith identity that fosters hope, and at times even concrete expressions of hope (such as feeding schemes, education, skills development, and social care).

The notion of social care as part of the local church is imperative in the context of this study. This aspect is important due to GBV being considered as a social ill which has an effect on the various dimensions of humanity. Furthermore, the notion of the local church in expressing hope is also of importance. Due to the effect of GBV on individuals, hope serves as a foundation for victims to overcome the negative effects and emotions linked with having experienced violence. To broaden the view of the local church, Allison (2016:41) mentions that the local church is constituted upon the following foundations:

- (a) The Word of God and use of Scripture serves as the pivotal foundation of the church.
- (b) Spirit- activated
- (c) Missional
- (d) Confessional

The universal church represents a broader description of the church and intends to encompass all people in the world, with different backgrounds, cultures, races, ethnicities, gender, ages

and traditions who believe in Jesus Christ (Gal 3:28). According to Allison (2016:41), the universal church consists of all those believers in heaven and on earth.

When relating to the church it is also vital to take note of the main functions of the church which include evangelism, edification, worship and social concern (Emedi, 2010:31). The church serves as a place where people are not only encouraged to follow in the way of Christ, but it also serves as a community where learning and growing can occur. The church relates to a community which seeks to extend mutual care (Lyon, 2010:246), teach (Baloyi, 2018:5), build, share the needs of people and provide Christ-centred solutions to the daily crises people encounter in this lifetime (Emedi, 2010:35). Furthermore, the church serves as a representation of the portrayal of the character of Christ on earth. This can be achieved through portraying peace and justice within the church community (Baloyi, 2018:6). According to Emedi (2010:36), the church serves as a community which seeks to present characteristics of compassion and mercy to all people. The church community seeks to provide hope in a broken world (Forster, 2015:1; Lyon, 2010:239; Sande, 2019:9).

In relation to this study the researcher finds that the most fitting definitions of church are those which relate the church to the body of Christ, the family of God and the temple of the Holy Spirit. These definitions are fitting to the study as they serve as reflections of the various roles of the church and pastoral care such as showing care, compassion, guidance and service to vulnerable members of our communities (Dreyer, 2013:3).

1.2.2 Gender-based violence and femicide

According to the (Kangas *et al.*, 2014:40) the concept GBV relates to “harmful acts which are directed towards individuals on the basis of gender.” These harmful and violent acts can be perpetrated by both men and women. According to the UNECE (2021) it is maintained that acts related to GBV often result in “physical, sexual and psychological harm or suffering” to those who fall victim to this type of violence. GBV is regarded as a human rights violation (Cruz & Klinger, 2011:1) and it is comprised of a broad range of actions such as “sexual violence, domestic violence, trafficking, forced marriages and harmful traditional practices” (Kangas *et al.*, 2014:40). Furthermore, the UNECE (2021) maintains that GBV is often accompanied by “threats of violence, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private.”

Within the spectrum of GBV another form of violence is regarded as femicide. According to Matthews (2010:2) femicide is considered to be one of the most extreme forms of GBV. The Merriam Webster online dictionary (2020) defines the term femicide as “the gender-based murder of a woman or girl by a man.” This definition is supported by that of the WHO (2012) which regards femicide as “any killings of women and children.” The WHO (2012) further maintain that these murders are often intentional and are often directed at women because of gender-related inequality and abuse of power.

1.2.3 Pastoral care

Pastoral care is a branch of practical theology which is concerned with the care of individuals and communities. The notion of pastoral care derives from the concept of a shepherd (Doehring, 2015:xxii). According to Louw (2014:3) the notion of shepherd is directly related to caring and to showing comfort to those in need. Furthermore, Louw (2014:3) continues to maintain that concepts such as service, compassion, wisdom, charity, discernment, mercy and unconditional love play a vital role in the ministry of pastoral care.

According to Louw (2014:2) the aspects of “care, cure and healing” are interconnected. Pastoral care aims for an individual or community to reach out towards a place of healing not only in the soul-dimension, but in all areas of functioning. Louw (2014:2) maintains that pastoral care aims to “enhance human dignity and develop a mature and spiritual stance to life.” Researchers such as Miller-McLemore (2012:97) have mentioned that the ministry of pastoral care is embedded within four pillars which comprise of:

- (a) Healing
- (b) Guiding
- (c) Sustaining
- (d) Reconciling

However, Louw (2014:6) elaborates on these pillars and states that other aspects such as nurturing, liberating, empowering and interpreting through the practice of hermeneutics are also central functions which are of importance within pastoral care. Therefore, due to these functions of pastoral care it is vital to maintain that this ministry is of great importance within a church setting. Pastoral care in a church setting allows for the care of members within the church and community at large. This is supported by a statement from Redding (2012:4) which

maintains that “the church is not a self-enclosed community.” This statement implies that the church as the body of Christ extends to the pastoral role of care, edification, love and compassion to all people whether or not they form part of the church. Another important function within the ministry of pastoral care is crisis- intervention and support to individuals, families and communities. This is vital especially “in response to a sudden loss, or experience of violence” (Doehring, 2015:xxii). Therefore, the focus of this study being a “pastoral study” implies that the researcher will focus on the various aspects which the church can portray to victims of GBV. Aspects such as compassion, love and care form a vital foundation in hope care. The researcher believes that once a victim finds hope, he or she can begin walking in a place of freedom and healing from the abuse.

1.3 Background and problem statement

1.3.1 Background

South Africa is a country often referred to as the rainbow nation. This is a country that is often celebrated for its rich history, diverse cultures, diverse language groups and one which is often celebrated for its immense beauty. In the midst of this beauty, the country also finds itself in a crisis. This is a crisis posed by the gender-based violence scourge in our country. GBV is a global crisis (Muluneh *et al.*, 2020:1) which affects women and children at an alarming rate. The term GBV refers to the abuse of an individual often because of his or her gender. According to Sida (2015:4) GBV is defined as any kind of harm and suffering which is often inflicted upon women and children, and one that negatively affects victims on a physical, sexual and psychological level. In the past year during one of his speeches, President Cyril Ramaphosa expressed his great concern regarding the GBV and femicide scourge in the country. In his speech he mentioned that GBV is a second pandemic in SA (Ellis, 2020) and this statement was supported by the police minister, Bheki Cele (Simpson, 2020). These comments came after SA reported approximately 21 GBV-related murders involving women and children within a two-week period (Ellis, 2020). The researcher regards this as one of the darkest weeks in the country. Amongst these reports was also the one about the murder of Tshogfatso Pule who was killed while pregnant. This led to a viral hashtag circulating around social media #StopKillingWomen. Protests broke out throughout the country and this also happened outside the SA borders, where women were standing in solidarity with South African women to fight against this evil pandemic called GBV (Crabtree, 2020). However, the reality remains that this was not the first time we saw women going out to the streets and engaging in protests to fight

against GBV. We witnessed this after the rape and murder of the 19-year-old University of Cape Town student, Uyinene Mrwetyana, in August 2019. This was also not the first time we saw GBV-related hashtags going viral on social media. Some of the very viral hashtags include the #AmINext, #MeToo and #ChallengeAccepted movements.

Bheki Cele maintained that “Gender-based violence is a societal evil that must be contained at all costs” (Simpson, 2020). The researcher agrees with this statement and believes that GBV interventions should not be limited to the government. Interventions should be multi-dimensional and holistic in nature (Muyambo, 2018:13) due to the complexity of GBV and due to SA being a diverse country where people have different worldviews, and cultural and religious beliefs. As a result, the researcher believes that it is imperative for the government, various organisations, stakeholders, members of society (both men and women) and the church to work as a united front in the efforts to prevent GBV.

The church has the responsibility to serve as representatives of God on earth and should at all times strive to imitate His character. Taking into consideration the responsibility and influence of the church the researcher found it important to investigate the role of the church in the response to GBV.

Although the researcher found that most studies argue that church response to GBV has been lacking in efficiency (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2013:221; Le Roux & Bowers-Du Toit, 2017:24; Manzanga, 2020:3), the researcher still believes that through a transformational approach, the church can address GBV by providing hope to those affected by this horrendous crime. This led the researcher to investigate hope as a possible approach to addressing GBV in a country like SA. The researcher believes that it is vital for a foundation to be laid within the church which allows for church leaders to understand the impact of GBV on individuals. Such a foundation can be laid through the development of a hermeneutical framework which is aimed at explaining the impact of GBV on individuals. The researcher will develop such a hermeneutical framework as a basic tool to help churches understand the physical, emotional and spiritual impacts of GBV. Furthermore, this hermeneutical framework is aimed at helping the church to develop adequate responses to GBV. The researcher believes that once church leaders can understand the impact of GBV, this might serve as an aid for churches to respond with empathy and compassion. This empathy and compassion can then serve as foundational aspects to providing hope to those affected by GBV.

The researcher developed a passion for GBV intervention and response because of having the awareness of countless personal stories relating to GBV and the constant media reports of such crimes. According to Muyambo (2018:15) “Everyday a media story is published on GBV in SA.” This statement from Muyambo highlights the seriousness of an issue such as GBV in SA. Due to a personal story of a girl who received insufficient help from the church, the researcher wants to change this narrative for others who might need to reach out to the church for help. The researcher strives to do this by actively using her voice and advocating for change in the churches GBV response. Furthermore, the researcher believes that by using her voice, she is fulfilling the call, as expressed in proverbs 31:8-9. In this portion of Scripture there is a call to “Speak up for those who cannot speak up for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute, speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy” (Proverbs 31:8-9). A verse which the researcher deems important with regards to the church speaking up for the abused in a congregational and communal setting in Amos 2:7. The researcher believes that this is one of the foundational verses which point to the prophetic voice of the church in cases relating to GBV. It is imperative to take note that the Bible never remained silent on GBV (Manzanga, 2020:iv) so the church should break free from the silence regarding GBV. The researcher makes this statement not to shame the church, but as a means to encourage the church to do better and be better when responding to GBV and femicide in SA.

1.3.2 Problem statement

GBV and femicide is a common struggle of our time and it affects people from all walks of life (Abrahams *et al.*, 2013:2). GBV remains an issue of concern from both a global and national level. Global statistics estimate that at least one in three women will be exposed to some form of GBV in their lifetime (Manzanga, 2020:30). Manzanga (2020:41) does mention that GBV is a complex matter, one that is comprised of various dimensions. Some of these dimensions include physical and sexual violence, intimidation (Sande, 2019:2), forced marriages (Manzanga, 2020:34) and femicide (Forster, 2015:5). Most researchers acknowledge that GBV and femicide are a violation to humanity as it infringes on basic human rights (Cruz & Klinger, 2011:1; Le Roux & Bowers-Du Toit, 2017:25; Manzanga, 2020:39). Furthermore, Sande (2019:2) maintains that GBV holds long-term effects for victims which entail psychological trauma and death, in the worst case scenarios. In a country like South Africa, GBV and femicide remain rife, and during the 2020 national lockdown, the country identified thirty GBV hotspots (Mitchley,2020). Despite the laws and government- interventions put in place, GBV cases

continued to be on the rise. This is a great cause for concern (Manzanga, 2020:5) and one which made the researcher realise that the fight to prevent GBV should not be limited to the government or to women. The fight against GBV should include an integrated network of various stakeholders, people, organisations and churches working together in unity to help prevent the problem. As a result, the researcher will be exploring the role of the church in responding to GBV and discussing ways in which the church can provide hope to those affected by GBV.

Various gaps exist in the response of the churches to GBV and according to Manzanga (2020:14) it is argued that churches are not completely engaged in the fight against GBV. Unfortunately, the reality remains that churches continue to fail to adequately respond to GBV and this is saddening as it deepens “the culture of silence related to GBV” amongst victims (Manzanga, 2020:3). The church as one of the most influential spaces in society, should strive to use its God-given power to break the silence and stigma surrounding GBV (Le Roux & Bowers-Du Toit, 2017:27). This is supported by Chisale (2018:3) who maintains that the church should be seen in the forefront of research pertaining to femicide and gender-based violence. Once the church can take its rightful place and start speaking out for the oppressed and marginalised in society, then a culture of hope can be integrated within the church- setting. The researcher believes that in order for hope to be provided, it is imperative for the church to find ways to positively approach issues like GBV within a congregational and communal setting. In order to achieve this, biblical frameworks on pastoral hope-care and the impact of GBV on individuals need to be developed. Such frameworks need to allow for a holistic, multi-faceted approach due to the complexity of an issue such as GBV and femicide (Corradi *et al.*, 2016:977). The limitation, however, is that although an interdisciplinary approach is recommended, most studies base their discussion on femicide in accordance with the social sciences. According to Corradi *et al.* (2016:975) research on femicide often focuses within “feminist, sociological, human rights and decolonial research approaches”. The researcher seeks to fill this gap by addressing femicide from a pastoral-care perspective.

The research problem to be addressed by this study would then be to investigate the role of the church in adequately responding to GBV and femicide in South Africa.

1.4 Preliminary literature review and contextualisation

GBV is a global crisis (Muluneh *et al.*, 2020:1) which affects women and children at an alarming rate. The term GBV refers to the abuse of an individual, often because of his (or her) gender. This statement is supported by Muyambo (2018:12) who mentioned that GBV “refers to violence perpetrated against women because they are women.” This definition by Muyambo clearly has limitations. This is because it fails to acknowledge that men are not exempt from encountering GBV. This statement is supported by Le Roux and Bowers-Du Toit (2017:24), who argue that GBV is not an issue which only affects women as men are also likely to be impacted by it. Within the context of the study, the researcher acknowledges that men are also prone to experiencing GBV. However, emphasis will be placed on GBV and femicide which affects South African women and children. The reason for this is because in SA, women and children are the most vulnerable to this atrocious crime (Simister & Kowalewska, 2016:1624). GBV cases of women as opposed to men tend to be higher. Research shows that approximately one in three women are confronted with a form of GBV in their lifetime (Cruz & Klinger, 2011:1; Sida, 2015:5). According to Sida (2015:4) GBV is defined as any kind of harm and suffering which is often inflicted upon women and children that negatively affects victims on a physical, sexual and psychological level. Although this definition gives an overview of the areas that are influenced as a result of GBV, it is also vital to take note of the fact that GBV negatively affects individuals on a spiritual level as it often causes individuals to feel rejected by God and develop a sense of distrust (Galea, 2008:150).

Sida (2015:5) regards GBV as a very extreme form of violence which goes beyond violating others. This type of violence is also viewed as a “global health issue” which affects people from all backgrounds irrespective of culture, religion, ethnicity or socio-economic circumstances (Muluneh *et al.*, 2020:1). The notion of GBV as a health issue is very important to consider. This is because in a country like SA sexual violence plays a great role in contributing to the increasing numbers of HIV/AIDS (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2013:7) According to Sida (2015:9-13), the concept GBV can also be viewed as an “umbrella term” for other types of violence which include: intimate partner violence, harmful traditional practices, the mutilation of female genitals, violence in the name of honour, any kind of sexual violence, forced childhood marriages, violence against the LBGT community and human- trafficking. Cruz and Klinger (2011:1) maintain that GBV is one of the most common human rights violations faced by people globally. Cruz and Klinger (2011:1) continue to emphasize that this type of violence is dehumanizing and oppressive to those who fall victim to it.

GBV occurs in many forms. These forms of GBV include sexual, physical, emotional, and psychological abuse of women (Chisale, 2018:1; Chitando & Chirongoma, 2013:12). Simister and Kowalewska (2016:1625) constantly report that other forms of GBV include cases where economic dependence between intimate partners is used as a form of abuse as well as forcefully isolating an individual from his/her loved ones. Amongst these forms of GBV we find femicide which is regarded to be one of the most extreme forms of GBV (Matthews, 2010:2).

According to the Merriam Webster online dictionary (2020), the term femicide is described as “the gender-based murder of a woman or girl by a man.” The term currently known as femicide was first introduced by Diana E.H Russel who is a feminist author (Corradi *et al.*, 2016:976). Russel (2012) defined femicide as “the killing of females by males because they are females.” Russel and Harnes (cited by Corradi *et al.*, 2016:976) further broadened the concept of femicide and maintained that it refers to “the death of females resulting from any form of abuse by males.” Weil (2018:1) defined femicide as: “The intentional killing of women and girls because of their gender usually by intimate partners or family members.”

South Africa which is known to be a predominantly Christian country with approximately eighty percent of the population (Manzanga, 2020:3; Muyambo, 2018:20) being of the Christian faith, remains a country in crisis. This statement has been made due to the appalling rates of GBV in the country. The researcher believes that with these high statistics which represents part of the Christian community, it is undeniable that the church is filled with victims and perpetrators of GBV. This statement is supported by Chitando and Chirongoma (2013:3) who have argued that some church members have been involved in GBV cases of whom only some got arrested for this behaviour. Unfortunately, pastors are also sometimes involved in GBV cases. In the past year a South African pastor was sentenced to thirty years in prison for sexual- related crimes directed towards young men (Seleka, 2020). Another pastor who was sentenced at the Oudtshoorn regional court was sentenced on rape charges after having raped twins who attended his church (Tshikalange, 2021). This provides a great cause for concern and is an indicator that GBV is a theological issue worth examining. The church was never intended to be a place of violence and when GBV occurs within the church it undermines the original design of the church. The church community is meant to extend mutual care, teach, build, share the needs of people and provide Christ-centred solutions to the daily crises people encounter in this lifetime (Emedi, 2010:35). Therefore, the study serves as a call for churches to take up their God- given influence and to strive to provide hope for those who are impacted by GBV and femicide. The church can do this through basing their teaching on correct

exegetical and hermeneutical foundations. The researcher holds the belief that the biggest mistake of the church is found in its wrong application of Scripture and exegetical approaches (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2013:215; Le Roux & Bowers-Du Toit, 2017:32). A gap in church interventions to adequately respond to GBV is found in the lack of training most pastors have with regard to GBV and femicide-response (Le Roux & Bowers-Du Toit, 2017:34). Furthermore, the researcher believes that this gap is further aggravated by most churches not providing counselling services in their churches. The researcher experienced this first-hand as only one church out of the many she attended, had this resource available to its members. Chisale (2018:3) argues that “Theologians should be at the forefront of interventions and research because in certain communities, religion is used to defend violent patriarchy.” This statement remains true within a South African perspective as most South Africans are forced to grow up in a patriarchal society (Muyambo, 2018:27). Muyambo (2018:19) believes that the top contributing factors of GBV in SA are patriarchy, poverty and harmful traditional practices which are embedded in forcing young children into marriage (*ukhuthwala*) and virginity-testing. A vast majority of studies focusing on GBV and femicide, explain that individuals are prone to resorting to this behaviour as a result of gender inequality, sexism and patriarchy (Chisale, 2018:1; Corradi *et al.*, 2016:985; Magezi & Manzanga, 2019:1). The need for control and power (Abrahams *et al.*, 2013:2, Matthews *et al.*, 2014:107) also plays a role in GBV and femicide. Le Roux and Bowers-Du Toit (2017:29) argue that a gap within the church with relation to GBV is that “very few faith communities address GBV” and femicide. The researcher believes that this narrative within the church can and should change. The church as a social institution should make social concern a priority (Emedi, 2010:31). Muyambo (2010:31) argues that churches have the influence and ability to “help people deal with burdens and turmoil.” Through an adequate pastoral response, the notion of hope in responding to GBV will become evident. The notion of pastoral hope-care serves as a critical response to the church for those affected by GBV and femicide.

South Africa has been seen to report femicide cases which are known to be approximately five times higher than the global average (Abrahams *et al.*, 2013:2; Muyambo, 2018:27). During the 2020 national lockdown due to the corona virus, South Africa saw an increase in the cases of GBV and femicide. However, this high statistic had already been reported years prior to the national lockdown (Chisale, 2018:3). During this time the country identified thirty GBV hotspots (Mitchley, 2020). This came after SA had experienced a rise in GBV cases to the extent that twenty-one new cases against women and children were reported within a two-week period

(Ellis, 2020). Muyambo (2018:19). maintained that statistical analysis focusing on GBV in Gauteng showed that approximately fifty percent of women in the province had been subject to GBV-related behaviour in their lifetime. This came with the alarming response that approximately 78 percent of men in Gauteng confessed to having perpetrated some form of GBV. With this high statistic of GBV in Gauteng it comes as no surprise that the two biggest townships in the province, Tembisa and Alexandra were amongst the thirty GBV hotspots ranking third and eleventh on the list (Simpson, 2020). According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2021) during the years 2015/16 SA reported approximately 51895 sexual-related crimes which means approximately 142 of these crimes were reported every day. According to the Mail and Guardian special reports, between the years 2018/19, SA reported 52420 sexual- related crimes, in 2019/20 SA reported 53293 of these crimes (Dicks, 2020). In 2019/20 SA recorded approximately 2695 murders of women, which approximates to a woman in SA being murdered every three hours (Dicks, 2020). These stats only show those crimes which were reported taking into consideration that GBV- related cases are often under-reported (UNODC, 2021; Manzanga, 2020:2). According to Muyambo (2018:18) during the year 2018, the city of Cape Town reported approximately 300 domestic violence-related cases each month and he further stated that in SA approximately 1 in 3 individuals would experience IPV in their lifetime.

Matthews *et al.* (2014:107) mentions that in South Africa, femicide is regarded as one of the most dominant causes of female murder. According to statistical information provided by Matthews (2010:v), approximately 50.3 percent of female murders in South Africa have been perpetrated by intimate partners. Weil (2018:1) maintains that in the year 2012 approximately 43600 females were killed by their intimate partners and some were killed by family members. Although a vast majority of these murders are perpetrated by intimate partners, the researcher does not single out those cases which occur outside intimate relationships. An example of such a case is that of 19-year-old University of Cape Town student, Uyinene Mrwetyana who was raped and murdered on Saturday 24 August 2019 by a 42-year-old post office worker at the Clareinch Post Office in Cape Town.

Although GBV and femicide are prevalent within a South African context, Weil (2018:10) maintains that European scholars are currently at the forefront of research on the field of femicide. The majority of these European studies on femicide are focused on discussing the issue with specific emphasis on Italy (Ferrara *et al.*, 2015:1). Other studies focus on countries

like Mexico (Corradi *et al.*, 2016:975), Peru (Hernandez, 2018), Brazil and the United States of America (Harth da Costa *et al.*, 2017:3087).

GBV is a widely- discussed topic in the field of practical theology amongst scholars such as Chisale, Dreyer, Manzanga, Muyambo, Le-Roux and Bowers-Du Toit. The shortcoming is that most of these practical theological sources do not give an in-depth discussion on the issue of femicide. This statement stems from the fact that the researcher could not find practical theological sources which solely focus on femicide. Weil (2018:2) supports this statement by maintaining that topics such as GBV, domestic violence and IPV are often studied by scholars while the focus on the issue of femicide remains uncommon and ignored in these studies. Chisale (2018:3) gives a brief mention of femicide in her article titled “*Domestic violence in marriage and self-silencing: Pastoral care in a context of self-silencing.*” Furthermore, the researcher does acknowledge scholars like Manzanga who do address femicide in their work. Manzanga (2020:45) in his paper “*A public pastoral assessment of church response to Gender Based Violence (GBV) within the United Baptist Church of Zimbabwe*” does touch intently on the issue of femicide.

Within the scope of this study the researcher will be examining the pastoral care of hope to those affected by GBV and femicide. The researcher seeks to contribute a new body of knowledge within the pastoral care field by re-evaluating the role of the church in responding to GBV and femicide. The researcher will do this by developing a hermeneutical framework that is designed to help churches understand the implications that GBV can have on affected individuals. Another hermeneutical framework focusing on hope and transformative change will be designed to show how churches can provide hope to victims affected by GBV and femicide. Chisale (2018:5) maintains that it is important for the church to be involved in addressing social ills from all platforms. This remains equally important for Magezi and Manzanga (2019:1), who maintain that “churches are a critical social institution that could play a pivotal role in addressing GBV.”

1.5 Contribution of the study

Although ample research on domestic violence has been done in the field of practical theology (Baloyi, 2013:1-10; Chisale, 2018:1-8; Davies & Dreyer, 2014:1-8; Klaasen, 2018:1-11; Magezi & Manzanga, 2019:1-9), the particular goal of the study is to focus on GBV and femicide within a South African perspective. Through the work presented in this study, the

researcher seeks to provide new knowledge on how the church can be actively involved in the prevention of GBV and femicide in our communities and congregational settings. This will be achieved through developing a hermeneutical framework which can be used in utilising an appropriate response to GBV and femicide. The first hermeneutical framework will be a basic framework designed for churches to understand the impact of GBV on affected individuals. The second framework is based on the notion of pastoral hope-care. This framework takes into consideration the basic principles of pastoral care and integrates these in a manner which allows the church to respond appropriately to those affected by GBV and femicide.

The study is relevant as it will serve as a guideline to church leaders, congregants and counsellors on how to deal with the implications of GBV amongst victims. Furthermore, the study will serve as a guideline to the church to respond appropriately to GBV with hope care as a foundational aspect.

1.6 Research question and further questions

1.6.1 Research question

The question to be answered by this research is:

What is the pastoral role of the church in response to GBV and femicide in South Africa?

1.6.2 Further questions arising from the research question

The further questions of the study will be formulated in accordance to the practical theological interpretation model of Richard Osmer. These questions will serve as a guideline to answer the primary research question.

1. What is the situation, episodes and context of GBV and femicide in South Africa? (Following Osmer's (2008:4) descriptive-empirical question "What is going on?")
2. Which interdisciplinary approaches can be applied in understanding the situation, episodes and context of GBV and femicide in South Africa? (Following Osmer's (2008:4) interpretive question "Why is this going on?")
3. What is the role of Scripture in addressing GBV and femicide and how does Scripture encourage appropriate responses of GBV in the church? (Following Osmer's (2008:4) normative question "What ought to be going on?")

4. How can the church adequately respond to GBV and femicide from a South African perspective? (Following Osmer's (2008:4) pragmatic question "How might we respond?")

1.7 Research aim and objectives

1.7.1 Research aim

The aim of this study is to establish the pastoral role of the church towards the GBV and femicide response in South Africa.

1.7.2 Research objectives

1. To identify what the situations, episodes and context of GBV and femicide are in South Africa.
2. To identify the role of interdisciplinary approaches in understanding the situation, episodes and context of GBV and femicide in SA.
3. To identify the role of Scripture in addressing GBV and femicide. To identify how Scripture encourages appropriate responses of GBV from the church
4. To identify the role of the church in adequately responding to GBV and femicide from a South African perspective.

1.8 Central theoretical argument

The central theoretical argument of this study is that the church can address the issue of GBV and femicide from a pastoral perspective. The church, as an institution created by God to serve people, can play a fundamental role in providing hope to individuals who have been confronted with the pain brought by GBV and femicide.

1.9 Research methodology

The methodology will be a literature study and the aim is to critically evaluate and analyse various forms of literature (Louw, 2015:75). The researcher will be making use of this method as it allows for the research question to be adequately answered from literature. The researcher

has identified sufficient sources that will be useful in answering the research question and study objectives. This will serve as the foundation to gathering an adequate amount of data and focusing on the role of the church in providing hope to victims who are affected by GBV and femicide. The literature collected will be from interdisciplinary sources focusing on the fields of practical theology and other sciences such as psychology. The reason for this is because an interdisciplinary approach will be applied throughout the research (Osmer, 2008:163-164). The researcher will make use of an interdisciplinary approach due to the complexity of an issue such as GBV. Corradi *et al.* (2016:977) agree with this statement as they also maintain that GBV and femicide are of a complex nature. As a result, the use of a “multifaceted model” is vital in understanding GBV and femicide. Furthermore, the literature collected will include books, journal articles, media articles, documents and internet sources which are academically based. The researcher will select relevant sources as found within the NWU databases such as EBSCOHOST, PROQUEST and the library. Google Scholar and Google Books will also be used as databases to find articles and books which are relevant to the study. In order to maintain credibility and reliability within the study the researcher aims to make use of the most recent sources. In order to achieve this, the researcher will avoid using sources which are older than ten years.

When conducting the search for articles and books on the NWU databases, the following keywords were used: Church, femicide, GBV, pastoral care, hope. The researcher has tried to narrow the selection of sources down by using “South Africa” as a key-word. The reason for this is because the study is conducted from a South African perspective. Although a researcher like Manzanga (2020) predominantly focuses on the Zimbabwean perspective of GBV, he does give a brief mention of GBV and femicide from a South African perspective. Due to the non-empirical nature of this study, information on relevant statistics will be conducted through databases such as Statistics South Africa, the South African Police Service and relevant statistical databases, newspaper articles, well-known journals and publications focused on GBV and femicide in South Africa. Furthermore, statistical information will also be collected from recently-published theses and dissertations. In order to ensure the relevance and credibility of statistical data, the researcher will make use of information not older than five years. The researcher will constantly reflect on recent media stories on GBV and femicide as the study does not involve any interviews with actual victims.

The study is based on a practical theological perspective where the field of pastoral care is the main focus. According to Louw (2008:19) practical theology is focused on the following aspects:

rational reflection and theory formation within a hermeneutical model; metaphor and interpretation; action, word and communication, liberation and transformation, as well as anticipation and hope.

These aspects of practical theology which Louw focuses on are synonymous to the core focus of pastoral care. Furthermore, aspects focused on “reflection, theory formation within a hermeneutical model, hope, as well as liberation and transformation” (2008:19) will be presented throughout the research study. This will be done through reflecting on personal stories on GBV and applying an appropriate hermeneutical framework to these stories. As mentioned before some of these stories will be based on recent GBV and femicide- related stories reported by the media. This approach will be utilised as no empirical research involving human participants, was conducted.

Furthermore, the use of Scripture will also play a fundamental role within the discussion. The use of Scripture is of importance within this study due to the practical theological aspect which forms part of the study. According to Louw (2015:63) practical theology as a theory and science of action is concerned with communicative actions. Louw (2015:64) continues to state that “hermeneutical reflection” plays a fundamental role in the notion of practical theology. Within the field of practical theology, it is important to accept that all Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit, is authoritative and God-breathed (Erickson, 1990:202). This stems from 2 Timothy 3:16 which maintains that “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.” The practical theological model of Richard Osmer (2008) will serve as the main channel through which the research discussion will be structured. The researcher will focus on discussing the “four core tasks of practical theological interpretation” as discussed by Osmer (2008:4). Within the four tasks of interpretation, the model of Osmer (2008:4) seeks to answer four questions which are:

- What is going on? - Descriptive-empirical task
- Why is it going on? – Interpretive task
- What ought to be going on? – Normative task
- How might we respond? – Pragmatic task

The reason for making use of this method is due to the researcher aiming to make use of an interpretive approach throughout the study. The researcher has chosen to make use of the model of Osmer (2008:4) because it allows for an integration of theories not only from a practical theological perspective, but from other sciences which allow for an interdisciplinary approach to be used (Osmer, 2008:163-164).

1.9.1 The descriptive-empirical task

According to Osmer (2008:4) the descriptive-empirical task consists of the question “What is going on?” The aim of this task is to explore and gather information on the nature of situations, episodes and contexts that people experience (Osmer, 2008:4).

Within the first task, the question in focus will be aligned to understanding the nature and context of GBV and femicide within a South African perspective. When working on this task the researcher will be answering the question: “What is the situation, episodes and contexts of GBV and femicide in South Africa?” To answer this question, the researcher will design a hermeneutical framework focused on understanding the impact of GBV on the different aspects of humanity. These aspects include the notions of spirit, soul and body as humans are created as triune beings. This hermeneutical framework will be useful in order to help church leaders identify the impact GBV has on victims on a spiritual, psychological and physical level. In order to add meaning to this section, the researcher will take note of recent statistical information on GBV and femicide in South Africa. This report of statistics will come from information gathered from South African statistical databases such as Statistics South Africa, published academic articles and current affairs such as the news and newspapers. Although this is a non-empirical study, some qualitative aspects such as the use of statistics, tables and graphs will be reflected within the study. The research literature should reflect elements of pastoral care or elements of research from interdisciplinary studies. This is due to the complex nature of GBV and femicide. The literature should reflect recent statistical data focused within the perspective of South Africa which is at least five years old. To adequately answer the research question from a South African perspective, the research will mostly make use of literature written and published by South African researchers. Due to the pastoral focus of this study, the study will utilise the use of literature from the perspective of pastoral care as the sole foundation. The researcher will make use of academic and popular material including academic

articles, books, study reports from GBV organisations and newspapers as basic sources to guide the answering of the question.

1.9.2 The interpretive task

The second task of practical theological interpretation seeks to develop an understanding into why a particular situation, episode or context is going on (Osmer, 2008:4). Within this task it is imperative to make use of an interdisciplinary approach in order to handle situations and contexts. This task is dependent on making use of theories derived from other disciplines such as the arts and sciences (Osmer, 2008:83). In light of the second task of practical theological interpretation, the researcher will answer the question: “Which interdisciplinary approaches can be applied in understanding the situation, episodes and context of GBV and femicide in South Africa?” In order to answer this question, the researcher will resort to a meta-theoretical departure point (De Klerk & De Wet, 2013:7) and an interdisciplinary approach (Osmer, 2008:163-164) where focus will be on integrating theories from other sciences such as psychology. The psychological theories which will be referred to in the study include Frankl’s existential theory, Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory as well as theories related to Beck’s cognitive theory. These theories will be used as they focus on notions such as hope as well as environmental, community and cognitive influences which play a role in shaping behaviour. According to Osmer (2008:84) such integration is vital as it helps in developing an understanding of complex and multi-dimensional phenomena. Data to answer the question will be found in both theological and psychological journals, articles, theses and dissertations as well as books.

1.9.3 The normative task

The third task of practical theological interpretation places emphasis on the question “What ought to be going on?” Although an interdisciplinary approach will be prevalent within the study it is vital to mention that a biblical approach forms the foundation of the study. The researcher regards the Scriptures as the authoritative word of God and as a result views all Scripture references within the study as authoritative. Therefore, it is of vital importance to integrate the use of Scripture when interpreting situations in accordance with the normative task. The use of Scripture within the pastorate allows for individuals to seek the guidance of God in the pursuit of understanding what ought to be done in response to certain situations,

contexts and episodes (Osmer,2008:138). Osmer (2008:139) maintained that both theological, and ethical interpretation, are regarded as foundational aspects of the normative task. As a result, the researcher will briefly describe the history of the church in responding to GBV and relate it to the current response of the church. Furthermore, the researcher will also take into consideration some ethical issues which GBV poses to victims and will consider the involvement of the church in this regard. The question the researcher will be answering as part of this task is “What is the role of Scripture in addressing GBV and femicide and how does Scripture encourage appropriate responses from the church?” In order to adequately answer this question, the researcher will make use of the biblical interpretation method of exegesis as proposed by Stuart (2008:139).

The researcher will identify the Scriptural perspectives that can be applied in addressing GBV and femicide. The researcher will be investigating the role of Scripture in providing appropriate responses to victims affected by GBV. To respond to the question within this task the researcher will make use of biblical texts and commentaries. The researcher will also study the biblical text and interpret Scripture to determine what the Scriptures say about violence against women although the Bible does not necessarily make use of the words “GBV” or “femicide.” The Bible is, however, full of examples of oppression and violence against women. Some of these examples are found in 2 Samuel 13 where the rape of Tamar is documented, Genesis 34 documents the rape of Dinah and in Judges 19:22-30 the rape and murder of a woman is documented. Due to the focus of this study being on GBV and femicide the researcher will also refer to Exodus 20:13 where one of the ten commandments states “Do not murder.”

The researcher will make references to the field of Dogmatics. Focus will be on conducting a discussion on mankind as created in the image of God. In order to do this effectively, the doctrine of man, sin and the covenant will be referred to. The reason for this is because the researcher will be addressing the views of men as elevated above women in relation to humanity being created in the image of God. The key verse pertaining to humanity being created in the image of God, is Genesis 1:27.

1.9.4 The pragmatic task

The question asked in the pragmatic task is, “How might we respond?” to situations and contexts. Osmer (2008:4) relates to formulating theoretical-practical guidelines and goals. He

(2008:4) maintained that the pragmatic task aims at combating actions that seek to influence situations in desirable ways. The response maintained within this task should be Christ-centred, although the use of an interdisciplinary approach can still be regarded as useful in responding to a situation. Within the context of this task the researcher will answer the question “How can the church adequately respond to GBV and femicide from a South African perspective?” In order to adequately answer this question, the researcher will integrate a hermeneutical framework to aid in answering the question which forms part of this task. Within the context of the pragmatic task, the researcher will evaluate the theory of practice in which the church should respond to the issue of GBV and femicide.

1.10 Ethical implications

Due to the nature of the study being solely focused on a literature review, the study was conducted, as a **low risk** study. The ethics number allocated for the research is NWU-00767-21-A7. The extensive literature research (of explorative, descriptive and explanatory design) (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95-96) posed a low risk due to the fact that it did not include human participants. The researcher conducting the study had successfully completed the ethical training course and adhered to the ethical rules as set by the North-West University. As a result, the researcher avoided academic dishonesty, acknowledged all sources used and made use of the Harvard referencing style to reference all sources, and avoid plagiarism.

1.11 Provisional classification of chapters

- Chapter 1: Introduction, problem statement and research method.
- Chapter 2: Descriptive analysis of GBV within a South African Context.
- Chapter 3: Interpretive analysis of GBV in South Africa.
- Chapter 4: Normative task - Scriptural perspectives on GBV.
- Chapter 5: A pragmatic interpretation of GBV and femicide.
- Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendation

Chapter 2: Descriptive analysis of GBV within a South African Context

2.1 Introduction

The following chapter will be written in alignment to the first task of Osmer's practical theological perspective where the goal is to answer the question: "What is going on?" (Osmer, 2008:4). As mentioned in the previous chapter, the goal of this first task is to explore and gather information on the nature of situations, episodes, and contexts that people experience. (Osmer, 2008:4). In the context of this chapter, the researcher will then explore and gather information on the nature, episodes, and context of GBV in South Africa.

The chapter will be focusing on a broadened contextualisation of GBV. Within the contextualisation, the research will discuss the nature of situations, episodes and contexts relating to GBV. Firstly, the researcher will investigate GBV as an issue which violates the freedom of others. The researcher will then discuss the nature and context of GBV in SA. This will be followed by a discussion of GBV in relation to the United Nations sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Secondly, the researcher will show the prevalence of GBV in South Africa through the use of statistical information. These current trends will be presented through the use of graphs and tables. In this section, the researcher will briefly discuss the role that attitudes and perceptions play in the perpetration of violent acts. This will be followed by the researcher showing the current trends on femicide, child murders and sexual offences in SA.

Thirdly, the researcher will discuss GBV within the context of the church. As part of this discussion the researcher will discuss the role of the church in promoting violent behaviour towards women.

Lastly, the study will show a hermeneutical framework of the impact that GBV can have on individuals. This hermeneutical framework will focus on the three aspects of humanity comprising of spirit, soul, and body.

2.2. Contextualisation

2.2.1. GBV as a violation of freedom

On 27 April 2021, SA celebrated twenty-seven years of freedom after the first democratic elections in 1994 and freedom from the Apartheid regime in the country (de Souza, 2021, Smit & Notermans, 2015:29). Days such as Freedom Day should be seen as an incredible milestone for a country like South Africa. However, one ceases to wonder whether or not there is a true representation of freedom in the country? In order to answer this question, it is vital to first define the concept.

The Oxford learners' dictionary (2021) defines *freedom* as: "The power or right to do or say what you want without anyone stopping you." The researcher considers this definition to be a bit limited and narrow-minded. Such a definition can be used as a means to defend unruly behaviour and actions of individuals. Freedom, seen from this stance can be used as an excuse to infringe on the rights of others. From such a perspective, freedom can be used as an excuse to inflict pain and hurt others.

The Merriam Webster online dictionary (2021) defines freedom as "the quality or state of being free." This freedom according to the Merriam Webster dictionary (2021) relates to the state of being free from "necessity, coercion, or constraint." Furthermore, freedom relates to experiencing liberty "from slavery or restraint or from the power of another." (Merriam Webster, 2021). This definition is more fitting in the context of this study. The reason for this is due to the fact that it addresses aspects such as power dynamics and coercion which are prevalent in GBV perpetration. More will be discussed on these aspects throughout the research.

When the South African youth was asked what freedom meant to them, some maintained that freedom means to live in a country where equality is celebrated (Motloun, 2015). However, in South Africa this is not necessarily the case. It remains a reality that in SA, a lot of individuals are still forced to face the injustice of inequality (de Souza, 2021; Dlamini, 2021:583). One cannot deny that the current COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the level and nature of inequality present in the country (Dlamini, 2021:583). Inequality from the perspective of this research is seen through the mindset of patriarchy where women and children are the most vulnerable (Mampane, 2020:250) people in society to fall prey to the evil of GBVF (Gender-based violence and femicide).

From the perspective of the researcher, freedom means being able to express oneself without living in the fear of the unknown. It means to be free to walk the streets without having to fear being the next victim of a violent and hateful crime. However, fear and utter terror remain the reality of most South African women and children (Sande, 2019:3; Stats SA, 2018:1). It is vital to realise that this fear is also common amongst men, although it is slightly lower in comparison to that of females (Stats SA, 2018:7). In an interview with Dr Judy Dlamini, Leanne Manas, an SABC journalist, cited that it is argued that “we cannot fully celebrate freedom while women in this country are not free to walk the streets” (SABC News, 2021). The researcher remains in agreement with this argument. This is because, the researcher believes that freedom is impossible to attain while our people are forced on a daily basis to live in conditions of oppression. We cannot fully be free as long as our brothers and sisters are faced with injustices such as violence and other social ills (SABC News, 2021). Within the context of this study, it can be said that we cannot fully celebrate freedom as long as GBV and femicide remain at the forefront of our narrative as a country. Not a single day passes without news being reported related to GBV and femicide-connected murders in South Africa (Muyambo, 2018:15). This horrendous crime happens everywhere. It happens in our schools, university settings, post offices, churches, homes, care centres, hotels, and just about anywhere outdoors. This shows that GBV is not reserved for a certain group of people and it can occur almost anywhere. This type of crime can be regarded as an exploitation of freedom (Stats SA, 2018:7) of those who encounter this crime or remain secondary victims after losing loved ones to GBV and femicide.

In order to attain this freedom, we need to act as a collective and to actively use our voices as a way to fight for justice. In a recent interview with residents from Alexandra township in Gauteng, an eNCA journalist Nqobile Madlala reported that fear is a prevalent response amongst residents in this township (eNCA, 2021). This fear, according to one of the interview respondents, sparks feelings of uneasiness when children are playing outside (eNCA, 2021). This township is notorious for crime and it is one of the recorded thirty GBV hotspots in SA (Mitchley,2020). Furthermore, in another interview from the eNCA it was mentioned that women residing in the Eastern Cape village, Lusikisiki constantly live in fear due to a resurgence in rape- cases and sexual offences reported in this part of the country (eNCA, 2021). All these news reports indicate that fear of such crime is a common response for South Africans. This is due to the fact that South -Africans live in a country where no- one is safe. It is an unfortunate truth that SA is in fifth place as one of the most dangerous countries in the world (Simpson, 2020).

Taking all of this into account, one can dare to say that true freedom is not yet a reality in South Africa. This has been reiterated by President Cyril Ramaphosa (2021) during his Freedom Day speech. In his speech he mentioned that although we have been living in a democratic country for twenty-seven years, the reality remains that for many South Africans true freedom remains a distant dream. In South Africa citizens constantly find themselves confronted with the reality of violence and crime (Ramaphosa, 2021). Being a woman myself here in South Africa, I, the researcher, experience fear of walking alone in the streets when not accompanied by someone else and I constantly have to be vigilant of my surroundings. For many South Africans this fear remains a reality even in the comfort of their own homes. The home-environment has become common ground for the abuse of women and children. In the worst case scenarios of violence, death is the end result. Abuse in the home- environment can either be perpetrated by individuals known to the victim or by strangers who gain access through house-break-ins. Events such as these are scary and South Africans need a new generation that will be bold and willing to address social ills such as GBV and femicide.

Nelson Mandela as cited by Nyamweda (2017) in one of his quotes stated that:

Freedom cannot be achieved unless the women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression. Our endeavours must be about the liberation of the woman, the emancipation of the man and the liberty of the child.

What is this oppression one may ask? In the context of this study, oppression relates to the evil of violent and gender-based crimes which affect countless women and children in our country. From a global perspective it is maintained that approximately one in three girls (Abdool & Baxter, 2016:1151; Manzanga, 2020:37; Muluneh *et al.*, 2020:2; Muyambo, 2018:18; UNDP, 2021), and one in six boys will encounter some form of violence before they reach the age of eighteen (Anon, 2021). In South Africa it is estimated that a woman is murdered “every four hours” which approximates to at least eight women being subjected to murder every day (Myeni, 2021). These statistics only point to murders which are known and reported. Without a doubt there are more woman and children who get murdered each day but these cases unreported. These statistics are alarming and should be seen as a call for action from both civil society and the church to work as a unified front to fight this oppression which affects our brothers, sisters, mothers, and children. Fighting this oppression will liberate our people and only when we win this fight can we start walking towards true freedom. However, in order to achieve this, it is vital to understand what an injustice like GBV really looks like in the context

of South Africa. Therefore, in the following section the researcher will discuss the nature and context of GBV in South Africa.

2.2.2. The nature and context of GBV in South Africa

GBV is a widespread phenomenon in South Africa (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2013:9; Mahabeer, 2021:29) - one which is such a common narrative for many South Africans. In South Africa, the reality is that most individuals have been exposed to some form of violence at some point in their lives. This perspective is backed up by global statistical evidence which shows that approximately a third of all women have been subjected to some form of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime (Muluneh *et al.*, 2020:2). Furthermore, Muyambo (2018:16) argues that South Africa is recognised as one of the world's leading countries in GBV. This is due to the high GBV numbers which are prevalent in the country (Stats SA, 2018:3). The country is also known as the rape-capital of the world (Mahabeer, 2021:29; Stats SA, 2018:4), with Inanda in Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN) known as the "rape-capital" of the country (Rondganger, 2021). GBV is regarded by many to be complex in nature (le Roux & Bowers-Du Toit, 2017:37). This complexity could be based on the fact that GBV is a broad concept and it takes many forms. Scholars tend to define the term GBV as "any act that results in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering" (Decker *et al.*, 2015:188; Gaffoor *et al.*, 2013:1; Muluneh *et al.*, 2020:1; Murhula *et al.*, 2021:85; Muyambo, 2018:12). Within this classification, it should be mentioned that acts such as rapes, murders, femicide, intimate partner violence (IPV), genital mutilations, honour-killings and forced marriages amongst many others, are some common forms of GBV (Manzanga, 2020:34-35). In South Africa, GBV is such a prevalent social-ill (le Roux & Bowers-Du Toit, 2017:23) which is often rooted in gender inequality (Dlamini, 2020:5; Magezi & Manzanga, 2020:2).

Taking into consideration that GBV is rooted in gender inequality it is vital to state that GBV defies all basic human rights of individuals (Mahabeer, 2021:29). The reason for this distinction is based on the notion that scholars regard GBV as a human rights violation (Manzanga, 2020:39; Muluneh *et al.*, 2020:1-2). As mentioned before GBV as a human rights violation, robs aspects such as freedom from individuals. It creates a world where people are not free to walk the streets, stay in their houses or even be in church without the fear of victimization. Therefore, the researcher stands in full support of a statement made by Dlamini (2020:5) who maintained that addressing GBV as a human rights violation "is the first step" to adequately bring positive change to the GBV response. For this to be done, it is imperative to note that no

individual should be viewed as inferior due to her or his gender, racial background, or socio-economic background (Muluneh, 2020:1-2). Although research on GBV tends to focus on women and children (le Roux & Loots, 2017:734), the truth remains that GBV is not necessarily a women's issue (le Roux & Bowers-Du Toit, 2017:24). It should rather be viewed as a societal issue, which requires all members of society to play their part in fighting it. This statement is supported by le Roux and Bowers-Du Toit (2017:24,27) who argue that just as GBV affects both males and females, it is important for both genders to work as a united front to prevent it. However, in some instances it can be noted that some individuals fail to recognize violent behaviour. This is mostly due to toxic cultural norms, which fail to recognize or categorize certain behaviours as GBV (UNODC, 2018:35). In the rural Eastern Cape parts of South Africa, the cultural norm of forced child marriages is still widely practised and accepted (Manzanga, 2020:60; Smit & Notermans, 2015:29; UNODC, 2018:42).

This practice of forced child marriages is known as “*ukuthwala*” (Mtshali, 2014:56). Manzanga (2020:34) maintains that on a global scale, approximately sixty million young girls have been subjected to forced childhood marriages. However, according to the United Nations Development Plan (UNDP, 2021) the number of girls who have got married before the age of eighteen is as high as 750 million. From this UNDP statistic it can be determined without a doubt that most of these marriages are forced and arranged marriages. According to a statement made by Muyambo (2018:13) cultural norms such as “*ukuthwala* and virginity testing” are considered to be one of the leading forces of GBV perpetration in the country. This practice puts children as young as twelve years old at risk of early sexual exposure, domestic violence and it takes away their opportunity to fully enjoy their childhood. Although the law is somewhat against this, it is not put to full effect as individuals can argue that this is their culture. This then makes the GBV fight contradictory to behaviours which are culturally acceptable. Furthermore, the payment of *lobola* (Manzanga, 2020:57) can make it difficult for women to report marital rape. The concept of marital rape can be considered taboo to speak about, due to something like sex being considered a right within the context of marriage. We unfortunately live in a world where cultural acts like the payment of *lobola*, has lost its significance. We live in a world where *lobola* is no longer about putting two families together but has become a matter of ownership. Once a man pays *lobola* for a woman it easily creates the ideology that the woman is his property (Manzanga, 2020:57) and has no right to refuse to engage in sexual behaviour. Likewise, in cases like these it is believed that the patriarchal ideology common in Africa has created a world where men “cannot be accused of raping” or beating a woman

(Manzanga, 2020:55). In some cases, when a woman refuses to engage in sexual behaviour, she is deemed to be disrespectful and often has violence perpetuated upon herself. However, it cannot be overlooked that consent needs to be present in all cases irrespective of the relationship status between a man and a woman.

Within the context of SA, behaviours such as forced child marriages and marital rape go against section twelve of the Bill of Rights. In this section of the Bill of Rights it is stated that all individuals have the right to “freedom and security of the person” (Bannister, 2012:12; Greer, 2015:114). This right maintains that all people have the right to:

be free from all forms of violence from either public or private sources; not to be tortured in any way; and not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhumane or degrading way. Everyone has the right to bodily and psychological integrity, which includes the right to make decisions concerning reproduction; to security in and control over their body (Greer, 2015:114).

The researcher argues that any form of sexual offence takes away the opportunity for individuals to be in control of their own bodies. Often marital rape, especially in cases of forced marriages occurs when a man is trying to force the woman or a child to fall pregnant. Such thought patterns not only take a toll on women and children on a psychological level, but they pose a health threat to victims (Muluneh *et al.*, 2020:1-2; Murhula *et al.*, 2021:85). Hence, GBV is also defined by scholars to be a “global public health issue” (le Roux & Bowers-Du Toit, 2017:25; le Roux & Loots, 2017:733; Muluneh *et al.*, 2020:1-2). In the case of forced child marriages, children are not entirely well-developed to take on the strain that comes with pregnancy. It puts women and children at risk of experiencing pregnancy complications (le Roux & Loots, 2017:734) which can be fatal in some instances. Furthermore, individuals who experience sexual offences are more prone to be exposed to gynaecological problems (le Roux & Loots, 2017:734). Recently it has been reported that there are concerns over young girls in the Eastern Cape testing positive for human papillomavirus (Fokazi, 2021). This virus poses a threat of cervical cancer later in life to those who contract it. It is estimated that in a sample of 200 high school girls, approximately seventy percent of these girls had tested positive for HPV (Fokazi, 2021). According to Mbulawa *et al.* (2021:2) HPV is predominantly a common type of “sexually transmitted virus” amongst adolescent girls and young adult women. This is cause for concern due to the fact that South Africa has high numbers of cervical cancer and HIV (Mbulawa *et al.*, 2021:2).

According to scholars it is believed that GBV is one of the leading causes of women and children contracting STD's like HIV/AIDS (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2013:7; Decker *et al.*, 2015:189; Gaffoor, 2013:1; le Roux & Loots, 2017:734; Sande, 2019:7). In a country like South Africa, the HIV epidemic is rife and the country is considered to be an HIV epicentre in the world (Allinder & Fleischman, 2019) and this is further elevated by the high GBV rates prevalent in the country (de Lange *et al.*, 2012:499; Muyambo, 2018:27). According to the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (Allinder & Fleischman, 2019) approximately sixty percent of all women in the KZN province are HIV positive. Within this percentage, it is alleged that in the very same province about a third of young women between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four are HIV positive (Allinder & Fleischman, 2019). These numbers are alarming; it goes without a doubt that GBV, especially amongst the population of young women who tested positive, could have been one of the largest contributors of HIV. This reminds the researcher think of the current *blesser* trend which is common in South Africa (Palfreman, 2020:i). This trend involves young women being financially dependent on older men with whom they get into relationships, in exchange for sexual favours (Palfreman, 2020:i). These relationships are often not based on commitment and often just involve a “give and take” scenario. Such relationships are often very self-centred and in the perspective of the researcher, based on “supply and demand.” What the researcher means by this is that these relationships are based on the *blesser* (the man) supplying money or very expensive gifts, while the *blessee* (the younger woman) has to give her body sexually, irrespective of what it entails, as this is the demand of the *blesser*. Often in relationships such as these, condom non-use is common (Decker *et al.*, 2015:189) and the woman has no say over her body. The researcher believes that this trend puts young women at risk of GBV and in the worst case scenarios, femicide. A common story relating to the so-called *blesser* movement which resulted in a tragic murder, is the story of Karabo Mokoena (Shange, 2017). The late Karabo Mokoena was only twenty-seven years of age when she was murdered by her boyfriend (Manzanga, 2020:47), after a fight which erupted due to a previous day's argument (Saba, 2017). It is imperative to maintain that most of these *blersers* are married men who are engaged in infidelity (Manzanga, 2020:57). Furthermore, Manzanga (2020:57) a maintains that the driving force for HIV is often perpetuated by the inability for women to make choices regarding safe sex with their partners. It is a sad reality that in most cases, women are forced to conform with their partner's decision on whether or not to engage in safe sex.

In the paper *Gender-Based Violence and HIV: Reviewing the evidence for links and causal pathways in the general population and high-risk groups*, the authors Dunkle and Decker (2013:20) hold that those who have experienced some form of GBV, have a fifty-three percent chance to test positive for HIV/AIDS. This, in the perspective of the researcher, could be due to the fact that not all victims of GBV seek help after having experienced some form of sexual violence. This is a common response due to the shame, stigma (le Roux & Bowers-Du Toit, 2017:33), and culture of silence (Manzanga, 2020:1). In some cases, women are not entirely aware of the help they can access after having been subjected to any GBV -related offence. In South Africa the government has put in place Thuthuzela care centres across different parts of the country for victims of GBV to be assisted and given adequate care (South African government, 2021).

Manzanga (2020:3) argues that “South Africa has failed to protect women from GBV.” Although this is a partly accurate statement, especially from the perspective of law enforcement in South Africa, it is imperative to maintain that the fight to prevent GBV goes beyond government intervention. It is unfortunate that we live in a country where women and children are afraid or sceptical of reporting violence because of fears of inappropriate responses from law enforcement. This has been described by Jones (2021) who mentions the story of a young woman who experienced rape at the hands of an intimate partner, but she believed the police would not take her seriously. Women are often asked inappropriate questions like: “What were you wearing”, “Did you scream” “Did you fight back” or “Were you drunk?” (Hillstrom, 2018:2). Asking such questions fails to provide adequate comfort to victims. This unethical line of questioning from the perspective of the researcher seems to be rooted in victim-blaming. The researcher recalls Bheki Cele’s reprimanding police officers for asking all these inappropriate questions during a speech he made at Uyinene’s funeral service (Matshili, 2019). The researcher argues that the government has drafted laws and legislation, aimed at implementing action against GBV in the country (Muyambo, 2018:13). However, Muyambo (2018:13) maintains that in SA there is a clear gap which exists in the implementation of these laws. One may argue, that although the laws are present, it is evident that these laws and legislation are just words on paper as they are not adequately implemented. For laws to be effective, it is necessary for action to be enforced. As the old saying goes: “action speaks louder than words”. Amongst these laws, the South African government has committed themselves to achieving the United Nations sustainable development goals (SDGs) by the year 2030 (Muluneh, 2020:1). In the following section the researcher will evaluate South Africa’s

readiness to achieve the SDGs aimed at the prevention of violence against women and children by 2030.

2.2.3. South Africa's readiness to achieve the SDGs by the year 2030

The sustainable development goals (SDGs) are a set of seventeen goals put together in 2015 by the United Nations (UN). These SDGs are committed to creating a lasting and sustainable change in the world we live in (UNDP, 2021). According to Muluneh (2020:2,16) one of the fundamental goals of the SDGs is to help prevent and limit all forms of violence against women and children. According to a statement made by Muluneh (2020:2) one of the key targets of this goal, focuses on preventing violence by reducing all forms of IPV. This argument made by Muyambo is true; however, it should be mentioned that this goal focuses on more than just IPV as VAW (Violence against women) and children, is so extensive. This statement is supported by the United Nations Development Plan (UNDP, 2021) who maintained that some of the goals include eliminating aspects such as forced marriages, “female genital mutilation”, harmful traditional practices perpetrated against women and violence, such as that of human-trafficking. Taking into consideration the current GBV crisis that the country is faced with, it is evident that it goes against the fifth SDG goal (Dlamini, 2020:2; Manzanga, 2020:47). This goal focuses on “gender equality” (Mampane, 2020:249; UNDP, 2021). According to Manzanga (2020:47) gender equality is conceptualised as:

All kinds of gender norms, roles, cultural practices, policies and laws, economic factors and institutional practices that collectively contribute to and perpetuate unequal power relations between men and women.

The notion of gender equality has been conceptualized further by Enaifoghe and Idowu (2021:156) who maintain that gender equality focuses on the reality that men and women are not inferior to each other. Le Roux and Bowers-Du Toit (2017:24-25) argue that through achieving “gender equality” it becomes possible to retain “a sustainable future for society and the economy” (UNDP, 2021). The researcher believes that this is an important goal to focus on due to most of the GBV and femicide-related crimes being rooted in gender inequality (Enaifoghe & Idowu, 2021:153; Muluneh, 2020:13; Murhula *et al.*, 2021:85). This gender inequality as mentioned earlier is often due to cultural beliefs, messages portrayed in the media, the disempowerment of women and in some cases a lack of education amongst women (Muluneh, 2020:13-14; Murhula *et al.*, 2021:85). Within the context of South Africa problems such as teenage pregnancies often play a pivotal role in early school dropouts (Branson *et al.*,

2014). Therefore, it is argued that this lack of education tends to put women at risk of experiencing GBV (Muluneh, 2020:2). According to Muluneh (2020:2) this is common in low-income countries, especially those that form part of the Sub-Saharan African (SSA) regions. These arguments on education from the researcher's perspective point to the reality that education plays a prominent role in mitigating GBV. However, the researcher holds a strong belief in the reality that educational quality does not necessarily reduce the vulnerability of women from experiencing abuse in this country. This belief is based on the researcher knowing stories of many women who were unable to escape abusive situations irrespective of their educational backgrounds. In the paper titled "*Women enjoy punishment*": attitudes and experiences of gender-based violence among PHC nurses in rural South Africa, the authors support the notion that education level does not make one immune from experiencing any form of GBV (Kim & Motsei, 2002:1248). However, the researcher believes that education plays an important role in helping women identify behaviours which are abusive in nature. Furthermore, the researcher believes that education helps in equipping individuals with an adequate amount of knowledge with regards to the reporting process. As a result, the researcher has come to believe that giving individuals adequate education on GBV can be regarded as a starting point to GBV mitigation.

Another SDG which is jeopardised as a result of GBV and femicide, is *goal number ten* which focuses on reducing inequalities (UNDP, 2021). From the perspective of the researcher this goal can be integrated with the fifth goal. Although most of the sub-areas which this goal is trying to eliminate include financial differences between men and women, it still takes into consideration the empowerment of all individuals (UNDP, 2021). This empowerment and inclusion, include the following aspects:

Promoting the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status (UNDP, 2021).

This is a very important dimension to consider, as the study has already determined that GBV and femicide can affect anyone. This type of violence does not discriminate based on the background of an individual (Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2020:2). In South Africa, it remains a constitutional right for people to freely express themselves without experiencing any form of discrimination (Constitutional Court, 2021). This right is put in place in accordance with section 9 of our Constitution which states that:

The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social

origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth (Constitutional Court, 2021).

Taking all of this into consideration, it is imperative to take note that those who identify as part of the LGBTQ community are often discriminated against because of their sexual orientation (Lee & Ostergard, 2017:38). Individuals falling within this community often find themselves falling victim to GBV-related crimes (Mampane, 2020:249). Although individuals all have different views pertaining to the LGBTQ community, the researcher argues that we are all human and no-one deserves to be treated in an inhumane manner. The ill-treatment of individuals who are part of the LGBTQ community is a common narrative in our country. The reason for this statement is based on the observations of the researcher in her community where those who identify as LGBTQ, are heavily discriminated against.

The researcher came to realize that these individuals go through bullying, emotional abuse and other violent acts. According to Mampane (2020:249) in SA women who identify as lesbian are more susceptible to experiencing rape. Furthermore, Mampane (2020:250) argues that individuals who identify as lesbian are more prone to experiencing GBV in comparison to their heterosexual counterparts. During the month of May 2021, the country experienced a couple of murder cases which were perpetrated against individuals who identified themselves as part of the LGBTQ community (de Vos, 2021). This led to protests erupting where LGBTQ individuals were voicing their concern over the ongoing murders and rapes which they were subjected to because of their gender identity. Furthermore, they used these protests as a way to call for justice for those who were victims of hate crimes (de Vos, 2021). It is an unfortunate reality that for many victims of GBV, justice will never be found. This statement has been reiterated by de Vos (2021) who argued that most of the murders reported are not accurately investigated. According to de Vos (2021) this results in a lot of perpetrators not being held accountable for the crimes they committed against others. This undermines the sixteenth SDG which is focused on promoting “peace, justice and strong institutions” (UNDP, 2021).

This is a cause for concern in a country which strives to achieve the SDGs by the year 2030. As a result, the researcher found herself asking whether SA will be able to achieve these goals by 2030? With regards to GBV in SA, it is important to maintain that the country developed courts which are specifically designed to address sexual offences (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, 2021, Watson, 2014:63). Furthermore, the country is one of the first to develop a Femicide Watch (Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2020:3). In March 2021, a court in Durban made it possible for victims of domestic

violence to apply for protection orders through an online portal (Republic of South Africa, 2021). This initiative has been established by most countries due to the resurgence of GBV cases around most parts of the world during the COVID-19 pandemic (Bettinger-Lopez & Bro, 2020:88). However, despite these efforts to fight GBV in our country, there are existing gaps and limitations.

The researcher argues that not everyone will be able to access something like an online protection order due to a lack of resources and knowledge. Furthermore, taking into consideration that this was established by a court in Durban, it limits women and children from other parts of the country to access this service. The researcher also argues that sometimes attaining a protection order is impossible because the perpetrator lives in the same house as the victim. For children who are victims of abuse, it might be hard (for them) to obtain protection orders without being accompanied by an adult to the police. The researcher argues that this is a limitation for children, because sometimes they encounter abuse at the hands of the adults they live with at home. The researcher is reminded of a story of a young girl who was turned away by the police, because she was unaccompanied by an adult when she needed a protection order. However, what the police did not know at the time was that when this young girl tried reaching out for help, no- one believed her. That made her lose her trust in the adults around her and she thought maybe the police would assist her; little did she know, however, that reaching out to the police would be a failed attempt. According to an argument made by Clark (2020:5) the lockdown period made it even harder for South Africans to get protection orders from the police stations. This from the perspective of the researcher is not only due to restrictions on movement which individuals had to adhere to, but at times police stations were forced to close because of positive COVID cases which were identified.

The researcher argues that in some cases, attaining a protection order alone is not enough. A lot of women have become victims of murder irrespective of having attained protection orders. As mentioned earlier, police are sometimes unwilling to assist individuals with protection orders (Watson, 2014:61). In South Africa the police have been probed after a woman in Cape Town was murdered a week after she had allegedly been denied a protection order (Williams, 2020). This in itself shows that there are issues with our criminal justice system which need to be addressed as a matter of urgency. Another important issue which can be regarded as a stumbling- block to achieving the SDGs is the clear gap that exists between cultural beliefs and the law. It is imperative to bridge the gap between culturally acceptable behaviour and the law.

The researcher argues that for as long as culture and religion are used as a means to defend violent behaviours, it will be impossible for SA to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

Furthermore, the researcher notes that whereas the current pandemic and the securing of vaccinations has been one of the main focuses of the government, many official activities were called to a halt. With the riots that erupted in South Africa on 12 July 2021 amidst the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the country found itself faced with a loaded problem. Therefore, from the perspective of the researcher, it is noted that with all the challenges facing the country it might make it difficult for the country to reach the goal of eliminating all forms of violence by the year 2030. The researcher believes that we as a nation have a long way to go before achieving a violence-free country where women and children are completely emancipated away from all forms of violence. The researcher argues that at the moment focus should rather be on the reduction of violence and creating a country where we break all stereotypes pertaining to GBV. In the following section, the researcher will discuss the prevalence of GBV in South Africa.

2.3. The prevalence of GBV within the context of South Africa

As seen in the previous section, GBV comprises of many forms of violence. As a result, this section will present a detailed statistical analysis of the various forms of GBV. This will be achieved by means of available statistical information which will be vital in showing the current trends of GBV in SA within the past five years.

Due to the non-empirical nature of the study, the researcher relied on national statistical databases to collect data. The data presented is retrieved from databases such as Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) and the South African Police Service (SAPS). The Special Rapporteur presented by the department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (2020) will be used to show statistics on femicide in the country. Due to the fact that these are the only databases which were used, there will be a limitation on the statistics that will be presented in this section. Therefore, it is vital to take note that not all GBV-related crimes common in South Africa will be reflected.

Furthermore, this data representation does not show the full extent of these problems within the South African context. This is mainly due to the “under-reporting” (Manzanga, 2020:2, UNODC, 2018:30) of GBV related crimes as a result of the stigma of silence (Manzanga, 2020:1; Muluneh, 2020:2) which is often associated with these crimes.

Before showing the results of the actual GBV- related crimes, the researcher will present data focusing on attitudes and perceptions related to the acceptability of violence amongst individuals (Stats SA, 2018:5).

2.3.1 Attitudes and perceptions of violence in South Africa

Attitudes and perceptions form a great part of who we are and they shape our perspective of the world around us. The term “attitude” refers to the “state of mind” of individuals (Merriam-Webster dictionary, 2021). This is supported by Pickens (2005:44) who elaborated further on this definition by stating that an attitude “is a mindset or tendency to behave in a particular way.” Furthermore, Pickens maintained that attitudes have a complex nature as they are comprised of aspects such as “personality, beliefs, values, behaviours, and motivations.” These ideologies and beliefs which people hold on to, play a vital role in helping us define the manner in which we see things and behave in various life-settings. As a result, one can state that attitudes and perceptions are interrelated. Both of these aspects involve a process of interpretation. However, as Pickens states, individuals do not always perceive situations in relation to how they would be perceived in reality (2005:44). This statement by Pickens, is supported by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA, 2018:5) who maintain that:

Attitudes and perceptions play a very important role in shaping human behaviour, including criminal activity and vulnerability to crime (Stats SA, 2018:5).

Furthermore, it is believed that cultural beliefs, religion (Stats SA, 2018:5), socio-economic background and beliefs- systems of individuals, play an indispensable role in determining which behaviours are deemed socially acceptable (Pickens, 2005:50; Stats SA, 2018:5). Taking these definitions into mind, it is vital to maintain that when it comes to GBV and femicide in South Africa, people have different attitudes and perceptions of these crimes. The following graph shows the acceptability of “wife beating” across different cultural backgrounds in SA:

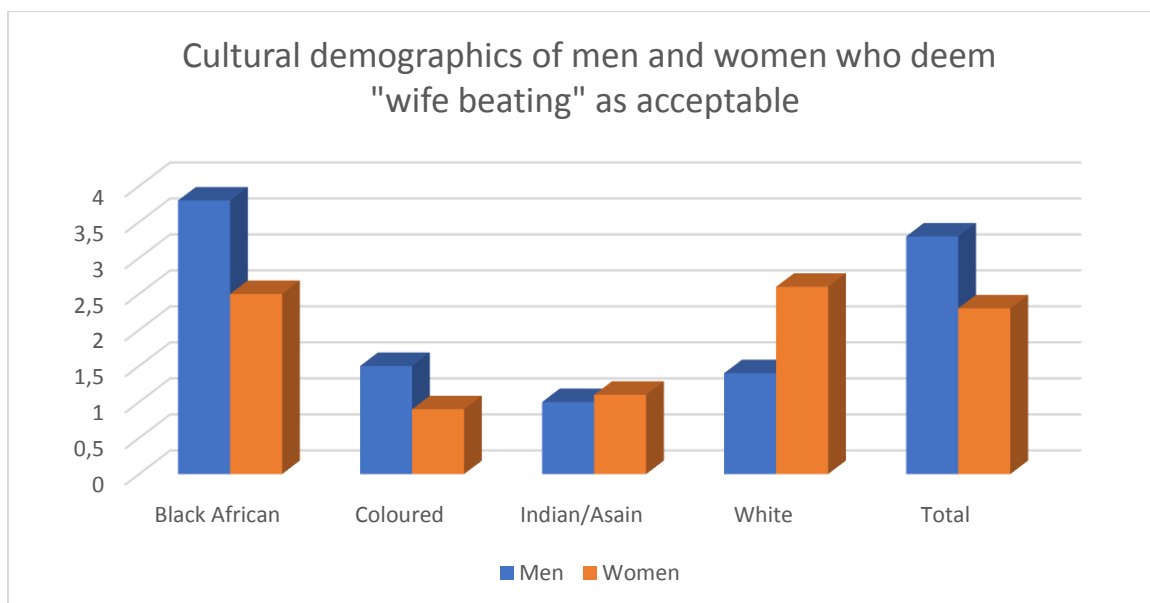


Figure 2.1: Cultural demographics of men and women who deem "wife beating" as acceptable (Stats SA, 2018:5)

From looking at this graph it remains a reality that in SA there is a group of individuals who believe that “wife beating” is acceptable behaviour. The graph shows us that cultural background does indeed play a vital role in influencing individuals regarding which behaviours are deemed acceptable or unacceptable (Stats SA, 2018:5). The statistics presented in the graph show that there is a higher acceptability rate of “wife beating” amongst black African males which rates at 3.8 percent (Stats SA, 2018:5). Indian/Asian women scored the least on the acceptability of “wife beating” grid, with an accumulative total of 0.9 percent (Stats SA, 2018:5). However, it is interesting that amongst the Indian/Asian population and the white population, the women scored higher than their male counterparts (Stats SA, 2018:5). The differences amongst the Indian/Asian population are not very significant at 0.1 percent in comparison to the difference shown among white men and women which rates at approximately 1.2 percent. The researcher believes that the differences presented show that cultural beliefs, practices, and values differ amongst one another. This is supported by Manzanga (2020:24) who states that beliefs on how to treat women differ from one culture to another. In most African cultures, patriarchy is viewed as one of the aspects which shape the perspectives of men on how to treat women (Manzanga, 2020:55). This notion of patriarchy involves having the ideology that women are inferior to their male counterparts (Manzanga, 2020:54). The researcher argues that such belief systems can condition women to always do what is expected from them in order to avoid punishment or violence inflicted on them.

Therefore, it is no surprise that black African women scored high on the acceptability of violence at a rate of 2.5 percent (Stats SA, 2018:5). However, it remains interesting that white women scored slightly higher than African women at 2.6 percent. According to statistics South Africa (Stats SA, 2018:5) this statistic was very surprising due to most white women being a bit more exposed to “human rights issues and liberal thinking.” The researcher argues that other aspects such as religious teachings on aspects such as submission and authority could have an influence on what women regard as acceptable or unacceptable behaviour. These statistics support the argument that GBV is to some extent considered to be normal (Muyambo, 2018:18). According to Muyambo (2018:18) approximately a fifth of women in SA regard GBV as acceptable. This belief is unfortunate, taking into consideration that GBV is violent behaviour that has potentially harmful effects on those who experience it. Behaviours such as “wife beating” involve exerting some form of physical dominance which women might view as a man showing authority over a certain situation.

In most cases, “wife beating” is viewed as a form of punishment when a woman fails to comply with certain rules or standards within a marital or relationship setting with a man. Statistics South Africa conducted a survey which aimed at evaluating the behaviours which people believed were a reasonable cause for “wife beating” (Stats SA, 2018:6). The table below shows some of the issues which men and women regard as influential factors that are exceptional reasons why inflicting physical violence on women is accepted across cultures.

Data representation of reasons deemed acceptable for wife beatings in South Africa

Types of behaviours deemed acceptable for wife beatings	Prevalence of men who believe it is acceptable to beat their wives (%)	Prevalence of women who believe it is acceptable for husbands to beat their wives(%)	Percentage differences between male and female acceptability of wife beatings
Neglecting children	7.6	6.5	1.1
Arguing with a man	7.7	6.8	0.9
Burning food	1.3	1.3	0
Woman leaving the house without reporting to the husband	6.0	5.2	0.8
Refusal to engage in intercourse	3.1	2.6	0.5
Total	25.7	22.4	3.3

Table 2.1: Data representation of reasons deemed acceptable for wife beatings in South Africa (Stats SA, 2018:6)

The table above gives a clear representation that within the context of SA, when a woman argues with her male counterpart it is considered unacceptable behaviour. Both men and women hold it in high esteem that arguing with a man is a very serious issue (Stats SA, 2018:6). As a result of this, both parties believe this gives men the permission to perpetuate violence towards women. This is due to the belief in most African cultures that men can never be blamed or accused for disciplining their wives (Manzanga, 2020:53). From a societal point of view, women have been made to believe that when it comes to responding to their male counterparts, silence should remain the main narrative (Manzanga, 2020:53). The researcher argues that this culture of silence serves as a representation that women are regarded as a commodity in society. This culture of silence takes away the opportunity for women to voice their thoughts and opinions, to be free beings and to work out problems in their relationships without living in fear. The culture of silence takes away the opportunity for women to fully express themselves, because doing this could potentially result in “beating, isolation, insults” and in worst case scenarios, it could result in murder (Manzanga, 2020:53). This culture of silence can result in victims losing a sense of their identity and resulting in feelings of hopelessness and loneliness. Feelings of guilt and shame can creep in when a woman goes against all that society expects of her and violence or punishment becomes the end result.

Culturally it is believed that the job of a woman is to remain quiet and to do the duties of a wife (Manzanga, 2020:53,56). Amongst these duties are things such as “taking care of the children and husband, ensuring everything in the household is in order, and ultimately being a good woman by not depriving a man of his needs” (Barnett, 2016:453). If these duties are not fulfilled, it ultimately gives the husband the authority to raise his hand to his wife. Although these are very important aspects, the researcher argues that using violence cannot be the solution when these responsibilities are not adequately met. Violence and abuse have the potential of causing feelings of bitterness and anger and these can push an individual to behave out of character. Violence not only hurts the victims who experience it directly, but it has secondary effects on family members and it puts children in vulnerable positions (Le Roux & Bowers-Du Toit, 2017:25). Recently a story was reported of a young woman who killed a young child, because of conflict that she had with the father (Mthethwa, 2021). South Africa has countless stories like these where innocent children are killed because of conflicts and disagreement amongst their mothers and children. Another story like this, is of a man who killed four children a few days after kidnapping and raping their mother (Nkgadima, 2021).

There is another story of a man who killed three children and then he proceeded to commit suicide (Seleka, 2019). This leads to the next section where the researcher will show current trends in femicide and violence against children.

2.3.2. Current trends in femicide and violence against children

2.3.2.1. Current trends in femicide

The intentional killing of women has become such a norm in South Africa (Manzanga, 2020:46) and despite desperate cries for the eradication of this crime, it still remains a reality that the women in this country are still not heard. After the death and murder of Uyinene Mrwetyana, we saw women come out in numbers and going to the streets to protest against the inhumanity of individuals who treat women like mere objects. These women protested to send out the message that the right to life, is a privilege meant to be enjoyed by every individual and that includes women. These women went out to the streets singing and desperately asking the question “*Senzeni na?*” which means “What did we do?”

What have the women in this country done, which calls for the ill and inhumane treatment that they are constantly subjected to? What have the women in our country done that they are constantly objectified and their bodies are grievously mauled by those looking for gratification? What did we do, that our male counterparts do not respect our right to life? Unfortunately, these are rhetorical questions which women have been asking for a very long time, but they continue to remain unanswered. The following section will show trends in domestic-related murder cases within the time-frame of April to June 2020 and July to September 2020. The data presented will show a comparison between the murder cases of females and males.

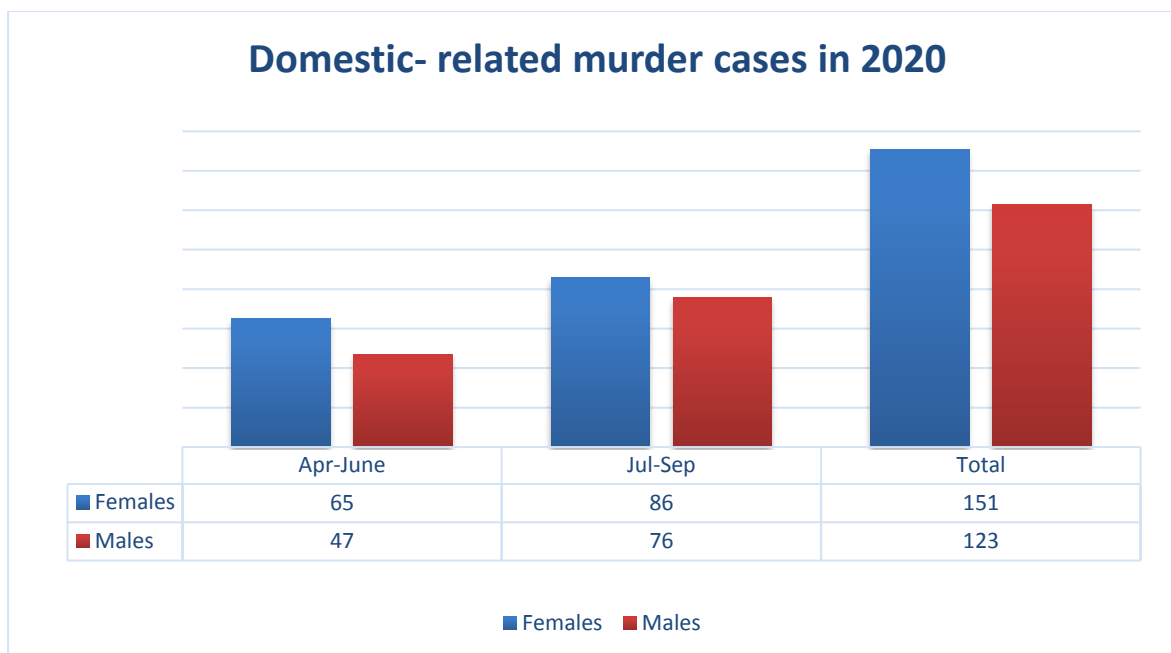


Figure 2.2: South Africa’s response to the request by the special rapporteur on violence against women, its causes, and consequences of the collection of information on prevention-activities, including the collection of data on femicide or gender-related killings of women (Department of Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2020:12)

Taking a look at the following graph, it is evident once again that domestic violence (DV) is prevalent amongst both men and women. However, as mentioned earlier in this study, women fall prey to this violence at higher rates. The statistical information presented here makes it clear that during the year 2020 more women in SA were murdered as a result of DV in comparison to their male counterparts. The murder rates of men and women in April 2020 to June 2020 were relatively low. The researcher alleges that this could be due to the strict lockdown measures that were imposed on the country during the period of April to June 2020. However, as the country eased lockdown regulations and the alcohol ban was lifted, the country then began to experience a steady increase in domestic-related murders. Another argument made by the researcher is that the statistics represented in this graph are likely to be inaccurate. This is due to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic such as some police stations having to close after positive COVID cases were identified. Some of the murders might not have been reported and in some cases, the causative factors that resulted in these murders, remain unknown. Research studies have also identified a rise and DV cases during the COVID-19 pandemic (Dlamini, 2021:3; Mbunge, 2020:1811). Furthermore, it is vital to mention that, according to the SAPS as cited by the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with

Disabilities (2020:10), most of the murders reported during the 2019/2020 financial year were the result of domestic violence.

The next set of statistical information will show the murder trends of women in SA within a five-year period.

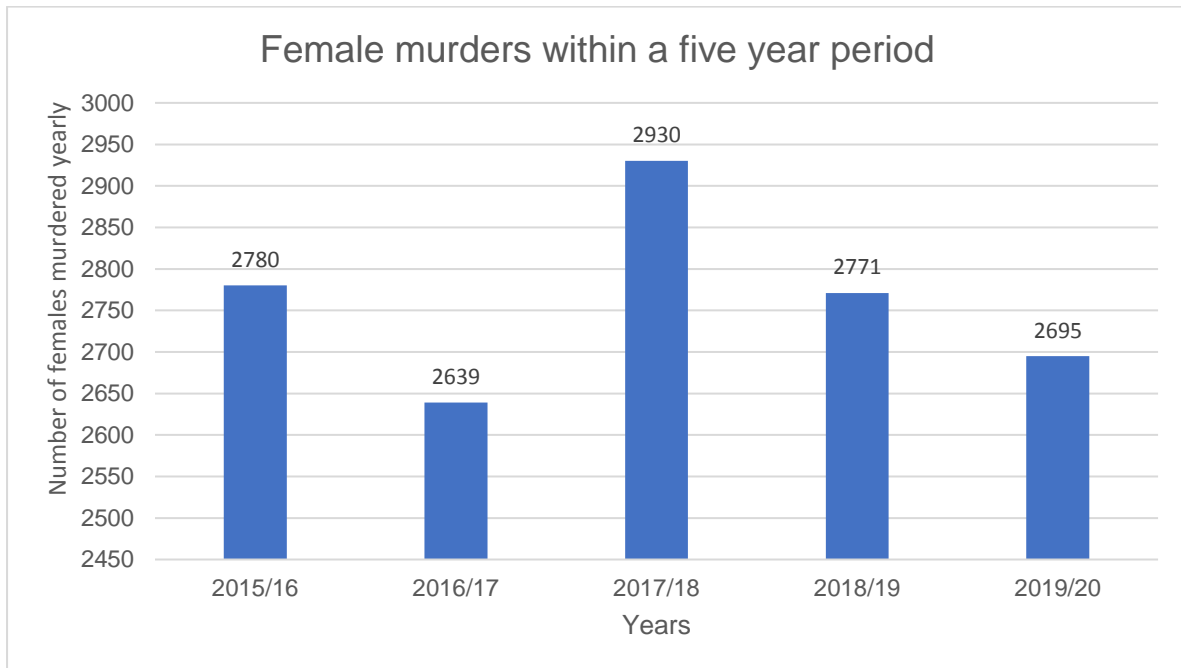


Figure 2.3: Female murders within a five-year period (SAPS, 2020:82)

The following graph shows us that in SA more than two thousand women are murdered each year. The country experienced a sharp increase of 291 murder cases during the 2017/18 financial year after it had reported the least murder cases in 2016/17. It remains interesting to the researcher that the number of reported murder cases in the 2019/20 period, dropped by 76 from the 2018/19 financial year. As in the previous section focusing on DV, the researcher argues that strict lockdown measures which were put in place at the beginning of the 2020 financial year could have played a great role in the reduction of reported murders. Although this graph alone does not show us the complete extent of murders in SA, it is argued that the country is known to have a very high average of murders of women in comparison to the rest of the world (Stats SA, 2018:3). In SA it is estimated that the murder rate of women is “more than five times the global average” (Stats SA, 2018:3).

In the following section, the researcher will then continue to show the trends of murder amongst South African children.

2.3.2.2 Current trends in child murders

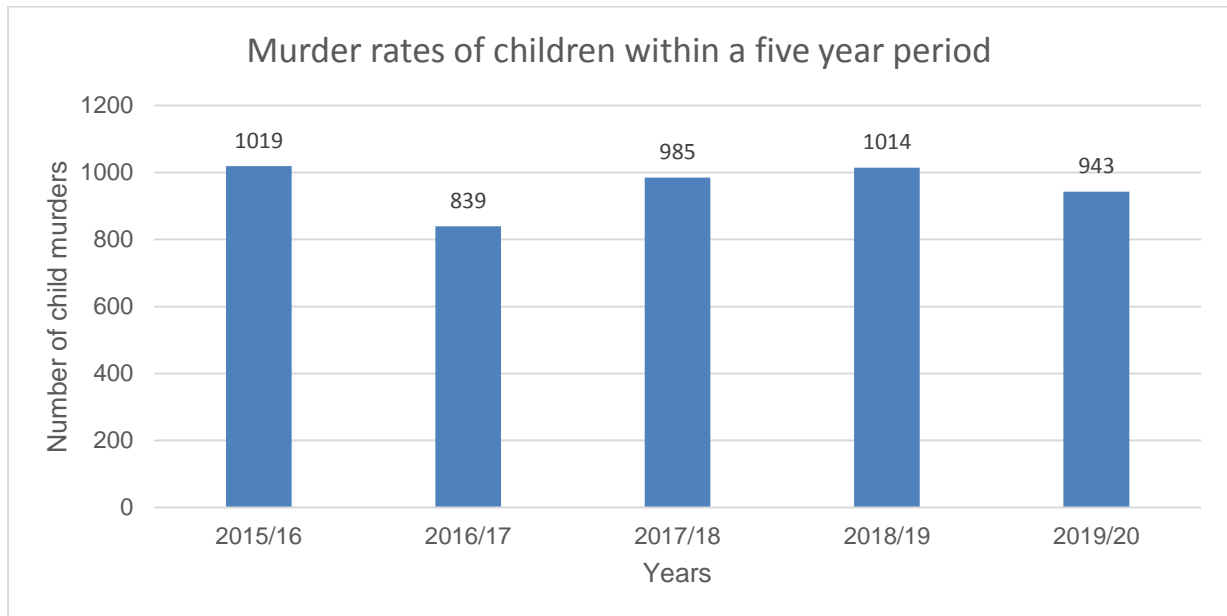


Figure 2.4: Murder rates of children within a five-year period (SAPS, 2020:82)

On taking a look at this graph, it is evident that child murders are a common issue within the South African context. It is interesting that child murders within the 2019/2020 financial year were already standing at 943 (Lepule, 2020; SAPS, 2020:82). Although it is a decrease of 7% from the previous year, this statistic is still very alarming (Lepule, 2020). This is mainly due to the fact that during the 2020 financial year, lockdown measures were already put in place in the country. However, despite lockdown measures children still found themselves as victims of violent crimes (Lepule, 2020; South African government, 2020). In April 2020, Panyaza Lesufi and Faith Mazibuko visited the families of children who had been murdered in Ivory Park and Orange Farm (South African government, 2020). These are both informal settlements located in the Gauteng Province. The murders of these children were recognized as cause for concern and show us that there is no place of safety for children in South Africa. In 2020 it became clear that there is a child-killing syndicate in Orange Farm. This statement comes from reports that approximately four children in this informal settlement were murder victims by September 2020 (Patrick & Njilo, 2020). Among these child murders in Orange Farm there were also the kidnapping and murders of eight-year-old Mpho Makondo and six-year-old Simphiwe Mncina who were best friends (Patrick & Njilo, 2020). These were gruesome murders which according to Patrick and Njilo (2020) were suspected to be *muthi*-killings. According to the South African Police Service statistical database (SAPS, 2020:15) it is

estimated that there were 96 contact crimes reported which were *muthi*- related in 2019/2020. Amongst these, *muthi* -related crimes, it is reported that only two of these resulted in murder. However, the researcher believes that this statistic might be a bit inaccurate. The reason for this belief, is because the researcher believes that those who report or investigate murders do not always know the causative factors of those murders.

Often in SA, murders are related to sexual offences. This statement is supported by the South African Police Service (SAPS, 2020:22) who mentioned that behaviours related to domestic violence attribute to most murders in the country. As a result, the next session will show the current trends of sexual- related crimes within the context of SA.

2.3.3. Current trends of sexual offences in SA

The term sexual offences is defined as:

sexual activities that a person has not consented to, and it can refer to a broad range of sexual behaviours that make a victim feel uncomfortable, frightened or threatened. Sexual offences include the following crimes: rape, sexual assault, attempted sexual offences and contact sexual offences (SAPS, 2020:67).

The following table shows a list of common sexual offences as well as their prevalence within a period of three years.

Crime Category	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020
Rape	40035	41583	42289
Sexual Assault	6786	7437	7749
Attempted sexual offences	2066	2146	2076
Contact sexual offences	1221	1254	1179
Total	50108	52420	53296

Table 2.2: Common sexual offences and their prevalence within a period of three years (SAPS, 2020:68)

On looking at this table, it is evident that rape is the most common sexual offence in SA. This is followed by sexual assaults which are the second highest reported sexual offences in South Africa. This statement is supported by the South African Police Service (SAPS, 2020:68) which states that “Rape and sexual assault contribute to 93.9% of the total sexual offences.” In the

following section the researcher will show a comparison of the reported sexual offences against women and children in the past five years by means of a graph.

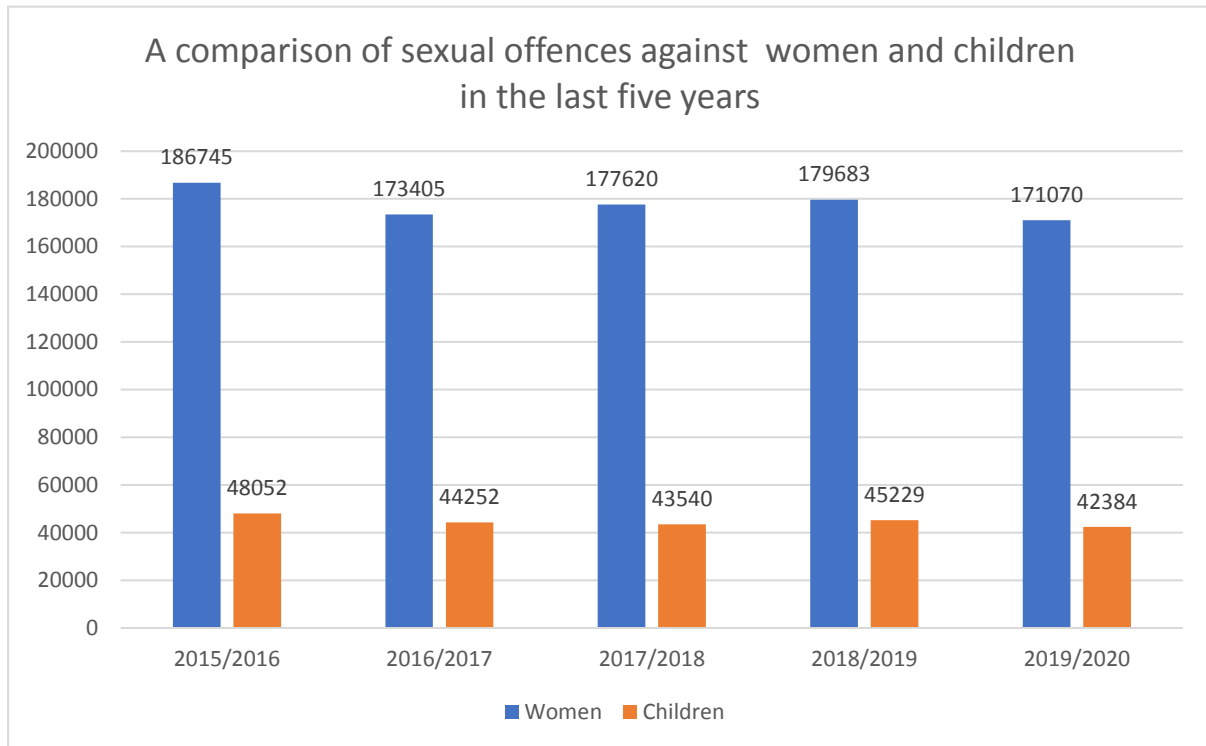


Figure 2.5: A comparison of sexual offences against women and children in the last five years (SAPS, 2020:80).

The following table is created to give a brief description of the statistical information presented in this graph.

Year	Women	Children
2015/16	186745	48052
2016/17	173405	44252
2017/18	177620	43540
2018/19	179683	45229
2019/20	171070	42348

Table 2.3: A comparison of sexual offences against women and children in the last five years (SAPS, 2020:80).

The graph and table above show us that the number of reported sexual assaults against women is predominantly higher than those against children. According to the South African Police Service (SAPS, 2020:80) the highest number of reported cases against women is from Gauteng

and the highest number of reported cases against children is from the Western Cape. The researcher notes that the number of reported cases amongst children remains lower than that of women because, children are often threatened by their perpetrators to remain silent and not report their abuse. Furthermore, most children fear that if they tell someone about their abuse they will be blamed and no-one will believe them. Following is a personal reflection from the researcher that is focused on the abuse of children and on the role of threats to prevent children from reporting abuse.

I am reminded of a story of a little girl who was constantly raped and beaten up. She was told that if she ever speaks out about this she would get killed and the truth is that she did come close enough to death's door, but she survived. She got strangled for trying to fight for herself and the man who did this only put a smile on his face. It gave him satisfaction to see this little girl hurting and crying herself to sleep so that she does not need to face the reality of her pain. This man used the word "love" to try and justify his actions, but reality is I do not think he truly understood the true definition of love. The true love that I know is patient and kind. It does not envy; it does not boast and it is not proud. The true love that I know does not dishonor others and it is not self-seeking (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

Day and night, this little girl was forced to live with the secret of this terrible act perpetrated against her. She felt broken, unworthy, and lived with the lie that she deserved everything that happened to her. Well in all honesty no one deserves to be treated in this way. This little girl had to go through her life reminding herself of the reality that **it is not her fault**.

The sad truth is that she goes through life fighting anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). She goes through life feeling alone in this battle and wondering if the pain will ever cease. She worries about how people will look at her should they know of her story. We all know that society always blames the girl right... "What was she wearing, did she say no, did she fight for herself, why did she not report it etc..." I can never understand why the girl is always at fault in these situations.

Reality is that sometimes when someone like this little girl tries to reach out for help, their cries are not always heard. Their stories are either not believed or even worse they get told that they are seeking for some sort of attention, they are told to get over it and move on with their lives as if nothing is wrong. So where is the love in all of this?



In the following section the researcher will discuss GBV within the context of the church and will investigate how the church has played a role in perpetuating violence.

2.4. GBV within the context of the church

The church in SA can be considered as one of the largest social institutions in the country. This distinction is based on the church comprising of approximately eighty percent of the population (Manzanga, 2020:3; Muyambo, 2018:20). Furthermore, it is vital to mention that women make

up the vast majority of the church population (Chisale, 2020:2). Chisale (2020:2) continues to maintain that church leadership structures however, are mostly comprised of men. This in itself can create a gap between how the church can respond to an issue which mostly affects women such as GBV and femicide. In this section the researcher will be evaluating the notion of GBV and femicide within the context of the church. This is a very important aspect to investigate, taking into consideration the prevalence of GBV and femicide in SA. There is no doubt whatsoever that there are countless women and children in the church who are forced to endure the pain of GBV and femicide in their daily lives. The researcher has made this statement, because she is aware of far too many stories of women in the church who have experienced some form of GBV. Therefore, the researcher has come to the realization that fighting GBV and femicide will mean that all stakeholders including the church, need to be involved in this fight. This is not a fight that is individualistic, but one that requires collective action. The researcher is appalled at the unfortunate reality that some of our churches in SA have become a common ground for controversial practices which include the abuse of women and children. This goes against God's original design for the church. In the following section, the researcher will discuss the sad role of the church in its promoting violent behaviour towards women.

2.4.1. The sad role of the church in promoting violent behaviour towards women

Our churches have an important and influential role to play in society (Muyambo, 2018:29). They can be considered the pillars of society. However, we now find ourselves living in a time where the church is somewhat corrupted. This in itself can create mixed messages surrounding the actual purpose and role of the church. With the rise of neo-Pentecostal prophets in South Africa, we have come to see the church becoming a very controversial space in society (Banda, 2021:1). Each year we hear of stories in the media of pastors and self-proclaimed prophets practising unethical activities and conduct, all in the name of the Lord. This statement is supported by Banda (2021:1) who mentions that in some of these churches, congregants find themselves in positions where they are forced to engage in degrading behaviours. These behaviours include being forced to eat grass (Engineer, 2014), rats and rat poison (Matsena, 2017), being sprayed with insecticides (Vilakazi, 2016) and being forced to engage in sexual acts with these pastors or other members of the church (Banda, 2021:1). Furthermore, in one church there were allegations of women being forced into terminating their pregnancies and men being forced to be sterilized (Mahamba, 2021). The researcher holds that all of these stories are concerning as the church is supposed to present good moral behaviour and sound

doctrine. The church community is supposed to reflect the image of God through imitating Christ at all times. Furthermore, the researcher argues that in the midst of social ills like GBV and femicide, the church should be standing at the forefront and addressing these issues (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2013:11). Although there are churches and leaders who have begun using their platforms to address GBV and share their stories, the gap still remains within the number of churches that are doing this. This statement is supported by Le Roux and Bowers-Du Toit (2017:29) who state the following: “A gap within the church with relation to GBV, is that few faith communities address GBV”.

Instead of actively being involved in addressing GBV, the church has actually been accused of being a key role-player in the perpetration of GBV (Le Roux & Bowers-Du Toit, 2017:24). This statement is supported by scholars who proclaim that church leaders themselves are continuing to be active participants in engaging in GBV-related behaviours (Le Roux & Bowers-Du Toit, 2017:33, Manzanga, 2020:3), with sexual violence and rape being at the core of their actions (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2013:56). This statement as mentioned above, remains true in the context of South Africa. Recently there are countless pastors and self-proclaimed prophets who are facing charges of rape perpetrated against women and children in the church. This statement made the researcher reflect upon a court case involving Cheryl Zondo who is a survivor of rape at the hands of the self-proclaimed prophet Tim Omotoso (Fisher, 2018). This pastor is not only standing accused for multiple counts of rape, but his charges also include “human trafficking and racketeering” (Manona, 2021).

Although Banda (2021) in his paper titled “*Doctrine as security? A systematic theological critique of the operational theological framework of the controversial South African neo-Pentecostal prophets*” focuses on the neo-Pentecostal prophets, it is imperative to note that the abuse of women continues to occur even in churches that do not make use of “neo-Pentecostal” methods. Taking a look at this, one can then believe that not only has the church become a common ground for the violence against women and children, but also poor exegetical approaches and the use of Scripture being used as an excuse for violence (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2013:215). This will be discussed further in chapter three of this research paper. In the following section the researcher will develop a hermeneutical framework and discuss the implications of GBV on the spirit, soul and body dimensions of individuals.

2.5. Hermeneutical framework

The purpose of this hermeneutical framework is to show the impact that GBV has on individuals. The researcher acknowledges that everyone responds differently to abusive and violent behaviour. Therefore, this hermeneutical framework does not necessarily present the complete picture of the effects of GBV and femicide upon individuals. Before explaining GBV in relation to this hermeneutical framework, the researcher will first discuss the concepts of spirit, soul and body.

2.5.1. A brief discussion of the concepts of spirit, soul and body

The notion of spirit, soul and body is an important biblical concept which the researcher feels is not spoken of enough in Christian circles and in the church at large. The common verse which is used to describe this aspect is found in 1 Thessalonians 5:23. In this Bible verse the Apostle Paul states the following:

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess 5:23).

On studying the verse, it becomes evident that humanity comprises of three parts. This is reiterated by a prominent scholar, Watchman Nee who actively studied this aspect of humanity in his book titled: *“The spiritual man”* (Nee, 1968). In his book Nee (1968:25) acknowledges that the human being is a tripartite individual. Another scholar who supports this notion is Erickson (2013), although Erickson speaks of a conditional unity of these three elements. As part of the doctrine of humanity, Erickson expressed a theory focusing on the different “views of the human constitution”, where he made reference to trichotomism (Erickson, 2013:1072). According to Erickson (2013:1072) trichotomism is a view that acknowledges that humans are made up of three parts. The notion of trichotomism was highly accepted by the church fathers such as “Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Gregory of Nyssa” (Erickson, 2013:1074). According to Erickson it has been argued that Greek philosophy considers the soul and body to be in unity only through the spirit (Erickson, 2013:1074). This notion of spirit, soul and body is also accepted by Viktor Frankl as part of his psychological theory focusing on logotherapy (Perera, 2020). The following diagram will show a common and brief description of each of these three parts:

A diagram on spirit, soul and body



Figure 2.6: Body, soul and spirit: Seeking complete health (Tague, 2021).

Now that the diagram has given us a brief overview of the spirit, soul and body elements, the researcher will give a conceptualisation of each element.

1. Spirit

The spiritual dimension is the part of our being that connects us to God (Nee, 1968:29). Furthermore, Nee (1968:29) mentions that in this dimension individuals can have communion with God and worship Him. Erickson (2013:1072) mentions that the spiritual dimension “enables humans to perceive spiritual matters and respond to spiritual stimuli.” Tague (2021) gives a wonderful description of the spiritual dimension by stating that:

Our spirit can be thought of as the immaterial part of us that includes our conscience, our “intuition”, and the part of us that can seek spirituality through prayer or meditation. In this model, spiritual pursuits, prayer, and having moral values would occur in our spirit. A sense of inner joy or peace happens in our spirit. At other times

our conscience, a spiritual concept, might tell us we need to forgive someone or make some life changes (Tague, 2021).

However, the researcher also argues that going through traumatic experiences can also make individuals lose touch with this dimension. This will be dealt with in the schematic framework discussing the impact of GBV on individuals. Furthermore, Viktor Frankl as cited by Perera (2020) maintains that the spiritual dimension plays a pivotal role in shaping our identity and who we are.

2. Soul

The soul dimension serves as an important part of who we are. This is the part of our being that influences our personality (Nee, 1968:29; Tague, 2021). Furthermore, Erickson (2013:1072) also states that the soul dimension is comprised of “the psychological element, the basis of reason, emotion and social interrelatedness.” This statement is also supported by Tague (2021) who argues that in essence the soul is made up of our “mind, will and emotions.” Furthermore, Nee (1968:29) maintains that:

The soul can either choose to walk in accordance to the will of God or suppress the spirit and take some other delight as lord of the man (Nee, 1968:29).

According to Lyon (2010:234) the soul relates to “human experience and it arises out of personal relatedness.” This personal relatedness according to Lyon (2010:234) is focused on the “relatedness to oneself, to other people and to God.” Due to the inter-relatedness of each of these elements, the researcher argues that what the soul dimension chooses to do causes a ripple effect on the spiritual dimension. For example, the researcher believes that if the soul decides to separate itself from God as a result of a hurtful situation, the spiritual dimension may start to feel a void or emptiness which might end up resulting in a spiritual depression.

3. Body

The body refers to our physical being (Erickson, 2013:1072). From the researcher’s perspective, this is the part of our being that is visible to humanity. According to Tague (2021) this is also the part of our being that can be physically touched by ourselves or others. Furthermore, Tague (2021) gives an excellent description of the interrelatedness of the body, soul and spirit by mentioning that:

The body is alive only if the soul and spirit are present in the body. Conversely, the body dies when the soul and spirit depart from the body (Tague, 2021).

Taking into consideration that the researcher conceptualised the three elements that make us who we are as humans (Tague, 2021), the researcher will then discuss how each part is influenced by GBV.

2.5.2. The effects of GBV on the three elements of humanity

Experiencing a traumatic event such as GBV has a distinct effect on the individual. The researcher argues that most studies tend to focus more on the physiological and psychological effects of violence (Le Roux & Loots, 2017:734; Manzanga, 2020:34; Sande, 2019:1) and often overlook the spiritual effects that it can have on individuals. However, Lyon (2010:233) supports the researchers statement by stating that:

Abuse of a sexual nature has the capacity to wound a person on a physical, psychological and spiritual level (Lyon, 2010:233).

Having experienced multiple traumas in her life, the researcher has come to realize the interrelatedness of our being and how we cannot underestimate the extent to which that trauma affects our body, soul and spirit. The researcher has often heard women who have encountered violence saying: “the perpetrator could only touch my body, but he could not touch my spirit.” Although this statement may be true in a literal sense, the researcher believes that in a more figurative sense, it is not entirely true. The reason for this distinction is because, the moment someone perpetrates violence upon us, the pain goes beyond the physical dimension. The individual becomes prone to experiencing emotional pain and from a spiritual dimension, one can feel a sense of abandonment by God. This section is a mere reflection of the effects of GBV on each dimension of our being from the perspective of the researcher. It is aimed at describing some of the common effects that violence can have on individuals. It is important to mention that this section does not represent the full picture of the effects of violence on individuals. The reason for this is because every individual is unique and responds differently to GBV. The researcher will make use of a schematic framework to describe the impact of GBV on the body, soul and spirit.

A schematic framework describing the impact of GBV on the body, soul and spirit



Figure 2.7: Schematic framework describing the impact of GBV on the body, soul and spirit

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter has been written in alignment with Osmer’s methodology. As a result, the researcher explored the first task of Osmer’s practical theological perspective with the goal of answering the question “What is going on?” (Osmer, 2008:4). To achieve this goal, the researcher focused on contextualising GBV to gain an understanding of the situations, episodes and contexts of GBV in SA. This was especially necessary as it will build up to the researcher

answering the research question and aim of this study which is focused on establishing the pastoral role of the church towards the GBV and femicide response in SA.

However, in order for us to establish the role of the church in responding to GBV and femicide, it is imperative that we understand the nature of GBV and how it impacts individuals in society and the church at large. Firstly, the researcher has discussed GBV as a violation of freedom in SA. As part of this discussion, the researcher compared the definitions of freedom. By doing this the researcher found that defining freedom as having the ability to do anything that we want to as individuals, sets a limitation on the concept. This can then result in individuals acting outside of what is morally correct and then using this limited view on freedom as a means to justify their actions. Furthermore, the researcher found that although we live in a democratic country with so much to celebrate, the notion of inequality bridges the gap to this freedom. The researcher argues that we cannot celebrate freedom in its entirety as long as the women and children in SA continue to be abused, marginalised and oppressed. True freedom can only be achieved when all people are liberated from all forms of oppression.

The study then discussed the nature and context of GBV in South Africa. In this section, the researcher not only defined the term GBV but she realised that the concept in itself is very broad. The researcher found that GBV comprises of a variety of violent acts such as: rapes, murders, femicide, intimate partner violence (IPV), genital mutilations, honour killings and forced marriages (Manzanga, 2020:34-35). Bearing all these in mind, the researcher also found that the majority of South Africans have been subjected to some form of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. Furthermore, the study found that SA is regarded as the “rape- hub” or- capital globally. The study found that GBV is rooted in gender inequality and it is classified as a violation of the basic human rights of individuals. The research study also found that GBV poses a threat to public health. It puts individuals at risk of contracting STIs and STDs like HIV/AIDS in a country that is globally known as the HIV epicentre.

The researcher went on to discuss South Africa’s readiness to achieve the SDGs by the year 2030. As part of this discussion the study found that GBV undermines the SDGs focused on preventing violence, promoting gender equality and ultimately reducing all forms of gender inequalities. The researcher argued that taking into consideration the challenges that SA is currently faced with and the complexity of GBV, our country still has a long way to go before fully reaching the SDGs by 2030.

Secondly, the study looked at the prevalence of GBV in SA. As part of this section, the study made use of statistical information to analyse the extent of GBV in SA taking into consideration violent acts such as femicide, child murders and sexual offences. In this section the study found that attitudes and perceptions on violence play a role in shaping the acceptability of violent crimes amongst individuals. As part of the notion of attitudes and perceptions, it was also found that cultural beliefs have the ability to shape individuals into determining whether a certain behaviour is considered as abuse. The study found that more women in comparison to their male counterparts are killed each year as a result of domestic violence. Furthermore, the study found that in SA more than two thousand women become victims of murder each year. The researcher also indicated that children are not exempt from these murders. The study found that in most cases children find themselves stuck in the middle when parents are fighting, and that this then results in children being killed as a result of disputes between parents. This study also found that rape is a common sexual offence in SA which enormously affects women and children. The Gauteng province has been identified as the province where most women have reported rapes, while in the Western Cape most reported rapes have been perpetrated against children.

Thirdly, the study investigated GBV within the context of the church. In this section the researcher found that the church does play a prominent role in promoting GBV. This is mostly due to most pastors and members of the church being accused and arrested for GBV- related crimes (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2013:56).

Lastly, the researcher developed a hermeneutical framework to identify the impact that GBV has on the spirit, soul and body of individuals. In this section the study found that human beings are tripartite and each element of the human being is interconnected. As a result, GBV does then actually have an impact on the spirit, soul and body of individuals.

Chapter 3: Interpretive analysis of GBV in South Africa

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter of this study, emphasis was put on the nature, situations and context of GBV and femicide in SA. This was done through making use of the descriptive task of Osmer's methodology where the question, 'what is going on' was answered. Now that the second chapter has looked into the 'what', the researcher will then go on to investigate the 'why' of GBV and femicide in SA. In this chapter of the study, the researcher will focus on the interpretive task of Osmer's methodology. As part of this task the researcher will answer the question, 'Why is it going on?' (Osmer, 2008:4).

This is not only a formal question that forms part of the method used. It is a question that lies on the lips of countless women and children, families, communities *etc* that have experienced any form of GBV and femicide. This is a question, however, that remains unanswered most of the time. This is mainly because, it is very difficult to know the state of mind of the perpetrators when they commit such crimes. Therefore, in this chapter the researcher will be making use of an interdisciplinary approach in the attempt to answer the question 'why'. The use of an interdisciplinary approach serves as the core or foundation of the interpretive task. This is achieved through making use of theories from other sciences such as psychology (Osmer, 2008:83). The question to be answered in this section is "What interdisciplinary approaches can be applied in understanding the situation, episodes and context of GBV and femicide in South Africa?" This question will provide a broadened understanding of the nature, context and situations of GBV as demarcated in the second chapter. Therefore, to answer this question in chapter three, the researcher will conduct a discussion focused on both psychological and biblical perspectives.

The chapter will start with a short discussion focusing on the importance of making use of an interdisciplinary approach. As part of this discussion, the researcher will conceptualise the term 'interdisciplinary approach' and go on to discuss why such an approach is vital to a GBV response.

Secondly, the chapter will then discuss the relevant psychological theories which can be applied to gain an understanding of why GBV and femicide continue to be so rife in SA. The researcher will take into consideration theories such as the social learning theory and the ecological systems theory.

Thirdly, the chapter will discuss biblical perspectives on GBV. As part of this discussion, the focus will be on the impact of the Fall on the nature of people. Concepts such as sinfulness and living in a broken world will form an integral part of the discussion. This will be followed by a discussion focusing on the role that the misinterpretation of Scripture plays in perpetuating violent behaviour towards women and children.

3.2. What is an interdisciplinary approach?

As mentioned in the introductory section, this chapter will be written based on an interdisciplinary approach. Therefore, it is vital to first define the term ‘interdisciplinary.’ The Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2021) states that an interdisciplinary approach is one that involves making use of “two or more academic, scientific, or artistic disciplines.” This definition is supported by Brunson (2014:3) who states that: “In an interdisciplinary approach, different approaches are employed without necessarily engaging one another’s epistemologies.” In essence one can argue that interdisciplinary approaches allow for a rather broad approach of response instead of single-handedly focusing on one scientific paradigm. This statement is supported by that of Cahill *et al.* (2019:137) which maintains that “interdisciplinary approaches aim to develop broader knowledge.” The researcher argues that this is especially vital when looking for adequate responses to complex situations such as GBV and femicide (Mpani & Nsibande, 2015:16; Corradi *et al.*, 2016:977; UNFPA EECARO, 2015:8). Scholars such as Corradi *et al.* (2016:975), Costa *et al.* (2017:3087) and Weil (2018:2) deem such an approach to be useful when trying to find an adequate response to GBV and femicide.

According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA EECARO, 2015:5) an interdisciplinary approach is useful for providing a rather holistic perspective. Furthermore, in their paper titled “*Multisectoral response to GBV: An effective and coordinated way to protect and empower GBV victims/survivors*” the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA EECARO, 2015:5) holds that an interdisciplinary perspective provides a:

coordinated approach aimed at harmonizing and correlating programmes and actions developed and implemented by a variety of institutions (but not limited to these) in the areas of psychosocial welfare, law enforcement (police, prosecutors and justice departments) and health (UNFPA EECARO, 2015:5).

Although this definition mentions some of the important role players who form part of an interdisciplinary team, the gap is that the church is not mentioned. The researcher believes that

it is imperative to involve the church as part of this interdisciplinary unit. The reason for this is based on the fact that churches have an influential role to play in society. This statement is supported by Le Roux and Bowers-Du Toit (2017:27) who maintain that “faith leaders have considerable power and influence” in the respective societies in which they are involved. As a result, if churches can get involved in the fight against GBV, communities around the world will be influenced and it could result in the prevention of GBV cases. In the following section, the researcher will then go on to discuss the reasons why it is important to utilise an interdisciplinary approach to adequately respond to GBV.

3.2.1. Why is an interdisciplinary approach important for a GBV response?

As mentioned previously in this study, the complexity of an issue such as GBV and femicide (Corradi *et al.*, 2016:977; Muyambo, 2018:13) requires research that is broad and holistic in nature (Le Roux & Loots, 2017:734). It is only through the usage of interdisciplinary methods that we can start to understand GBV and femicide at the core. The researcher recalls countless moments when she asked herself the question “why.” Why do women and children constantly find themselves in vulnerable situations which result in violence and pain? Why is screaming “no” not enough to prevent a woman or a child from being raped or constantly beaten up? These are very difficult questions to attempt to answer on our own. Therefore, the researcher believes that questions like these will call for an interdisciplinary approach to be utilised.

According to an argument made by Corradi *et al.* (2016:977) the implementation of interdisciplinary approaches for GBV response is a critical component as it allows for individuals to “improve scientific analysis and prevention.” The researcher argues that although such an approach does pave a way for improvement in terms of scientific analysis and understanding, the use of interdisciplinary approaches alone is not sufficient to completely prevent violence. The researcher believes that it takes communicative action to win the fight against GBV and femicide. As the old saying goes “Actions speak louder than words.” The researcher believes that it is important to strike a balance between the two. What the researcher means by this is that it is important for interdisciplinary approaches to go beyond the implementation of theories and words. These interdisciplinary approaches also need to be action-based. This type of action needs to occur from both an individual and collective basis. The researcher holds on to the words of Tony Robbins which state that “if we change nothing, nothing will change” (Lindberg, 2019). From this quote alone, one can argue that it is up to each individual, church leader/member, organization and various stakeholders to make a

decision that change does indeed start with each and every one of us. If we all choose to sit and do nothing, then it will make winning the fight against GBV and femicide almost impossible. In an interdisciplinary approach, it is vital not to leave out a certain group of individuals as it requires all people to fight the societal complexity of GBV and femicide in a rather holistic manner. This statement is supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA EECARO, 2015:5) who stated that:

Addressing GBV effectively is not possible in a closed system, a system in which the institutions involved develop programs and offer services without interacting with other service providers and being connected to them, without knowing the complex data of the problem and without having a clear image of the result of the activities undertaken (UNFPA EECARO, 2015:8).

Furthermore, it has been maintained that interdisciplinary approaches are important to GBV responses because they are useful in providing an “increased level of safety and support for GBV victims/survivors through an effective, immediate and consistent services network” (UNFPA EECARO, 2015:6). This is something which the researcher regards as an important factor in GBV response. When an individual decides to report an abusive situation, he/she needs to be assisted in a safe space where he/she can be met with respect, care and empathy. This is something that has been established at most of the sexual offences courts in South Africa. According to the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (2021) these specialised sexual offences courts are created in such a way that those testifying are given the right to testify in private rooms to avoid being in the same space as the perpetrator. Furthermore, the use of an interdisciplinary team is prevalent in the sexual offences courts as victims are given debriefing sessions before and after the trial (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, 2021). Such an approach is necessary given the revictimization that one can experience when having to relive traumatic experiences such as GBV. Although these represent brilliant efforts to addressing GBV in our country, the conviction rate continues to remain relatively low at approximately 6.2 percent (Centre for Applied Legal Studies, 2021).

As mentioned in previous chapters, the South African government has put in place a number of care- centres for those who are victims of GBV. However, there are GBV cases which recently occurred in places like police stations and court- houses which can make individuals question the notion of safety in South Africa. Such cases involve the story of the twenty-eight-year-old woman who was shot and killed in a police station located in the Eastern Cape when attempting to report a domestic violence case (Isaacs, 2020). Another example involves the

attorney who was assaulted inside a court in Cape Town (Mitchley, 2021). Such stories show that safety protocols in police stations and court- houses need to be prioritised and upgraded on an even greater scale. Such safety measures should be prioritized for all individuals.

In the following section, the researcher will discuss the psychological perspectives which play a role in understanding GBV and femicide.

3.3. Psychological perspectives

In this section, the researcher will discuss some psychological perspectives which play a role in the perpetration of violent behaviour leading to GBV and femicide. Countless psychological theories can be used as a means to evaluate the risk factors which lead to violent behaviours. The following diagram shows some of the most prominent theories across the fields of psychology and sociology which can be referred to when attempting to understand violent behaviour:



Figure 3.1. Understanding gender policy and gender-based violence: A literature review. (Mpani & Nsibande, 2015:16).

To adequately answer the question “why is it going on” (Osmer, 2008:4) the researcher will make use of the social learning theory and the ecological systems theory. The reason for making use of these theories is because, these are widely- used theories amongst scholars when attempting to understand the motivation behind individuals committing crimes relating to GBV and femicide (Decker *et al.*, 2015:189 WHO, 2012:4).

3.3.1. Social learning theories

Social learning theories are regarded to be one of the most prominent theories when examining violence (Mihalic & Elliot, 1997:21; Penny, 2016:150). According to Mihalic and Elliot (1997:21) these theories are widely used in cases where violence occurs within the marital context. This belief is not uncommon amongst scholars, as most scholars who study this concept maintain that the social learning theory has links to IPV (Anderson & Kras, 2005:99; Malambo, 2016:12). Although this is true, the researcher argues that this provides a limited view of the vast areas that the theory can be applied to. GBV and femicide are not issues that are limited within the confines of intimate relationships. It has been established in previous chapters that this type of violence can occur in any setting by individuals known (Dartnall & Jewkes, 2013:4) or unknown to the victim. It remains a reality that although most victims of abuse know their perpetrators, there are cases where the perpetrators do not have any form of intimate relationships with their victims. Therefore, the researcher reckons that the social learning theory can also be applied in cases of violence that do not occur in intimate relationships. The social learning theories have been studied by scholars such as Albert Bandura and Julian Rotter (Penny, 2016:149-150). However, due to the focus of this study being on GBV and femicide, the researcher will be referring to Bandura’s perspective of the theory. The reason for this is based on the fact that in his theory Bandura evaluated the links between aggression and learning through his famous Bobo - doll experiment (MacBlain, 2018:63; Penny, 2016:149).

Before getting into the depth with regards to the links between aggression and learning, it is imperative to first discuss the core concepts of the theory. The social learning theories have been formulated based on the belief that behaviour is learnt through social interactions with others (Penny, 2016:149; MacBlain, 2018:63). Furthermore, it is vital to mention that environmental factors play a critical role in shaping the behaviour of individuals (Penny, 2016:149; MacBlain, 2018:63). The following diagram shows the key elements of the social learning theory:

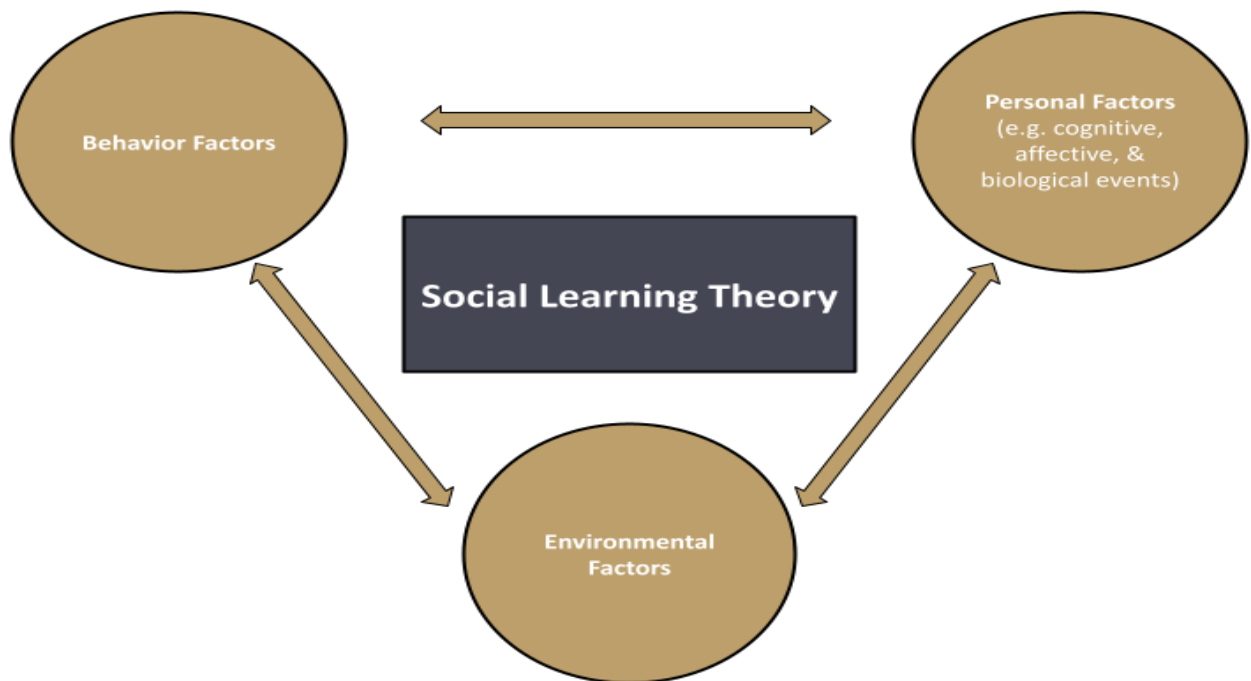


Figure 3.2: Bandura's social learning theory: 3 Examples (Stutton, 2021).

Bandura's social learning theory asserts that individuals are more likely to observe, imitate and model behaviour as displayed within their immediate environment (Anderson & Kras, 2005:103; Kim, 2019:54; Stutton, 2021). However, in order to imitate this behaviour children often pay attention to whether the behaviour is positively reinforced by adults or the people they look up to (Kim, 2019:6). What is meant by this is that to imitate behaviour children often look at whether the behaviour is rewarded or not. If behaviour is deemed acceptable then the child is most likely to imitate it. This is what happened with the Bobo -doll experiment. When a woman was given a doll and she acted aggressively towards it, the children who saw this went on to imitate this behaviour (Penny, 2016:149; MacBlain, 2018:63). Therefore, from this experiment it can be argued that when children come from aggressive and abusive backgrounds they are more likely to be aggressive themselves at a later stage in life (Kim, 2019:6; Mihalic & Elliot, 1997:21). According to Gelles as cited by Mihalic and Elliot (1997:22) the following statement was maintained:

Not only does the family expose individuals to violence and techniques of violence, but the family also teaches techniques for the approval of violence

The researcher agrees with this concept, because she knows of a man who grew up observing violence committed against his aunt by a drunk husband in his childhood. When he got married, he would get drunk and get abusive towards his wife. This social behaviour was also reiterated by Penny (2016:150) who stated that in a township in Cape town most children have been exposed to some sort of violence which then puts them at risk of committing violent acts. However, for children to have the ability to imitate behaviour, it is vital to maintain that there are four processes which should take place. These processes are comprised of attention, retention, reproduction and motivation (MacBlain, 2018:63; Stutton, 2021). The following diagram shows how each of these processes work:

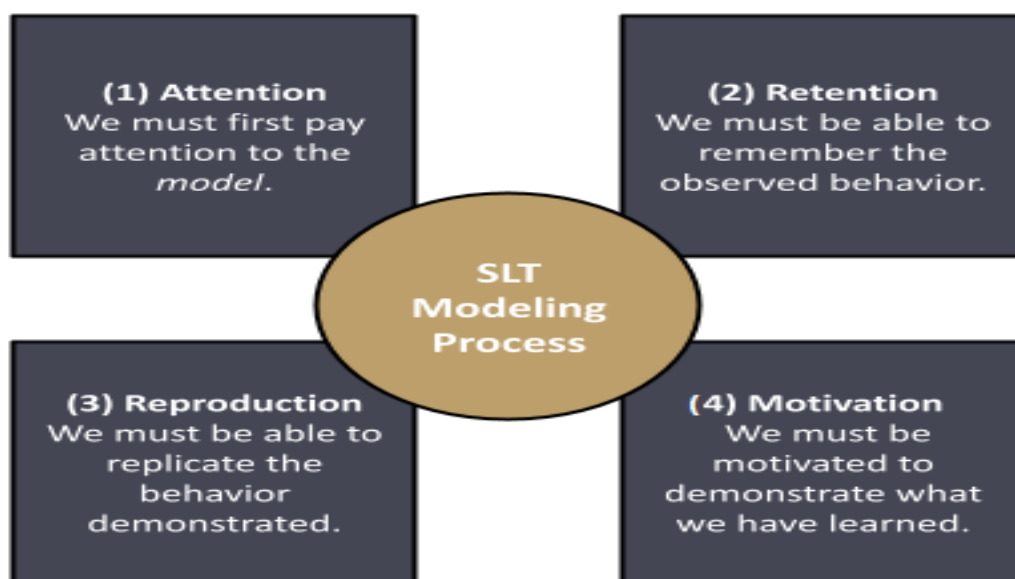


Figure 3.3: Bandura's social learning theory: Four processes (Sutton, 2021).

The researcher argues that observational learning is not only limited to that which occurs in one's immediate environment. It is imperative to maintain that external factors such as mainstream media can play a role in influencing behaviour. Children are more likely to imitate and act out behaviours which they see on television, music videos, literature, and video games (MacBlain, 2018:63; Malambo, 2016:12). In a world where violence is prevalent in media, it remains a reality that children who do not experience violence first-hand, may get secondary exposure to violence through the media. Ted Bundy was a well-known serial killer and in his interview with Dr Dobson, he mentioned that he was motivated to murder women because of his exposure to violent pornography (Q'nqura, 2020). The researcher is aware of countless stories where young children were exposed to violent video games and they would go on to be

aggressive towards their peers. The researcher argues that these children went on to become aggressive towards their peers because they might have been desensitized by violence due to the constant usage of violent video games. This notion of desensitization was mentioned by Ted Bundy in his interview where he mentioned that each time he murdered a woman he became desensitized so that he wanted to murder even more women. The researcher believes that exposure to pornography plays a significant role in leading people to perpetrate sexual violence. Ted Bundy made the following statement about pornography addiction: “The more you get addicted to it, you want more until you reach the point where you want to act it out” (Q’nqura, 2020). This argument is also supported by Malambo (2016:12) who maintains the following: “Over time, repeated exposure to violence through television, movies, sports, video games and music videos would result in desensitization.”

Another common argument that supports the social learning theory is the belief that those who experience violence are at risk of perpetrating violent acts towards others (Kim, 2019:54). The researcher agrees that this assertion is true to some extent. Although some individuals who experience trauma in childhood are more likely to grow up and project their pain and violence onto others, the researcher argues that if the trauma is dealt with, it can put individuals at a place where they would never subject others to the same hurt they had been subjected to. For example, in the story of the little girl mentioned in chapter two, one of her perpetrators had unhealed wounds from his childhood, and as a result, he developed the belief that he would be satisfied to see someone else going through that same pain. However, for this little girl the response to her traumatic past was the complete opposite of what her perpetrator exhibited. Instead, the little girl developed a sense of compassion and empathy for those who experience GBV and femicide. This shows how important motivation is when it comes to aggression and perpetrating violent acts towards others.

In the following section, the researcher will discuss further reasons why GBV and femicide remain a problem with specific focus on the ecological systems theory.

3.3.2. Ecological systems theory

The ecological systems theory was theorised by Urie Bronfenbrenner and it asserts that learning takes place within a broader context (MacBlain, 2018:66). This model is known as a socio-cultural framework which takes into consideration how different environmental contexts play a role in behaviour development (Wilmhurst, 2017:13). This is an integrated theory that views learning and development from a rather holistic manner. The theory argues that different sub-

systems play an integral role in shaping individuals behaviour. These sub-systems are comprised of the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and the macrosystem (MacBlain, 2018:66; Wilmhurst, 2017:13). The following diagram shows what each of these systems entails:

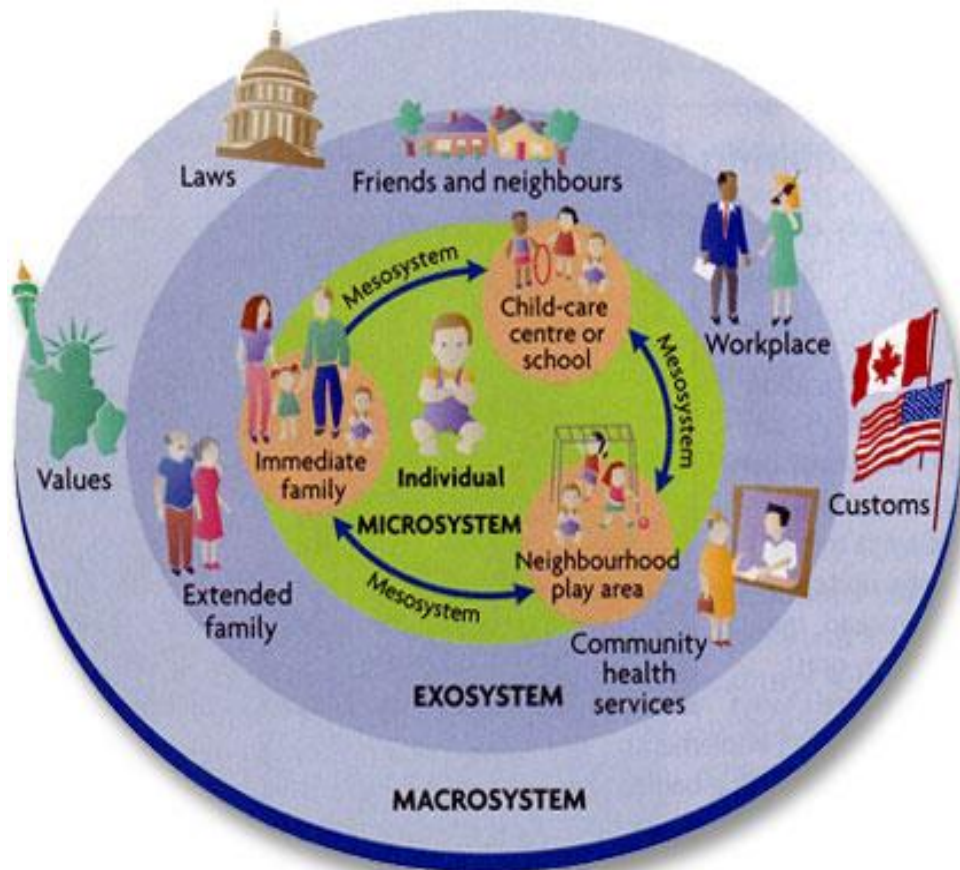


Figure 3.4: An expat child has many layers of influence (Mobbs, 2014).

The researcher argues that each of these sub-systems shows that human beings form part of an integrated network. Therefore, when it comes to GBV and femicide, it remains a reality that it occurs because of gaps in each of these systems. These gaps could range from individuals being ill-informed about GBV from the home or school environment to coming from environments that condone violent behaviour (UNODC, 2018:29-30). The values and cultural customs that one holds on to tends to have an impact on how individuals view the notion of violence against women and children. This is supported by Manzanga (2020:52), who argues that “men are culturally and socially expected to seek adventure, even if violence is necessary.”

Having grown up in a township, toxic masculinity (Dlamini, 2021:583) continues to be one of the major problems that lead to young women and children being subjected to violence at some point in their lives. In townships young women often go through harassment from their male counterparts. Their culture involves men asking women out and when they decline, these women are often cursed at and in worst case scenarios, they end up being physically assaulted by these men. The researcher recalls a time when she was walking to the shops and an older man made advances on her. When she would not entertain what he was saying, he shouted that he would rape her. Consequently, the researcher was always afraid to walk alone or wear certain clothes due to the objectification that women in her community experience from males when they are wearing clothes such as dresses or shorts. It is a sad reality that these behaviours continue to be supported and condoned in our communities and within our home environments (Dlamini, 2021:583).

Most women in this community where the researcher grew up remained in abusive relationships because of financial dependence. According to most scholars, it has been found that financial dependence is one of the main reasons that women continue to go back to abusive situations (Barnett *et al.*, 2016:455; Mbunge, 2020:1811; UNODC, 2018:44). This statement was supported by one of the women who was interviewed in Jeffery Epstein's case, who maintained that she kept going back to him because she was in need of financial support (60 Minutes Australia, 2019). This aspect of financial dependence remained at the core of Jeffery Epstein's modus operandi, because he targeted women from poor communities and lured women into a human trafficking ring because they were in need of financial security (60 Minutes Australia, 2019). Recently, in most communities, individuals fall victim to violence because of mob justice (Kabongo, 2021:3; Tripp, 2010:13). Another factor that is common ground in places like Limpopo and the Eastern Cape, is that older women are often murdered because of witchcraft accusations (Baloyi, 2014:1; Petrus, 2011:1; UNODC, 2018:34). For example, in the Eastern Cape, an 81-year-old woman was stripped naked and beaten due to witchcraft accusations (Shange, 2021). Furthermore, gender norms (Barnett, 2016:449; UNODC, 2018:23) regarding men and women play a role in GBV and femicide. Men are painted as strong, aggressive, powerful, unemotional, and controlling as opposed to females, who are viewed as weak, nurturing, powerless, dependent on men, and submissive (Manzanga, 2020:53-54).

From this statement it becomes evident that gender inequality (Gaffoor *et al.*, 2013:1, Manzanga, 2020:47), patriarchy (Chisale, 2020:2; Manzanga, 2020:32; Sande, 2019:2), social

and cultural norms (Manzanga, 2020:56; Muluneh *et al.*, 2020:3) play an integral part in the perpetration of GBV and femicide in South Africa. Therefore, the researcher believes that these gender norms and thought patterns need to be challenged in order for the GBV and femicide scourge to be prevented to some extent.

The following diagram is a simpler form of the ecological systems theory which is used by most scholars. It takes into consideration personal, relational, communal and societal factors that play a role in the perpetration of GBV and femicide.

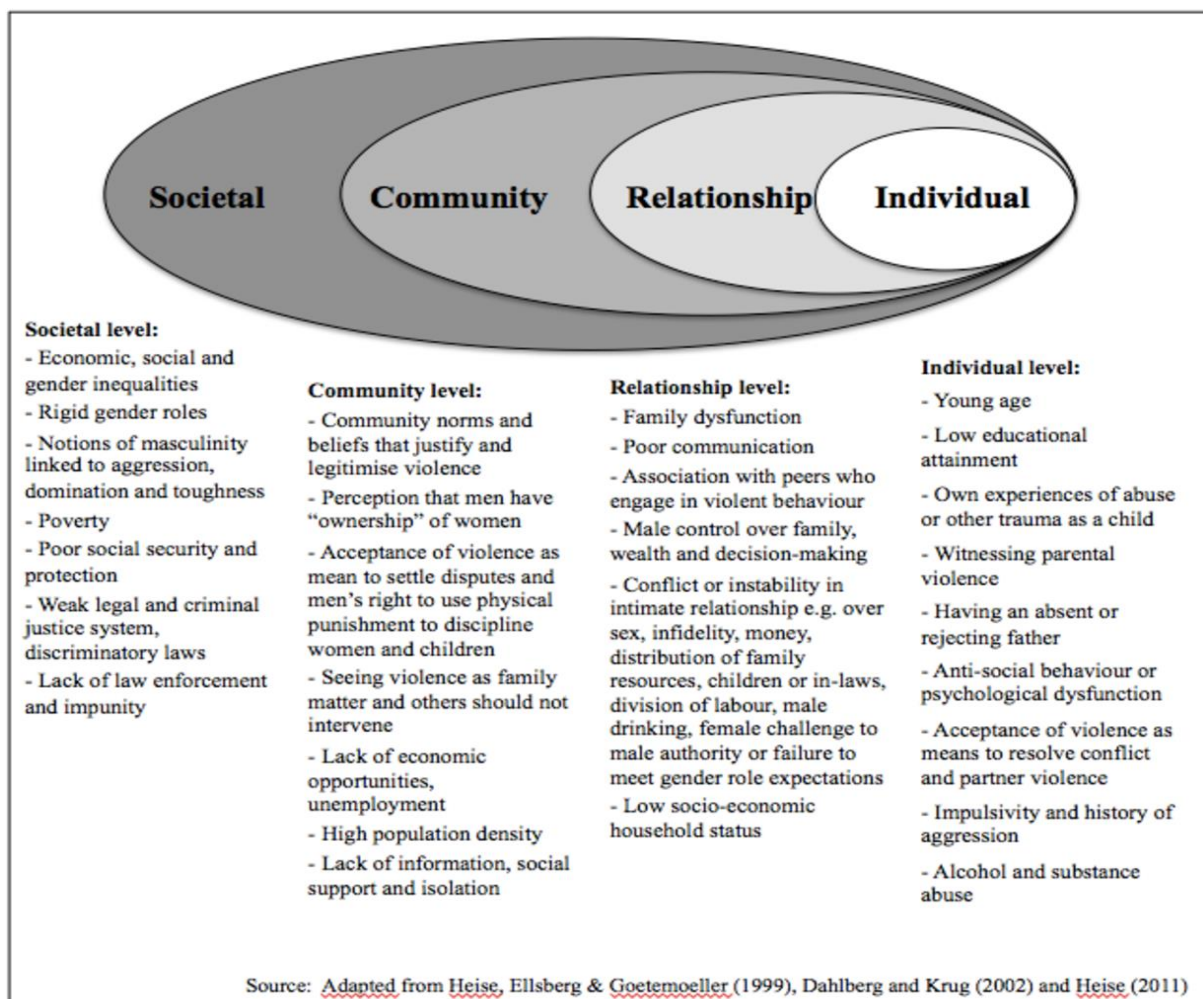


Figure 3.5: Preventing Gender-Based Violence Post- Disasters: Building the capacity of humanitarian actors in the Philippines to engage with men and boys to reduce the risks of perpetration of violence (Mollin, 2018:24).

Although the diagram shows some of the most common reasons for violence, the researcher believes that a gap still exists. Figure 3.5 does not address the role that pornography addiction

can play in the perpetration of GBV and femicide. This is something that most men and women have been exposed to at some point in their lives, and as mentioned previously, it has the potential to influence behaviour. Pornography depicts women as sexual objects and it sends out the message that all women should be treated in that manner (Davis, 2013:10; Papadopoulos, 2010:8). In reality, most women seen in pornographic videos have been subjected to rape and human-trafficking (Luzwick, 2017:355). This statement has been supported by Dlamini (2021:584) who stated the following: “Advancement in technology has added cyber-violence against women as another channel for GBV.”

This is an accurate statement which clearly shows that technology is an important factor in the perpetration of violence. With the ever-increasing rates of social media, people tend to be susceptible and exposed to all kinds of inappropriate material through the sharing of inappropriate adult content. Young women are often lured into sexual exploitation due to advertisements of false job opportunities on various social media outlets. Some fall victim to GBV as a result of allowing dates from men/women on social media or dating apps. Paediatricians have found that there is a direct link between the early use of pornography and sexual assaults being committed later in life. It has been found that “children under twelve years’ old who have viewed pornography are statistically more likely to sexually assault their peers” (Jenson, 2015).

Another gap which is not mentioned in this diagram is that some individuals are more likely to commit violent crimes because they own weapons. Research has shown a direct link between the ownership of handguns and the perpetration of femicide (WHO, 2012:6). Furthermore, this research study of the WHO showed that women who own guns often do this as a mode of self-defence (WHO, 2012:6). This supports the claim made by scholars that in some cases individuals perpetrate GBV as a means to protect themselves from being subjected to abuse and violence. Other factors that lead to GBV and femicide include jealousy, arguments and misunderstandings, infidelity, break-ups/divorce, fear of abandonment and mental health issues (UNODC, 2018:38). In some cases, women are murdered to spare families from embarrassment after they get pregnant from a rape (UNODC, 2018:30). In some communities GBV and femicide occur due to individuals falling outside the societal norm. This tends to put those who identify as part of the LGBTQ community and those who are sex-workers at risk of experiencing violent behaviour (UNODC, 2018:33-35).

The researcher believes that these are some of the known factors that play a role in GBV and femicide but due to the complexity of the issue, it is hard to name all the factors that play a role because the perpetrators' motivations are not always clear.

Due to the theological foundation of this study, the researcher will go on to investigate biblical perspectives which can be applied in understanding the reasons GBV and femicide continue to be a problem in South Africa.

3.4. Biblical perspectives

In this section of the study, the researcher will discuss biblical perspectives which play a role in the perpetration and justification of violence in our society and churches. As part of this discussion, the researcher will focus on the role of sin and brokenness in the world as one of the core reasons for violent behaviours. This will be followed by a discussion focusing on understanding how the misinterpretation of Scripture plays a role in the perpetration of GBV.

3.4.1. Sinfulness and brokenness in the world

One could imagine that GBV and femicide might be continuing at such a rapid rate because we live in a sinful and broken world (Samuel, 2015:3). According to Samuel (2015:4) the act of inflicting any form of GBV on others is considered to be sinful. Samuel (2015:1) makes the following statement:

GBV is an ancient sin that for thousands of years has harmed countless women, children and men. It is a sin that Christians need to recognize, understand and confront, for our religious history also bears its stain.

The researcher assumes this statement to be accurate, because it remains a reality that even in biblical times women were not exempt from experiencing GBV. Although the biblical text does not explicitly mention the term GBV, it is evident that violent behaviours such as these were common during that time. From as early as the book of Genesis, we start to see cycles of violence where men and women became victims of murders (Gen 4:8) and rapes (Gen 34:2, Gen 38).

In chapter four of the study, the researcher will give a detailed discussion focused on these Scripture references and how these go against the moral laws as detailed in the Torah. Furthermore, the researcher notes that some churches and leaders fail to confront this behaviour because they are also actively involved in committing and enabling these senseless crimes

against women and children (Le Roux & Loots, 2017:737). In most churches, the Scriptures are often misused and manipulated in such a manner that perpetrators of abuse against women and children are enabled to continue with their violent behaviour. This statement is supported by Samuel (2015:8) who maintains the following: “Scripture is sinfully misused when it is used to excuse or legitimize violence that violates the life God gives in Jesus Christ.”

Often Genesis 3 is interpreted in such a manner that women are regarded as “primary sinners” (Manzanga, 2020:144, 152). This notion tends to send the false message that women are deserving of violent acts perpetrated against them and that it is their fault as the “primary sinners.” This kind of ideology puts women and girls in even more vulnerable positions of enduring GBV and femicide. Men often think that this specific biblical passage allows them to exert power over women. Furthermore, it is important to maintain that the very reason Genesis 3:16 mentions that “...he will rule over you” is because humanity had already fallen into sin and disobedience to God (Hack, 2017:24). The researcher maintains that the main purpose of Scripture is for humanity to live life in a manner that is pleasing and intended to honour God. As is written, humans ought to pursue lives of holiness as God Himself is holy (1 Peter 1:16). Therefore, from this reflection alone, it becomes evident that the Scriptures were never written in such a manner to enable sinful behaviour or violence towards others. The researcher believes that this is supported by Matthew 18:6, which states the following:

If anyone causes one of these little ones - those who believe in me - to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.”

It is unfortunate that we live in a world where the media plays a critical role in how women are perceived and viewed in our society. In most advertisements and marketing strategies, women are always depicted as “sexual objects” (Dreyer, 2011:2; Nagi, 2014:75). This depiction sends the wrong message as to how women should be treated. The researcher argues that the negative images portrayed in media outlets put most men in difficult situations where they are most likely to commit violent crimes against women and children. Furthermore, the researcher reckons that the media- perception of aspects such as love and sexuality is not based on a biblical foundation. This then creates a flawed view of what love and sexuality entail. According to a statement made by Erickson (2013:969) it has been construed that:

The playboy philosophy assumes that a human is primarily a sexual-being, and sex is the most significant human experience. Much of today’s advertising seems to espouse this idea as well, almost as if nothing can be sold without a sexual overtone.

The preoccupation with sex suggests that in practice the view that humans are essentially sexual beings is widely held in our society.

The researcher realises that part of the problem involves the idea that society has come to accept certain behaviours as normal (Dreyer, 2011:5). The more these behaviours are condoned by society, the more they will continue to cause a ripple effect of abuse in our communities. The more society continues to view behaviours such as the use of pornography as normal, the more people are vulnerable to moving away from God's original design of sexuality. This not only perpetuates a culture of sin and brokenness but one where women are perceived from the perspective that they always need to submit to their male counterparts and cannot refuse sex. This notion of submission is rooted in the belief that a woman is the possession of her husband (Dreyer, 2011:5). Furthermore, it conditions men into thinking that women are only good enough to be used, abused and objectified.

3.4.2. The misinterpretation of Scripture

The misinterpretation of Scripture is not an uncommon response to GBV and femicide by individuals and pastors alike (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2013:215; Le Roux & Bowers-Du Toit, 2017:32, Manzanga, 2020:iv). This is very concerning as it can easily create a misconception relating to the nature and character of God. Furthermore, the misinterpretation of Scripture remains problematic as it sends the wrong message regarding the role and purpose of the Word of God into our lives. It is vital to take into consideration that the Scriptures are supposed to be used as a means to provide hope, and faith-based teaching and encouragement to people. This statement is supported by 2 Timothy 3:16, which states that: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness."

From this verse alone, it is clear that the Scriptures are not meant to manipulate or force individuals into conforming to harmful and degrading behaviours. However, we live in a world where the Word of God is often used as a way to promote, encourage and defend behaviour which is violent and patriarchal in nature (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2013:217; Dreyer, 2011:2; Le Roux & Loots, 2017:735; Nwaomah & Min, 2019:62). This statement has been supported by Deepen (2016:7) who maintains that after conducting a study involving 391 participants, it was found that only one percent of the men in Rwanda found it acceptable for a woman to refuse sexual contact, and that this should only happen under rather extraordinary circumstances. Deepen (2016:7) has found that all these men quote 1 Corinthians 7:4 as a

foundational verse to justify their views on women and sexuality. Furthermore, Deepen (2016:7) maintains that the common misconception is: men often quote the first part of the verse which states that: “The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband” (1 Cor 7:4).

However, it remains clear that these individuals are failing to read the rest of the verse (Deepen, 2016:7) which continues to state that: “In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife” (1 Cor 7:4). This inconsistent way of using Scripture allows individuals to gain a rather crooked meaning of the message conveyed in a particular passage of Scripture. However, there are cases where individuals deliberately choose to read the Scriptures in a way that is solely fitting to their ideologies and fail or refuse to look at the actual context of the Scripture. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2021) defines this process where individuals use the Scriptures to interpret them in a context that fits their own ideas or biases as eisegesis. This is the opposite of exegesis, which will be explored in chapter four of this study.

Furthermore, the misinterpretation of Scripture is seen in the manner in which the biblical passages on submission have been used. According to a statement made by Nwaomah and Min (2019:61) that Scriptures are often misinterpreted so that women are encouraged to submit to their husbands despite any occurrences of abuse. This has been reiterated by Lyon (2010:240) who shared the following story:

A woman came to her pastor for help because she was being beaten by her husband. Instead of giving her comfort and support, her pastor told her that it was the will of God that she go home, apologize to her husband and pray harder. She went home, desperately wanting to be obedient to God, and apologized, but was then taken to the hospital in the night after her husband had viciously beaten her. At that point the pastor told her husband to make a statement of repentance but allowed him to remain in the church even though he continued to abuse his wife. (Lyon, 2010:240).

Stories like these, show how dangerous it can be when the Bible is used as a tool to enable abuse. When the Scriptures are misinterpreted in such a manner, it creates a culture where women are conditioned to believe that the abuse is part of the will of God for their lives. This poses a problem, because it not only creates a culture of silence amongst those who are victims of abuse in the church, but it can force women to stay in relationships that might end in a fatal manner. This culture of silence from the perspective of the church is often justified with biblical

passages where the Apostle Paul instructs women to learn quietly (1 Tim 2:11) and to remain silent in church (1 Cor 14:34). Pastors often use these passages to encourage those experiencing GBV to remain quiet, especially in cases where the abuse is perpetrated by one's husband or by the pastor of a church. The culture of silence can be seen in the case of the Catholic church, where nuns were subjected to sexual abuse, forced abortions and labour exploitation for years, and they were forced to remain silent about their experiences (PBS NewsHour, 2019). In most cases, silence helps to prevent the perpetrators of violence from being held accountable. However, the researcher believes that the culture of silence can also play an important role in enabling abusers to continue with their behaviour despite making promises to the contrary. One of the interviewees of PSB NewsHour (2019) reiterated this statement in the following words: "As long as victims don't speak out, perpetrators just go on... So, we have the responsibility to speak."

According to a statement made by one of the interviewees of PBS NewsHour (2019) it has been expressed that although Pope Francis had confessed the sexual abuse perpetrated by priests in the Catholic church, it remains a reality that these priests were never held accountable for their behaviour. Instead, it has been declared that these pastors continue working for the church despite all the allegations of abuse reported against them (PBS NewsHour, 2019). The researcher feels that this wrong exegetical and hermeneutical application of Scripture is bound to create a culture where women continue to feel ashamed, unheard, misunderstood and alone because of their experiences. Furthermore, the misinterpretation of these Scriptures creates a culture where women are regarded as weak and inferior to their male counterparts (Deepen, 2016:6). This notion will be explored in depth in chapter four.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter was written in alignment with Osmer's second task where the focus is to answer the question "Why is it going on?" (Osmer, 2008:4). In order to answer this question, it is important to utilise an interdisciplinary approach. Therefore, the researcher has initiated the discussion by conceptualising the term "interdisciplinary approach." From this discussion, it is clear that the essence of an interdisciplinary approach would normally result in the use of two or more scientific paradigms. Therefore, it is for this reason that the researcher has based the discussion of this chapter on both psychological and biblical perspectives. Since interdisciplinary approaches play an important role in developing broader knowledge on issues of concern, this approach was useful in helping to create a substantial understanding of GBV

and femicide. The researcher believes that a common question asked by those who are victims of GBV and femicide is “why?” Therefore, utilising an interdisciplinary approach not only helps to answer the pressing questions that individuals are faced with, but it helps individuals develop a wide spectrum of responses to GBV. Furthermore, in an interdisciplinary approach it is imperative to work as a united front with various stakeholders and not to leave out a certain group of people. In order to win the fight against GBV and femicide, it is required that all individuals and institutions such as the church, need to play their part.

Secondly the researcher looked at psychological perspectives which could be applied in order to gain an understanding of factors that put individuals at high risk of experiencing or perpetrating GBV and femicide. The perspectives focus on the social learning theory and ecological systems theory.

- Based on the social learning theory it has been found that individuals who perpetrate GBV and femicide are most likely to have come from violent and aggressive environments. The theory further suggests that external factors such as television, music videos, and video games play a role in individuals acquiring violent behaviour. It has been established that there are direct links between experiencing childhood trauma and perpetrating GBV towards others later in life.
- The ecological systems theory is a social framework which shows that behaviour is influenced by actions and beliefs which form part of a rather holistic network. This network is comprised of individuals, relationships, community and society. The ideologies and beliefs, cultural and social norms which are present within the various parts of this network play an important role in the perpetration of GBV and femicide. As part of this discussion, it has also been suggested that aspects such as toxic masculinity, financial dependence, jealousy, infidelity, the ownership of guns, self-defence, and mental health issues are some of the risk factors which put individuals at risk of perpetrating GBV and femicide.

Thirdly the researcher has studied biblical perspectives on GBV and femicide. As part of this discussion, it has been noted that sinfulness and brokenness in this world play an integral part in the perpetration of GBV and femicide. Furthermore, the researcher has also noted that the misinterpretation of Scripture is another critical component which not only condones violence and puts women and children at risk of experiencing GBV, but it is a method often used to silence victims of GBV and femicide. In the following chapter, the researcher will conduct an exegetical study that will focus on understanding the role of Scripture on GBV and femicide.

Chapter 4: Normative task - Scriptural perspectives on GBV

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored interdisciplinary perspectives of GBV. The discussion included understanding GBV from psychological and biblical perspectives. The central theoretical statement argues that the church does indeed have a role to play when it comes to responding to GBV. This will link up with the next chapter where the focus will solely be on responses of the church to GBV and femicide in South Africa.

This chapter forms part of the normative task of Osmer's methodology where focus is on scriptural perspectives (Osmer, 2008:138). This is important because the Scriptures form a central part of our lives and seeing that events like GBV did in fact occur in Scripture is evidence to us that we have a role to play in addressing these social issues. The question to be answered in this section is "What is the role of Scripture in addressing GBV and femicide and how does Scripture encourage appropriate responses to GBV from the church?"

This chapter will focus on scriptural analysis as a form of understanding GBV. This scriptural analysis will be conducted through the method of exegesis. Therefore, the researcher will firstly conceptualise the term **exegesis**. This will be useful to help readers gain an understanding of what exegesis entails and the importance of this method.

Secondly, the researcher will go on to discuss the moral laws. This is an important discussion because GBV and femicide are issues of morality (Lungu, 2016:iii). As part of this discussion the researcher will define moral laws and discuss what they say about GBV and femicide. As part of this discussion the researcher will discuss GBV as an issue of morality from the perspective of Exodus 20.

Thirdly, the researcher will conduct a discussion focusing on the biblical perspectives regarding the sexual assault of women. This discussion is important in order to confirm the fact that the biblical text is not silent on issues relating to GBV. As part of this discussion the researcher will focus on Deuteronomy 22:25-29 and Leviticus 18.

Fourthly, the researcher will conduct an exegetical study on Judges 19. The researcher will make use of the exegetical method proposed by Stuart (Stuart, 2009). Judges 19 involves the story of a concubine who was raped and murdered. This is a story that continues to be relevant

in our modern day society where countless women and children become victims of violent crimes every day.

Lastly, the researcher will go on to discuss humanity as created in the image of God as described in Genesis 1:27. As part of this discussion focus will be on creating a link between the true essence of being created in the image of God in relation to GBV.

4.2. Conceptualising exegesis

In the previous chapter of this study the researcher mentioned that GBV continues to be accepted in the church due to incorrect scriptural applications. The process of exegesis should form an integral part of Scripture analysis. Exegesis involves interpreting the Scriptures in the correct context. This statement is supported by scholars who argue that exegesis involves interpreting the deeper meaning that the biblical authors were trying to convey through the Scriptures (Cairns, 2003:171; Fee, 2002:1; Stuart, 2009:1). Scholars further believe that this process of interpretation involves:

The exegete interpreting and explaining a passage of Scripture in the light of linguistics, semantics, grammar, syntax, textual criticism, literary structure and rhetorical strategies of the author. Aspects such as genre, historical and sociological background of the text as well as geographical setting are important to understand and are part of the exegetical process (Longman III, 2013:311).

All these steps play a critical role in guiding the exegete to gain a sense of revelation of the message that the Scriptures are trying to convey to us today. This statement is supported by Stuart (2009:1) who professes that “an exegesis is a thorough, analytical study of a biblical passage done so as to arrive at a useful interpretation of the passage.”

The researcher believes that the use of this methodology is especially important when trying to find Christ-centred solutions to social issues like GBV and femicide within the context of the church. In order for individuals to gain a new perspective on GBV, it is important for the church to take up their rightful place and be the salt and light in communities (Matthew 5:13-16). It is also imperative for the church to utilise the correct scriptural analysis when addressing the issue of GBV and femicide. Therefore, as part of this chapter the researcher will be making use of the exegetical method proposed by Stuart (2009). The following diagram shows the steps involved as part of the methodology of Stuart (Kruger, 2014:8):

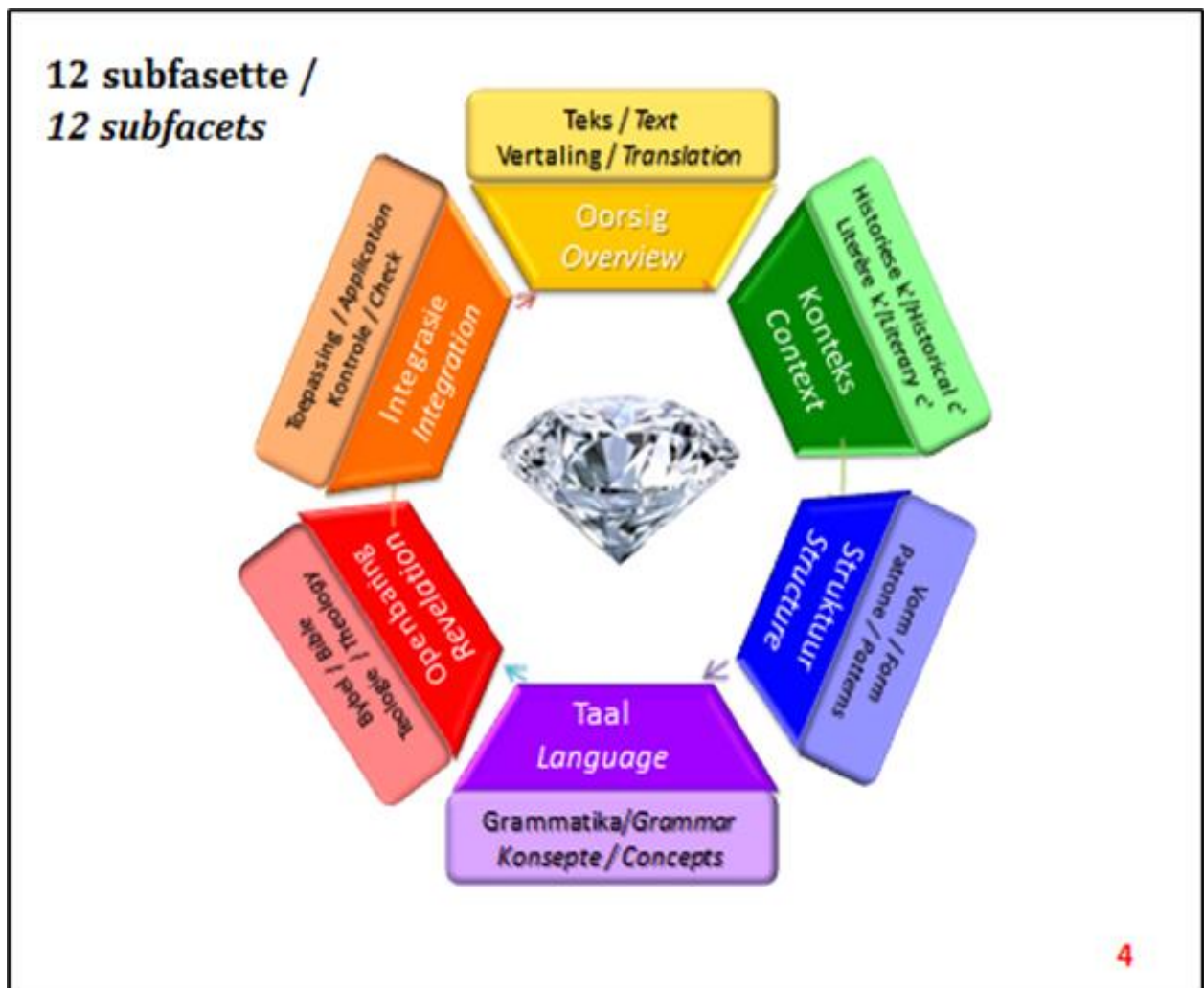


Figure 4.1: The steps of exegesis as proposed by Stuart (Kruger, 2014:8).

4.3. Conceptualising the moral laws

GBV is an issue of morality (Lungu, 2016:iii). It undermines the instructions given to us through the moral laws. It is therefore important to not only gain an understanding of the moral laws, but to take note that the church has a moral obligation to respond to social issues which affect individuals in communities (Muyambo, 2018:9). However, according to Baloyi (2018:5) it is argued that “the church has portrayed ignorance in relation to providing moral and spiritual guidance.” The researcher feels that this statement by Baloyi is not entirely correct. The researcher takes note that although an issue such as GBV and femicide might not be explicitly spoken about within the context of the church, there are other issues of morality which continue to remain central in the teachings of the church. It is important to mention that what we believe

and the content of our faith has to influence our morality and the way we live our lives. Therefore, even though GBV and femicide are not explicitly mentioned in the church, the teachings of the church still influence congregants' views thereof. Furthermore, the researcher argues that in most churches the spiritual guidance of congregants is not taken for granted. The only limitation on spiritual guidance has to do with the fact that most pastors and church leaders are not adequately trained to work with victims of GBV and femicide (Le Roux & Bowers-Du Toit, 2017:34). This is an aspect that needs to be challenged amongst pastors and church leaders. Before getting involved in depth with an exegetical analysis focusing on moral laws, it is important to first define the concept.

The moral laws are set on biblical principles concerned with moral living (Sprinkle, 2008:909). This statement is supported by the Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2021) which maintains that the moral laws are concerned with individuals living right. This was further supported by Sprinkle (2008:910) who argued that a moral law serves as a guide for living. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2021). broadened the argument by stating that the moral laws are concerned with living life in alignment with the will of God. It was further maintained that the “moral laws encompass regulations on justice, respect, and sexual conduct” (The Pantagraph, 2013). In essence one can argue that the moral laws represent the holy nature of God (The Pantagraph, 2013). Living a life of holiness is imperative and this is something that God demanded of His people. God commanded all individuals to be holy as He is holy (Leviticus 21:8; Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 1:16; 1 Thessalonians 4:7). This notion is supported by Sprinkle (2008:909) who maintains that the moral laws are “based on the character of God that does not change and remains forever applicable.” There is no doubt that the moral laws such as those reflected in the Ten Commandments continue to remain applicable in our lives today (Sprinkle, 2008:909).

4.3.1. GBV and femicide as an issue of morality

Although the biblical text does not explicitly make use of the terms “GBV and femicide”, it is important to maintain that it does take into consideration issues of morality. This statement is supported by Vorster (2021:29) who states that “all morals come from God.” As part of this discussion on GBV and femicide as an issue of morality, the researcher will be analysing the pericope in Exodus 20. This pericope is of importance not only because it is foundational to the way of life and continues to remain relevant in our current time (Lindsley, 2013), but it

also serves as ethical material (Kangwa, 2021:475). Due to the nature of this study being on GBV and femicide in South Africa, the focal verse is verse 13: “*You shall not commit murder.*”

This is an important focal verse, because from the previous chapters it became evident that GBV can result in the brutal murders of women and children (Metoo & Mirza, 2007:195). This is something which occurs far too often from a South African and global perspective. However, it is important to note that these continuous murders of women and children go against the very nature of God. One can emphasize that the Ten Commandments reveal the character of God to humanity (Arnold, 2015:222). This statement was supported by Kroll (2008:72) who argues that in Exodus 20 “God has revealed His moral will.” The researcher agrees with this statement, because the Ten Commandments are not only a set of rules or moral commands they are a way of life. If anything, these Commandments should be regarded as a model for one’s lifestyle.

In the book of Genesis, it is evident that violence does not glorify the character of God. In Genesis 4 the Bible records the first domestic related murder where Cain kills his brother Abel (Genesis 4:8). From this portion of Scripture, it becomes evident that committing violence towards others goes against the will of God for humanity. In Genesis 4:10 Cain is cursed by God after he has killed his brother. The punishment that Cain receives from God is evidence enough that God is displeased with what Cain did (Okunoye & Akano, 2018:124). The researcher believes that the reaction that God directs towards Cain shows that He is a God of justice. Psalm 89:14 states that “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you.” It is important for individuals, family members, church leaders and society at large to imitate this characteristic of God where justice becomes the central point of response to violent behaviours. This justice should be handled in such a way that the family members, friends, church leaders etc... stop protecting the perpetrators when they are aware of cases of GBV committed against women and children. The perpetrators will need to be held accountable for their actions. Therefore, it is vital for each and every individual to take a stand against violence (McMahon *et al.*, 2014:59) by not covering up for the perpetrators to the point where justice does not prevail. Furthermore, the researcher argues that our justice system and police personnel in South Africa need to stop failing women. They need to stop the culture of mistreating women who are reporting cases of violence and treating them as though the women were at fault for falling victim to violent crimes.

Furthermore, in Genesis 6 it becomes even more evident that God was unhappy with the behaviour of humankind. Genesis 6:11 maintains that “the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence.” In an earlier verse when the Lord saw how wicked and evil humanity

had become, he regretted creating them (Genesis 6:5-7). As a result, God resorted to destroy humanity because their actions were not in alignment with his will and character (Genesis 6:13). All these acts of violence reflect a sense of immorality. The sad reality is that we continue to live in a world where violence is common and it is rooted in societal norms (Breger, 2017:170).

From the perspective of the New Testament, it is evident that these commandments continue to be of relevance. The commandment “*You shall not murder*” (Romans 13:9; Matthew 5:21) speaks to the reality that no- one has the authority to take the life of another individual. This is not only a biblical command, but an ethical issue which is reflected in the Bill of Rights (Vorster, 2021:97). It remains a reality that every individual has the right to life (Vorster, 2021:57). Therefore, each time someone takes a life, it undermines both this very important biblical principle and the law. Matthew 5:21 continues to state that “anyone who murders will be subject to judgement.” From this portion of Scripture, the researcher maintains that accountability should be imperative for those who go against the instruction of God not to murder. However, we live in a world where not everyone is held accountable for perpetrating acts of violence upon others. At times the church purposefully fails to hold members, implicated in violence, to account in an attempt to uphold the image of the church. The researcher believes that it is imperative for churches to not only preach obedience to the word of God, but also important to follow in the example of God. Therefore, it is important for church leaders to ensure that those who are implicated in violent acts are held responsible for their actions. If our churches stop becoming a hub where abuse is covered up and they work hand-in- hand with law enforcement agencies, we could begin to start seeing a ripple effect of change in our communities. Furthermore, it is imperative that our churches become safe spaces for women and children who are being abused so that they can be guided with tools which can help them on their journey of healing. In the following section the researcher will discuss rape from the perspective of the biblical text.

4.4. Biblical perspectives on the sexual assault of women

To gain a biblical understanding of GBV, it is imperative to discuss the various scriptural perspectives on the topic. As mentioned before, although the biblical text does not make use of the term “GBV” it is important to mention that it does not remain silent on issues pertaining to sexual assaults and rapes. There are countless stories in the Bible involving women who were

victims of rapes. The following section will focus on discussing a biblical story on GBV. As part of this discussion the researcher will be looking at Bible verses which specifically discuss the issue of rape. The first Bible verse that will be discussed is Deuteronomy 22:25-29. The pericope reads as follows:

²⁵ But if out in the country a man happens to meet a young woman pledged to be married and rapes her, only the man who has done this shall die. ²⁶ Do nothing to the woman, she has committed no sin deserving death. This case is like that of someone who attacks and murders a neighbour, ²⁷ for the man found the young woman out in the country, and though the betrothed woman screamed, there was no one to rescue her. ²⁸ If a man happens to meet a virgin who is not pledged to be married and rapes her and they are discovered, ²⁹ he shall pay her father fifty shekels of silver. He must marry the young woman, for he has violated her. He can never divorce her as long as he lives (Deuteronomy 22:25-29).

Deuteronomy 22:25-29 makes it clear to the reader that rape is a violation against those who fall prey to it and those who experience rape are not at fault (Deming *et al.*, 2013:473). This is such an important aspect for the biblical text to address because victims of rape tend to blame themselves for their experiences (Deming *et al.*, 2013:467). This notion of blame is often embedded in the abusers making the victims believe that the rape happened because they asked for it or it happened because they were dressed inappropriately (Wegner *et al.*, 2015:1020). However, it is imperative to maintain that all these thoughts associated with the feelings of blame are not associated with truth. When individuals get violated in this manner, the truth is that it is beyond their control and is never their fault. The reality is that any form of sexual violence serves as an example of the abuse of power (Sanjel, 2013:179). The abuse of power is an aspect that was identified in most high-profile cases of rape such as in the cases of Jeffery Epstein (60 Minutes Australia, 2019) and Harvey Weinstein (Sky News, 2019). The victims are often powerless (Baldasare, 2012:8; Boateng, 2021:45; Misra, 2019:14) against their abusers. Furthermore, the biblical text compares rape to murder (Deuteronomy 22:26). The researcher argues that this is a very accurate description of what rape does to a woman. The abuser might not physically kill a victim, but the act itself can cause one to feel as if a part of themselves has died when the rape occurred. The little girl spoken about in chapter two felt like a part of her had died each time she was taken advantage of. This is one of the reasons she battled with feelings of depression and anxiety. She felt violated and that made her battle with feelings of guilt, shame and unworthiness. However, as discussed in chapter two it has been established that these feelings are normal.

Deuteronomy 22 takes into account the importance of holding perpetrators of sexual violence accountable. This statement was supported by scholars such as Nelson (2014:309) and Grisanti (2012:555) who reiterated that the law given in this portion of Scripture, had warned individuals that they would be held “responsible for their actions” if they engaged in unethical and immoral sexual behaviour. Such a response is one which the researcher argues needs to be adopted within the context of the church. It is disheartening that so many people continue to commit sexual crimes against women and children, but they are never held accountable for their actions (PBS NewsHour, 2019). This is an issue of concern that needs to change not only in South Africa, but in the world at large. Instead of blaming victims of abuse for their experiences it is imperative to hold those responsible accountable for this abuse.

Leviticus 18 is another portion of Scripture that addresses unethical sexual conduct. Although this verse does not make use of the word “rape” it does mention various scenarios where sexual contact would be unethical. These scenarios include abstaining from sexual contact with close relatives (Leviticus 18:6), siblings (Leviticus 18:9) and the wife of your neighbour (Leviticus 18:20). The researcher argues that this is an important portion of Scripture in a world where most children experience their first sexual encounters in close family systems. It is also a sad reality that when cases of abuse are disclosed in most families victims are required to stay silent because it is considered to be a “family secret” (Barnett *et al.*, 2016:455). However, as mentioned in the previous chapters, research findings show that most cases of abuse are perpetrated by individuals who are known to the individual and one third of the cases are perpetrated by family members (Macdonald *et al.*, 2012:3). The fact that the biblical text maintains such behaviour as unethical, proves that it is imperative that individuals stop condoning or overlooking abuse that happens in close family systems. In order to get to a place where we see a reduction in the cases of GBV cases in our country, it is vital to address it from a familial level. Families need to be encouraged to stop protecting those individuals who take advantage of women and children within family systems. Furthermore, the researcher argues that families need to teach children at a young age to report cases of abuse to trusted individuals. The family should not be the reason why a victim is afraid to reach out for help. Furthermore, the family system should be one where women and children are cared for, nurtured and supported. The researcher feels strongly that ending GBV is a collective action and it requires all families to get to a point where they say “no” to GBV. Doing this will play a role in reducing the number of rapes and child sexual abuse cases in our country.

From a New Testament perspective, Leviticus 18 is supported by the command “do not commit sexual immorality” (1 Corinthians 6:18). The biblical text calls each individual to pursue a life of holiness (Leviticus 19:2) and love towards one another (Mark 12:28-31). However, it remains a reality that sexual violence is not an expression of love towards the next person. It represents the opposite of what true love entails. GBV is behaviour that is self-seeking and it dishonours the next person. In the following section the researcher will discuss GBV and femicide by conducting an exegetical analysis focusing on Judges 19.

4.5. An exegetical study on GBV

GBV is a phenomenon that is not new in our current times, but it is something that has existed through the ages. The biblical text records multiple stories where women were victims of violent crimes (Genesis 34; Genesis 38; 2 Samuel 13). Due to the nature of this study being on GBV and femicide, the story that the researcher will be focusing on in this study is that of the concubine who was raped and murdered. In this section of the study the researcher will be making use of the method of exegesis as described by Stuart (2014:8). This is essential in developing a sense of in-depth context regarding the pericope that will be studied., It is also vital in gaining an understanding of how the pericope continues to remain relevant in our current society.

4.5.1. Overview

The thought unit in Judges 19 begins with the opening verse which mentions that “*In those days Israel had no king*” (Judges 18:1; Judges 19:1). The opening verse is a cause for concern, because the book of Judges mentioned that whenever Israel had no king people were prone to resort to wicked and corrupt behaviour (Judges 2:11,19). This is further elevated in Judges 21 which maintains that because “Israel had no king” the people lived life in accordance to their own will and they “did as they pleased” (Judges 21:25). The opening verse sets the tone for the rest of the pericope. In this portion of Scripture, the rape and murder of a concubine is documented (Judges 19:25-29). Throughout the biblical text it becomes evident that rape was considered an outrageous act committed against a woman (Brouer, 2014:24).

The researcher indicates that the opening verse points the reader to the reality that there was a lack of accountability amongst the host and the Levite. This lack of accountability can be

observed in the manner that both the host and the Levite offered to sacrifice the women to the men of Gibeah to be gang-raped (Judges 19:25). Both of these men only cared about saving themselves, but they both failed to protect the women in their lives. In this pericope, it is interesting that only the men were given voices (Masenya, 2012:207). The women in this narrative are not only unnamed, but they were never given voices (Gunn, 2005:244; Masenya, 2012:208). This is not uncommon in a culture of patriarchy (Blyth, 2008:15; Ifechelobi, 2014:22). It is vital to realise that women and children in South Africa who are victims of rape are often silenced by their families and perpetrators.

The researcher declares that it is appalling that the host had such a one-sided view of the matter. The host regarded rape as an outrageous act only if it was committed against another man, but he deemed it acceptable for the women to be abused and used in any way (Judges 19:23-24). These verses led the researcher to realise that in our current society, it is deemed unacceptable for a woman to raise her hand against a man (McCarry, 2009:334). However, it is deemed acceptable for a man to raise his hand against a woman (McCarry, 2009:328). Ideologies like these need to be challenged in our society. Furthermore, the Levite saw it fit to sacrifice the concubine to be raped as a means to protect himself (Judges 19:25). One can only wonder whether the Levite truly cared about his concubine or not, because true love does not take advantage of others. True love is not selfish, it never delights in evil and it protects at all times (1 Corinthians 13:5-13). The researcher argues that true love is embedded in standing for the truth (1 Corinthians 13:7) and it fights for what is right. Therefore, in the context of this study the researcher has identified Judges 19:30 as the focal verse. This verse is a call for justice and for people to stop being complacent with regards to responding to GBV: *“We must do something! So speak up!”* (Judges 19:30).

4.5.2. Context of Judges 19

4.5.2.1. Historical context

Longman III and Dillard (2006:135) believe that the book of Judges was written at a time preceding Joshua’s death (Judges 1:1) and at a time where the monarchy was becoming a norm in Israel. At this point the Israelites had already inherited the Promised Land, but because they had failed to drive the Canaanites out of the land they had adopted their ways (Hays & Duvall, 2011:292). A nation that once served God with passion (Judges 2:7) turned into one that did evil before the eyes of God (Judges 2:11). The Israelites began to worship idols, they became

corrupt and stubborn (Judges 2:16). Their behaviour displeased God (Judges 2:14, 20) and it went against the laws that God had given His people throughout the Pentateuch. As mentioned earlier, God required His people to be holy as he is holy (Longman III & Dillard, 2006:128), but in the book of Judges the people did not represent this holiness. Instead, the researcher holds that the events that occurred in Judges 19-21 are a representation of the unfaithfulness that was prevalent amongst people at that time. In Judges 2 the biblical text mentions the following:

After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel (Judges 2:10).

After observing this verse, the researcher maintains that this was a generation that was unconcerned with following the ways of God. In Judges 19 it is evident that the laws on murder (Exodus 20:13) and rape (Leviticus 18) were broken in every way possible.

It has been determined that the community in Israel is one that was patriarchal (Masenya, 2014:214). This can be observed in a few instances within this pericope:

- The Levite persuaded the concubine to get back with him after she had left him (Judges 19:2).
- The woman instead of the man was put in a dangerous and abusive situation by the Levite. Furthermore, the host was also willing to send out both his virgin daughter and the concubine to be raped by the men of Gibeah. According to an argument made by Masenya (2012:209) it was maintained that in the context of Israel “the sexuality of wives was owned by their husbands.”
- The manner in which the Levite spoke to the unresponsive concubine was uncaring and controlling in verse 28: “Get up; let’s go” (Judges 19:28).

This notion of patriarchy is also common within the South African context (Thobejane, 2014:897). According to Masenya (2012:209) it is quite the norm and not uncommon in South Africa for men to feel entitled to owning the sexuality of women. This false belief is one of the driving causes of GBV within a South African context (Manzanga, 2020:57). Entitlement can lead individuals into dangerous places where they fail to respect women and their bodies. It is evident in Judges 19 that none of these men cared about the concubine’s feelings; she was sent out by her own husband to be humiliated and the men of Gibeah continued to rape her all through the night without caring about her emotional well-being. According to Brouer (2014:24) the following comment is worth studying:

The legal texts reveal that rape is viewed as equivalent to murder (Deuteronomy 22:26) and as pressuring a woman physically (Deuteronomy 22:25-26) or psychologically (Deuteronomy 22:28-29) into sexual intercourse. The legal texts value the consent and voice of the woman (Deuteronomy 22:27) and assume her innocence (Deuteronomy 22:27) ... The biblical writers understood the multi-dimensional trauma and devastation of rape and viewed rape as life-threatening and a serious violation of a God-ordained, life-sustaining order (Brouer, 2014:24).

4.5.2.2. Literary context

Scholars have argued that the Judges 19 narrative contains intertextual similarities with the story of Sodom and Gomorrah (Longman & Dillard, 2006:136; Masenya, 2012:210). The following statements appear in both the Genesis 19 and Judges 19 narratives: “*Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them*” (Genesis 19:5; Judges 19:22). This notion of intertextuality is also seen in the responses given by Lot and the old man. In the Genesis 19 narrative it reads:

... No, my friends. Don't do this wicked thing. Look I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don't do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof (Genesis 19:8).

This passage is in alignment with the words written in the Judges 19 narrative which states the following:

... No, my friends, don't be so vile. Since this man is my guest, don't do this outrageous thing. Look, here is my virgin daughter, and his concubine. I will bring them out to you now, and you can use them and do to them whatever you wish. But as for this man, don't do such an outrageous thing (Judges 19:23-24).

Although there is some literary contrast between these two passages (Kochin, 2007:310), it has been noted that the contexts portrayed are not entirely the same. The researcher agrees with this. In the Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19) story the wicked men did not want to take Lot's offer to send out his daughters. They not only threatened Lot, but they tried to break into the house in order to seize the males at the house. In the Judges 19 narrative the wicked men accepted it when the concubine was sent out to them (Kochin, 2007:311).

It is also imperative to maintain that this narrative contains elements of irony. This has been supported by Masenya (2012:211) who made the following statement:

A two-fold irony is narrated in Judges 19:24-25. The guest, not the host, is the one who offers hospitality to the perverse mob. The Levite seized his own wife who was also a guest and put her out to them (Masenya, 2012:211).

According to an argument made by Pitts (2015:3) the irony presented in Judges 19 is seen in the manner in which the Levite's primary wife is not mentioned anywhere in this pericope. The Hebrew word used for "concubine" suggests that the concubine was a secondary wife to the Levite (Gunn, 2005:243). Therefore, Pitts mentioned that there are arguments stating that the concubine was the Levite's mistress. This forces one to ask why the biblical text views the concubine's father as the Levite's in-law? The researcher comments that there is a possibility that the Levite had multiple wives. Furthermore, Judges 19 concludes with the following words:

Such a thing has never been seen or done, not since the day the Israelites came up out of Egypt. Just imagine! We must do something! So Speak up! (Judges 19:30).

From this verse the researcher believes that the Israelites would work as a united front to fight the culture of violent crimes committed against women. However, in the following chapters this notion of irony continues. The researcher argues that in Judges 20-21 irony is observed in the following ways:

- When the Levite was asked about the murder of the concubine, he was not truthful about the details of that night (Judges 20:3-6).
- After the tribe of Benjamin was destroyed, the people of Jabesh and Gilead were killed and these killings included both women and children (Judges 21:10). Furthermore, it was tragic that the men and women who were not classified as virgins were also murdered (Judges 21:11).
- The Benjamites kidnapped the young women of Shiloh and forced them to be their wives (Judges 21:20-21, 23).

According to Pitts (2015:4) it has been noted that the events that occurred in Judges 20-21 are classified as "tragic irony." Pitts has made use of this concept because the culture of rape and abuse against women continued to happen in Israel. Furthermore, the researcher suspects that this culture of rape could have continued because the tribe of Benjamin refused to turn over the wicked men of Gibeah (Judges 20:13).

The rhetorical question that the researcher asks herself when reading Judges 19 is: “At what moment in the pericope was the concubine murdered?” This is something which not only remains a mystery in the pericope, but there are debates surrounding the actual time when she died (Masenya, 2012:211; Pitts, 2015:3). There are two sides to this debate:

- The first side includes individuals who argue that she was unconscious when she did not respond to the Levite (Nelson, 2014:411) and hence the Levite murdered her.
- The second side of the debate involves the argument that she had already died when the Levite cut her body.

The story is narrated in such a way that themes relating to patriarchy and gender inequality are brought to light (Masenya, 2012:212; Pitts, 2015:4). Masenya (2012:212) argues that the narrative contains themes relating to how GBV is rooted in “other dynamics of power such as social class, power relations between other men and socio-economic status.” Masenya (2012:212) comments that the silence of the women in Judges 19 is metaphoric to the reality that GBV renders women helpless, voiceless, powerless and often leaves them feeling annihilated. Furthermore, Gunn (2005:246) maintains that the narrator makes use of both allegory and typology in Judges 19. According to Gunn the following is stated:

Allegorically, the Levite seeking out his wife represents God seeking out the Jews after they worshiped other gods (i.e. “fornicated”). Typologically (and remarkably), the woman’s suffering prefigures the sufferings of the apostles and saints; and just as her fate was broadcast throughout Israel, so should that of the martyrs be broadcast throughout the church, encouraging the faithful (Gunn, 2005:246).

4.5.3. Structure

The proposed structure for the book of Judges according to Hays and Duvall (2011:269) is as follows:

- The cycle of disobedience (1:1-3:6).
- The downward spiral of the twelve Judges who deliver Israel (3:7-16:31).
- Israel hits rock- bottom (17:1-21:25).

This three-part structure is in line with the statement made by Longman and Dillard (2006:138) who see Judges divided into three parts. According to Longman and Dillard (2006:138) these three parts comprised of the prologue (1:1), the centre (2:16-16:31) and the epilogue (17:1-

21:25). Furthermore, Longman and Dillard (2006:138) maintain that there are two central story- lines which are present in the book of Judges. The researcher observes that Hill and Walton (2009) make use of a slightly different structure for the book of Judges. According to Hill and Walton (2009:441-442) the proposed structure for Judges is as follows:

- I. Background: Failure to drive out the Canaanites (1:1-2:5).
- II. Introduction: Cycle of apostasy (2:6-3:6).
- III. Cycles: “The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord (3:7-16).
- IV. Tribal depravity: “Everyone did as they saw fit” (17-21).

Taking into consideration the fact that the discussion in this chapter is focused on Judges 19, the researcher believes it is imperative to include the structure for this pericope. According to Constable (2012) the structure for Judges 19 is divided into the following sub-sections:

- The background of the incident (19:1-15).
- The hospitality of the stranger (19:16-21).
- The immorality of the people of Gibeon (19:22-26).
- The Levite’s reaction to the atrocity (19:27-30).

4.5.4. Language

The opening verse in Judges 19 provides the background for the rest of the pericope. It is, therefore, vital to discuss three key-concepts which appear in this pericope. These key-concepts are comprised of the words “concubine” and “unfaithful.” Discussing the significance of these words within the pericope will be useful in gaining an in-depth understanding of Judges 19:21.

1. “Concubine” – The King James Version of the Bible (Bible Hub, 2021) made use of the word *piylegesh* to indicate that the concubine was probably the Levite’s secondary wife (Gunn, 2005:243). According to the NASB lexicon it is also considered that the usage of the word פִּיִּלְגֶשֶׁתַּי (filegesh) points to the concubine possibly being a foreigner (Bible hub, 2021). Constable (2012) thinks that the use of the word *piylegesh* makes individuals realise the immoral nature of the Israelites, because God’s standards of marriage involve a monogamous relationship. Although Pitts (2003:3) agrees that *piylegesh* refers to a secondary wife, he also suspects that the word can also mean that the concubine was the

Levite's mistress. Pitts (2003:3) continues to argue that concubines were usually used for a man's pleasure. This argument by Pitts is concerning to the researcher as it could let one think that in the eyes of the Levite, the concubine was only good to him for sexual pleasure and there was no real intimacy that existed between them. This argument is rooted in the fact that Judges 19:2 records that the concubine was unfaithful to the Levite. Furthermore, in this pericope the Levite seems to be emotionally unattached to the concubine, because he willingly sent her out to be abused by the wicked men of Gilead.

2. "Unfaithful" – The NIV makes use of the phrase "she was unfaithful to him" (Judges 19:2). However, the NASB and KJV versions make use of a different phrase. In the NASB Judges 19:2 is written in the following manner: "But his concubine played the harlot" (Bible Hub, 2021). The Hebrew term used to describe the concubine's behaviour is *וַתִּזְנֶה* (*vat-tiz-neh*) which refers to the act of committing fornication or being a prostitute. The KJV phrased verse two in the following manner: "And his concubine played the whore" (Judges 19:2). Within the context of the KJV the word *zanah* was used to indicate that the concubine had committed an act of adultery against the Levite (Bible Hub, 2021). The researcher is wondering whether the translation of *zanah* as "prostitution or adultery" is accurate enough in the context of Judges 19?

As a Levite one is expected to know the law and to fully abide by it (Masenya, 2012:209). Therefore, the researcher reckons that for the Levite to go after the concubine after she had committed adultery is a questionable act. In the law narratives, the biblical text makes it clear that the act of adultery was punishable by death (Gunn, 2005:254; Leviticus 20:10). For a Levite who was essentially "set apart to stand and serve in the name of the Lord" (Brouer, 2014:25) to go after an adulteress, it would go against the holy nature of God. Therefore, the researcher stands in agreement with the scholars Masenya (2012:209) and Pitts (2015:3) who maintain that the Greek word "*origizo*" which means "to be angry" is the most appropriate translation of this verse. This translation is accurate in regard to the fact that the Levite went back to persuade the concubine to come back with him (Judges 19:2). Although the biblical text does not make mention of this, one ceases to wonder if the relationship between the concubine and the Levite was abusive or not? The researcher found herself asking this question because in our current times if a person allowed someone else to rape a woman, it is viewed as abuse. Furthermore, Masenya (2012:210) reiterates that due to the concubine being portrayed as voiceless and powerless in a patriarchal society, it would not come as a surprise if she were

returning to an essentially abusive lover. Masenya continues to believe that this is a cycle that is so prevalent in society where women constantly return to relationships which are toxic and violent for them (Masenya, 2012:210).

The biblical text regards rape as an “outrageous” action (Judges 19:23). This is a statement which is true, but the researcher also argues that putting someone else in that vulnerable position is also outrageous. The word “*nebalah*” is used in this context in order to describe that rape is an issue of godlessness (Brouer, 2014:24). The researcher feels that this godlessness and wickedness is not only limited to the perpetrators of the rape, but the old man and Levite have also shown this. None of the men in this narrative cared about the well-being of the concubine and the fact that all of them had used her seemed like the norm. This goes on to show the problem with perpetrators of rape: they use women for their own pleasure without caring about her well-being. To them this is normal behaviour which is rooted in the false belief that the victims actually asked for it and even enjoyed it. It has been mentioned that:

An outrage was considered a serious threat to the well-being of an individual, community, and nation, that resulted in a dangerous breakdown of social, communal and cosmic norms. This was observed in Tamar’s rape story (2 Samuel 13:19) which showed the damaging physical, social and psychological effects of rape (Brouer, 2014:24).

The researcher believes that this outrageous act is based on pure evil. This statement is supported by the KJV’s usage of the phrase “certain sons of Belial” in Judges 19:22. This phrase relates to something that is of an evil nature, ungodly and worthless (Bible Hub, 2021). From this translation one can imagine that not only were the men of Gibeon who raped the concubine, wicked, but that GBV is behaviour that is wicked and evil in society. Judges 19 is regarded as one of the texts of terror (Pitts, 2015:3). Tribble (1984:65) describes the story of the unnamed concubine in the Book of Judges as depicting “the horrors of male power, brutality, and triumphalism, of female helplessness, abuse, and annihilation.”

It is important to mention that feminist theologians such as Nadar (2008) and Claassens (2016) have provided a contextual analysis of Judges 19. However, due to the limitations of this study the researcher will not be discussing this in depth.

4.5.5. Revelation

As mentioned previously the book of Judges follows after Joshua (Longman III & Dillard, 2006:133) where the Israelites were faithful in their pursuit of God (Judges 2:7). However, in the book of Judges the trajectory changed as people were now beginning to be unfaithful to the Lord (Judges 2:10-11). Therefore, one can argue that in Judges the people had fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23) and they lived life as they pleased (Judges 21:25). Although God had raised up twelve judges to deliver the Israelites (Judges 3:1-16:31), some of them had their own human flaws (Longman & Dillard, 2006:133). Taking into consideration that the judges had their own flaws, it remains a reality that Israel was in need of a holy God to deliver them as He had done in Egypt. Therefore, the reality remains that God was the true deliverer of Israel.

Judges illustrates the impact that lawlessness (Burge & Hill, 2011:602) and sin (Hays & Duvall) can have on people. Hays and Duvall (2011:178) made the following argument:

Once people abandon worshipping God they usually quickly embrace the corrupt morals of their surrounding culture and spiral down morally and theologically until they hit rock- bottom with a splash.

This statement points to the importance of being rooted in Christ and seeking first the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33). These are central elements for humanity to pursue a life of holiness as God intended (Leviticus 19). An important realisation that is prevalent in Judges is that although the Israelites failed to live in accordance to godly standards (Hill & Walton, 2009:442), His love, mercy, grace and compassion for them still remained (2020:178). Therefore, the researcher stands in agreement with Longman III and Dillard (2006:178) who maintain that in Judges one learns that although we serve a God of justice, He is also gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love (Exodus 34:6; Psalm 51:1; Psalm 119:77; Psalm 145:8).

4.5.6. Integration

The story presented in Judges 19 is a reflection of the terror that continues to exist in modern days. In South Africa news relating to the rape and murder of women and children is common. The Judges 19 narrative reminds the researcher of the story of the brave young girl mentioned in chapter 2. Although this young girl endured constant abuse, her miracle is that even though she faced the valley of the shadow of death, she survived. She survived a very violent

strangulation, however, like the concubine, though not everyone experiences the miracle of survival. It is therefore imperative to respond to the call in Judges 19 which states that “*we must do something and speak up*” (Judges 19:30) about this societal evil that is so prevalent in our communities. The researcher thinks that the Levite sending out the concubine to be sexually abused metaphorically represents those in the church who condone the abuse of women and children. It is an unfortunate reality that the church often misinterprets verses on submission, but stories such as the one presented in Judges 19 are hardly even read in our churches (Pitts, 2015:3). Therefore, the researcher argues that in our current times Judges 19:30 serves as a call for the church to take up their rightful place and fight for the justice of those who are marginalized in society. Pitts (2015:3) feels that it is imperative for churches to stop avoiding sexually- explicit texts, because the story in Judges 19 is a representation of an issue that continues to persist in our communities. The numbers relating to sexual violence globally are staggering and it is without a doubt that within the context of the church there are victims and perpetrators who sit amongst us every Sunday (Masenya, 2012:213).

However, the unfortunate reality is that many of these victims are silenced and shamed even within the church (Pitts, 2015:3; Masenya, 2012:214). This statement is supported by Masenya (2012:212) who has made the following argument:

Our 21st century contexts continue to be typified by women’s invisibility, voicelessness and violent acts perpetrated against women and children... The escalating rate of sexual violence in South Africa is alarming. The increasing occurrence of rape is not only worrying; the fact that the assaults are also accompanied by vicious sadism and gross mutilation of women’s bodies, is of deep concern.

The researcher agrees with Masenya and further feels that it is worrying that most rapes are perpetrated by individuals known to the victim. Judges 19 never failed to show this just as the Levite willingly put his concubine in danger instead of protecting her. It is a sad reality that we continue to live in a world where the home and the church environment is not always a safe space for women and children in South Africa (Masenya, 2012:213).

4.6. Humanity as created in the image of God

Genesis 1:27 states that all of humanity has been created in the image of God. This Bible verse reads as follows: “*So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created*

them; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). From this portion of Scripture, it becomes evident that men and women have been created equal in the image of God. Hammett (2021:29) made the following argument with regards to the “*imago dei*”:

Most scholars affirm one of three major ways in which the image of God in humans has been understood, with differing combinations of the three forming a fourth approach. John Collins alliteratively calls them resemblance, representational, and relational; J. Wentzel van Huyssteen and Millard Erickson use the categories of substantive, functional, and relational; and Marc Cortez prefers structural, functional, and relational, and terms the fourth approach ‘multifaceted.

Furthermore, the researcher maintains that the driving forces of GBV and femicide are based on the argumentation that women are inferior to their male counterparts (Ifechelobi, 2014:17). As discussed in previous chapters the notion of viewing women as inferior to males is embedded in patriarchy. Furthermore, it has been suggested that some scholars have reconstructed the message of Genesis 1:27 and argue that women are not made in the image of God (Sande, 2019:6). The researcher believes that making such statements undermines the authority of what is written in the biblical text. Ideologies such as these pose a problem in society, because they often spread the wrong messages about women in society. The researcher believes that messages like these reduce the significance of women in our society. Furthermore, the researcher holds that this is a false belief that is trying to send a message that women are not worthy because they are not created in the image of God. This very sense of worth is often something that women struggle with after encountering violent and abusive situations. GBV has a debilitating effect on the self-worth of individuals and the most common question that victims often ask is “Who am I?” Most victims of GBV find themselves battling with this question because traumatic events often cause individuals to battle with existential threats (Brouer, 2014:24). According to Louw (2012:144) these existential threats are interconnected with feelings of “anxiety, guilt, despair, helplessness frustration and anger.” Although these are very common feelings for those who have experienced GBV, it is imperative for the church to share a message of hope with these individuals.

The researcher argues that part of being made in the image and likeness of God involves recognising that each individual, whether a member of the church or not, has a role to play in society. This role, seen from the perspective of the church, would involve being a light in the midst of the darkness. The researcher argues that being a true representative of God would involve using the Scriptures in such a way that they are used to build, encourage and create

hope in a world where brokenness is common ground instead of twisting the message of the Scriptures to condone unethical behaviour. A true essence of hope for abused survivors can be found the moment the church takes the responsibility to speak the truth about God over the lies that people have created to condone abusive behaviour. The researcher believes that when the church can start to proclaim truth over the lies that come with GBV and the lies that victims believe about themselves, people will be liberated from the emotional prison that comes with GBV. The reality that both the church and victims of GBV should recognise, is that where there is truth, there is freedom. Women and children who are battling with a negative self-worth and a sense of identity after having experienced GBV and femicide, should look at Genesis 1:27 and immediately realize that they are the children of the Almighty God. The researcher argues that the love of God for humanity is a central element in this verse. He created humanity in His image and likeness as a result of His unconditional love for humanity. This element of love continues to be reflected in Psalm 139 where the biblical text makes it evident that we serve a God who fully knows us and because of His great love for us, each individual has been “fearfully and wonderfully made” in His image (Psalm 139:14). Therefore, from these portions of Scripture one can believe that when God created mankind we were all created equal before the eyes of the Lord. No-one was made to be superior above another individual.

If we continue to live in a world where some individuals hold on to ideologies that women are not created in the image of God, then there is no doubt that women will continue to be treated as mere objects. These are the kinds of ideologies and belief systems that need to be challenged in our society.

To understand the notion of humanity as created in the image of God, it is vital to discuss what this means. According to Nelson (2014:6) it has been argued that being created in the image of God involves upholding “certain moral, ethical and intellectual abilities.” This statement is supported by Manzanga (2020:178) who holds that one of the aspects of being created in the image and likeness of God is to portray the same moral and spiritual capacity as our God. One can then believe that being created in the image of God means to be a representative of God on earth (Hammett, 2021:43). It involves being an ambassador for the kingdom of God. However, due to the sinfulness and brokenness of this world, mankind sometimes falls short and may fall since people are prone to misrepresenting God. The researcher holds that being created in the image of God means to show characteristics of mercy, grace, compassion, fair judgement and love towards others (Louw, 2012:159). This is an aspect that will be discussed further in chapter

five of this study where the question “how should the church respond to GBV and femicide in South Africa?” will be answered.

4.7. Conclusion

Chapter four of this research study was founded on the normative task of Osmer’s methodology. The focus here was on utilising Scripture as a means to understand the issue of GBV in our society. This was done through the method of exegesis as proposed by Stuart (2009). The discussion began with conceptualising the term exegesis. In this discussion it was found that exegesis is a method of interpreting Scripture to come to a broader understanding of the text. This was followed by a discussion focused on understanding GBV and femicide as an issue of morality. Exodus 20 formed the basis of this discussion. In this discussion it was found that the moral laws are a set of godly standards of living for humanity. It was also found that in the context of Exodus 20 GBV and femicide undermine the sixth commandment which instructs mankind not to commit murder.

The researcher continued the discussion by discussing biblical perspectives on the sexual assault of women. This was an important discussion in order to show the reader that the Bible does not remain quiet on issues affecting women today. The biblical text has countless stories and opinions on issues pertaining to the sexual abuse of women. This discussion was founded on Deuteronomy 22:25-29 and Leviticus 18. The researcher found that the biblical text stands firmly on holding perpetrators of sexual violence accountable for their actions. Therefore, it was understood that churches need to follow this biblical example and make accountability central as a response to GBV and femicide.

An exegetical study on Judges 19 was conducted. This was an important scriptural verse to analyse as it serves as a reflection of a struggle that continues to be prevalent in society. Through the analysis of this biblical text, it was found that GBV thrives in a patriarchal society and that victims are often left powerless and without a voice. Furthermore, it was found that the Judges 19 narrative is metaphoric to the reality that GBV is rooted in the abuse of power and various socio-economic factors. The researcher realised that the final verse in this narrative serves as a call for the church to take its rightful place and speak up for those who are marginalised in society.

Finally, the researcher conducted a discussion focused on humanity as created in the image of God. This discussion was based on Genesis 1:27. In this section it was held that both men and

women are created in the image of God. However, it was found that GBV and femicide are often rooted in the false ideology that women are inferior to their male counterparts. The researcher found that the message of Genesis 1:27 had been reconstructed in such a manner that the early church fathers like Augustine believed that women are not created in the image of God. This argument not only undermines what is written in the biblical text, it also reduces the significance of women in society. The researcher consequently feels that this ideology poses a threat on the self-worth and identity of women. From this argument it was found that GBV often poses a threat to the identity of those who encounter it. Furthermore, it was also found that GBV often results in individuals encountering an existential crisis where the question “Who am I” becomes central for victims of abuse who are trying to cope the with the trauma of their experiences.

Chapter 5: A pragmatic interpretation of GBV and femicide

5.1 Introduction

The central theoretical argument (CTA) of this study argues that the church can address the issue of GBV and femicide from a pastoral perspective. This is something that was established in the previous chapter where the researcher evaluated scriptural perspectives in order to understand GBV from a theological perspective. The CTA continued to maintain that the church can play a fundamental role in providing hope to individuals affected by GBV and femicide. Therefore, within the context of this chapter, the researcher will be answering the CTA in alignment with Osmer's (2008) final task.

As mentioned in the first chapter, the pragmatic task of Osmer's methodology is concerned with answering the question "How might we respond?" (Osmer, 2008:4). Chapter five of this study will investigate ways in which the church can respond to the GBV and femicide pandemic that is so prevalent in South Africa. The question to be answered in this section is "How can the church adequately respond to GBV and femicide from a South African perspective?"

The researcher will firstly conduct a discussion on understanding the role of the church in responding to GBV and femicide. As part of this discussion the researcher will make use of a biblical perspective where she will analyse what the Scriptures say about the church. This discussion will be followed by an answer to the question "Can the church effectively respond to GBV and femicide in South Africa?"

Lastly, the researcher will discuss pastoral guidelines that can be utilised when working with individuals affected by GBV and femicide within the pastorate. A hermeneutical framework will be used as a basic guideline that can be referred to when counselling victims and families that have been affected by GBV and femicide.

5.2. Understanding the role of the church in responding to GBV and femicide

As mentioned many times throughout this research study, the church has an important role to play in society (Le Roux & Bowers-Du Toit, 2017:35). This role includes the church responding to the various social issues that affect people in our modern day society. Within the context of this study, it is therefore imperative to understand the role of the church in responding to GBV and femicide in South Africa.

Before continuing with this discussion, the researcher will first examine the role of the church from a biblical perspective. In the biblical text it becomes evident that the church as the body of Christ is created with many parts that should stand in unity with one another (Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12; Colossians 3:15). Therefore, no-one who is part of the body of Christ should be treated as if they were of less value or unworthy. The church should approach everyone as equals. This is something that Jesus always exemplified during His life on earth (Breed *et al.*, 2008:49; Dugan, 2007:19). As is written in 1 Corinthians 12:25 all the parts of the body complement each other and work in unity. In this scriptural passage it becomes evident that the moment one part of the body suffers, the rest of the body suffers with it (1 Corinthians 12:26). The researcher believes that in the context of this study, 1 Corinthians 12:26 relates to the church getting to a place where it carries the burdens (Galatians 6:2) of those who are hurting, oppressed and marginalised in our communities (Manzanga, 2020:iv; Soards & Pursiful, 2015:311). The church as the body of Christ has been equipped with individuals who have unique gifts. These gifts including the “gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance *etc...*” (1 Corinthians 12:28) are essential in the ministry of pastoral care and counselling. Most individuals who reach out for pastoral care are often in need of healing and guidance to cope with pain in their lives. In the context of this study, the notion of healing and guidance are important in order for victims of GBV to find the help they need to heal and come out of abusive situations. This healing can be found through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

In Ephesians 4:25-26, the biblical text continues to mention that Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, gifts to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up and exalted.

From this text one can accept that servant leadership is one of the core callings of the church (Chung, 2011:162). The researcher realises that servant leadership requires of individuals to have the willingness to lay themselves down for others. According to Focht and Ponton (2015:1) servant leadership is rooted in having the willingness to first serve others. Along with this notion of serving others, Focht and Ponton continued to accept that servant leadership is rooted in the following characteristics: “valuing people, humility, listening, trust, caring, integrity, service, empowerment, serving others’ needs before one’s own, collaboration, love/unconditional love, and learning” (Focht & Ponton, 2015:1). However, it is vital to mention that this aspect of putting the needs of others before your own can sometimes be misused in the church. This is done when the church encourages women to stay in relationships where they experience violence (Sande, 2019:7). Women in the church are often encouraged

to submit and remain humble, putting the needs of their abuser above their own, since that suffering is the Christian calling.

Jesus, however, is the real embodiment of what servant leadership entails (Chung, 2011:159). He broadly portrayed this aspect to mankind during His life on earth. Jesus lived a life of service and putting others first (Chung, 2011:169). He cared for others, He empowered, He showed humility and He loved unconditionally irrespective of the background an individual came from. This statement is supported by Lyon (2010:245) who made the following argument:

Jesus lived among the abused and suffering of the world and died like one of them identifying with the lowliest of the earth. Jesus inhabits the broken souls and spirits of the abused, suffering with them, struggling for life against all forces of evil which prey upon them. Our hope is that after the abused and wounded people of today have a full experience and understanding of healing within their church life, they may gradually become aware that the humble, persistent spirit of Christ's love inhabits their own bodies and seeks to restore their souls (Lyon, 2010:245).

The researcher believes that this notion of servant leadership is in alignment with what true discipleship should entail. The church often limits discipleship to the salvation of people. Although this is an important aspect of the role of the church, the researcher accepts that discipleship does not end here. True discipleship is rooted in the greatest commandment which states that people need to love their neighbours as themselves (Matthew 22:26-40; Nzeyo, 2019:178). The Apostle Paul gave us the image that Christ loves the church so much that He himself cares for it (Ephesians 5:29; Breed *et al.*, 2008:84). From these portions of Scripture, we get a clear understanding of the role of the church in society. It has been argued that the societal role of the church involves being relational, tending to discipleship, caring, preaching and teaching sound doctrine (Reni *et al.*, 2020:45-49). Therefore, the big question remains: Can the church effectively respond to GBV and femicide in South Africa? This aspect will be discussed in the following section.

5.3. Can the church effectively respond to GBV and femicide in South Africa?

From the arguments made throughout this research study, one can believe that the church can indeed respond to the issue of GBV and femicide in South Africa. However, the limitation, as mentioned countless times, is based on most church leaders having limited to no training to respond to issues of GBV (Le Roux & Bowers-Du Toit, 2017:34). According to Sande (2019:7)

it has been seen that within the context of the AFM the culture of GBV is perpetuated through the manner they teach about marriage. This is a classic example of how church teachings can intensify the ever-increasing rates of violence in South Africa. Sande (2019:7) continued to mention being in a situation where the pastor made the following statement: “It does not matter even if you live with an abusive husband, what is important is that you have Jesus.” This is a very concerning statement, because marriage as an institution created by God is something that should exemplify the holiness of God (Breed *et al.*, 2008:150). If it is suddenly “okay” for one partner to be abusive, it takes away the central element of love that should be prevalent within the marriage institution. It also continues to undermine the loving nature of God. According to Breed *et al.*, (2008:93) the following argument was made:

A husband’s duty towards his wife in a society where discrimination against women is acceptable and common practice (is as follows): don't look down on her, pay her respect, because you know that before God you are co-heirs to life.

The researcher maintains that this response towards women should not be limited to the marriage relationship. It is a response that needs to be adopted by society at large. As a society and as the church, it is imperative that we treat women with respect, care and nurturing. Therefore, an important question to ask is: how should the church respond to the issue of GBV and femicide within their congregations?

The researcher claims that responding to GBV and femicide in South Africa requires of churches to challenge their theological perspectives. In most South African churches, the Bible is read in such a way that it perpetuates patriarchy (Manzanga, 2020:iii; Sande, 2019:6). According to Sande (2019:6), it has been presented that within the AFM the Bible is often read in such a way that men are made to be superior to women. As mentioned previously in this study the notion of men being regarded as superior to women is one of the leading causes of GBV (Woods, 2019:5). Therefore, it is imperative for the church to address inequality (Woods, 2019:1). This is important because if the church continues to fail here, more women will be susceptible to experiencing sexual violence even within the church (Sande, 2019:7). In the previous chapter the notion of mankind being created in the image of God (Plaskow, 2014:83) was mentioned. Therefore, the researcher holds that for the church to respond to the issue of GBV and femicide effectively it is imperative for the church to serve as ambassadors of Christ on earth. To be an ambassador of Christ, the church is required to imitate the character of Christ. As it is written in the biblical texts we need to be imitators of Christ (Ephesians 5:1-2;

1 Corinthians 11:1-6). The researcher believes that this is a key element in responding to the issue of GBV and femicide in our various churches, homes, schools *etc...*

The researcher reflected on the character of Christ towards women in the Bible and she found that Jesus was always compassionate, caring, empathetic and loving towards women (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2013:25; Henderson, 2004). Jesus was able to do this in a society where women were not respected and were often subjected to constant hate and oppression (Nzeyo, 2019:168; Plaskow, 2014:84). This argument is supported by Nzeyo (2019:165) who argued that “women play subservient roles, they are marginalized, oppressed and their rights violated deliberately.”

Through this reflection the researcher came to realise that responding to GBV and femicide effectively, would require the church to imitate the character of Christ. This can be done through portraying the images of God relating to and showing comfort, nurturing, justice, a listening ear, care *etc...* (Louw, 2012:159) to those who have been affected by violent crimes directly or indirectly. According to Breed (2008:49) it has been indicated that injustice towards women, goes against the heart of God. Breed (2008:49) states that God “does not tolerate any injustice in His Kingdom, including injustice on the grounds of gender. The researcher agrees with this statement and reiterates that the perfect example of this can be seen in the John 8 narrative where a woman was accused of committing adultery. In this narrative Jesus granted all those who are without sin to be the first to throw a stone at the woman. When no-one threw a stone and they left, Jesus spoke to this woman with compassion telling her that she was not condemned (John 8:1-11). Furthermore, it was indicated that “a Christian exists as God’s representative in social interaction with fellow-Christians and non-Christians for the purpose of establishing orderliness and the development of society” (Nzeyo, 2019:177).

Christ-centred education should be implemented in our churches. Through the utilisation of Christ-centred teachings in our churches, it is essential that people are not only taught about the ill-effects of GBV, but people will need to be taught about the negative impact of toxic masculinity in our communities. As mentioned many times before, accountability is central to the churches’ response to GBV and femicide in South Africa (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2013:221; Haddad, 2002:102). However, the researcher believes that accountability within the context of the church will become almost impossible to attain if churches continue to shy away from matters relating to GBV and femicide. The notion of accountability would require of church leaders to view every member of the church and the broader community with fairness and equality. Therefore, if needed, church leaders should assist victims and families who encounter GBV by reporting these cases to the police. The church should also extend emotional

and spiritual support to victims and families whether or not their cases reach the courtroom. According to Sande (2019:7-8), it has been argued that one of the limitations of the church has to do with the fact that they are often unlikely to report cases of GBV, because it is seen as a private matter. The researcher argues that continuing to see GBV as a private matter is rooted in a culture that seeks to protect the perpetrators of violent crimes. It is, therefore, imperative for the church to take action and report any known cases of GBV within their congregations.

Due to the complexity of an issue such as GBV (Manzanga, 2020:41), the researcher believes that churches need to avoid shying away from working with secular organizations in the fight against violence. The reason for this idea stems from the reality that GBV requires to be fought from a rather holistic perspective (Le Roux & Loots, 2017:734). However, Le Roux and Loots (2017:737) maintain that:

“Faith leaders and communities may distrust anything that they perceive as having a feminist agenda, and faith groups are often uncoordinated and hesitant to engage with non-faith actors.”

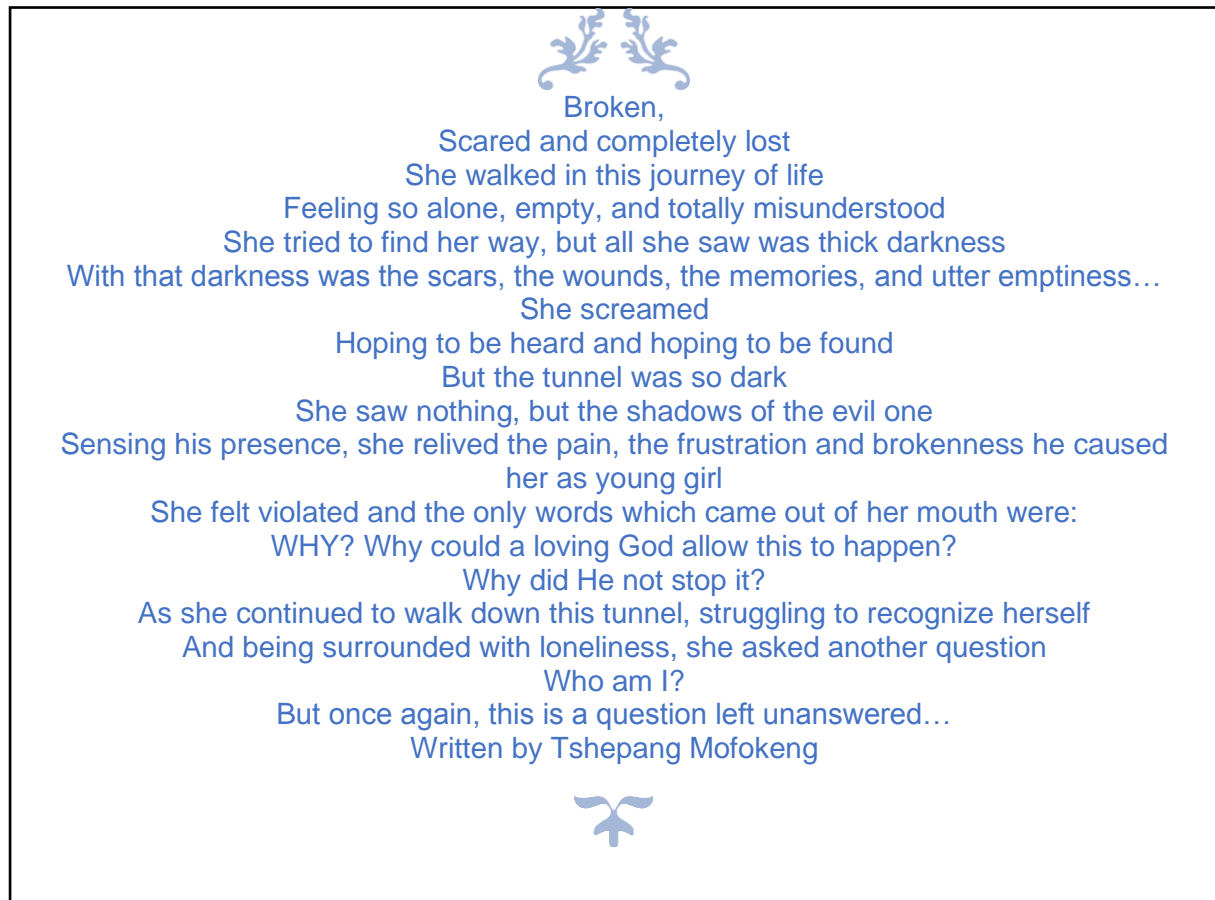
GBV is a societal problem that does not discriminate against individuals. As a result, it requires all individuals to be bold and courageous to fight this societal evil. It is by doing this that we can start to see change happen in our communities, families, churches and the world at large. The researcher also maintains that it is through Jesus and the guidance of the Holy Spirit that churches can be equipped with further tools to effectively respond to dealing with GBV and femicide. Therefore, in the words of Hebrews 12:

Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart (Hebrews 12:1-3).

5.4. Pastoral guidelines for victims of GBV and femicide

There is a set of proposed pastoral guidelines which can be used as basic tools to respond to the issue of GBV and femicide in South Africa. However, before discussing these guidelines the researcher would like to include a piece for reflection based on the story of the young girl

mentioned in chapter two. In this reflectional piece, the researcher wrote a poem that is aligned to the young girl's emotions after having experienced GBV:



From the scenario presented above the researcher argues that pastoral care and counselling needs to be of paramount importance with the context of the church. Such an approach would be useful in bringing about transformative change for victims of GBV. By transformative change the researcher refers to utilising an approach that will allow victims of GBV to find hope and healing in all aspects of their lives. These include and are not limited to finding healing in their spirit, soul and bodies. The researcher believes that the following model can be used as a basic hermeneutical framework when working with individuals who have been affected by GBV and femicide. The researcher also holds that in the context of pastoral counselling, this framework will need to be worked on in steps. Therefore, it would require the counsellee to commit to multiple sessions in order for this approach to be effective.

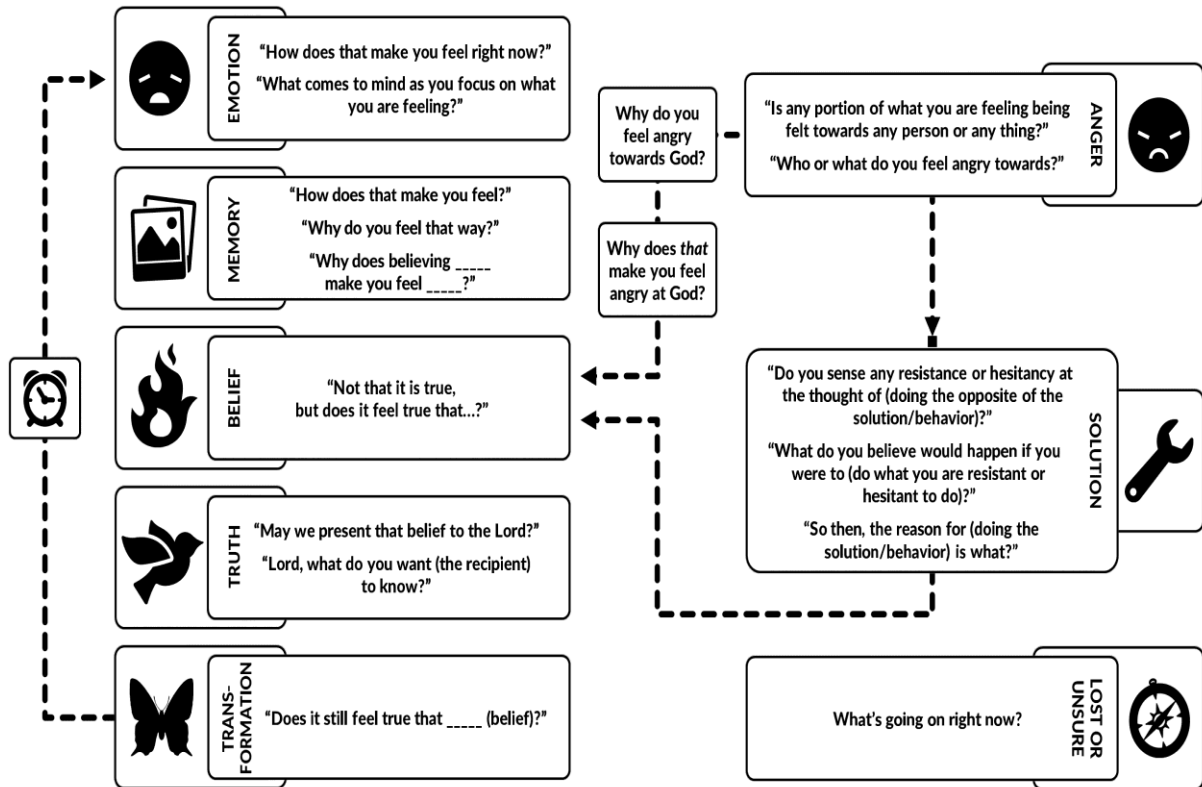


Figure 5.1: A pastoral framework for GBV (Transformation Prayer Ministry, 2016).

The pastoral guidelines which should be utilised when working with victims of GBV should involve taking the following steps in the various sessions:

1. Working through the emotions experienced by the counselee

The goal here is for the pastoral counsellor to try and gain an understanding of the emotions of the counselee. GBV often leads individuals to deal with a lot of emotions. As mentioned in chapter two these emotions can range from a sense of betrayal, sadness, anger with God and the perpetrators and grief, to feelings of guilt and shame (Muluneh, 2020:14) If one reflected on the poem above, the pastoral counsellor would need to help the young girl to overcome the feelings of hopelessness, powerlessness and emptiness that she is experiencing. Working through each of these feelings will be the starting-point that can lead victims of GBV to a place of hope and liberation in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, an important question to ask is: how can one work through this emotional dimension? The researcher believes that making use of an emotion-scale exercise would

be useful in gaining some understanding of the counselee’s emotions and the intensity of his/her emotions. It has been maintained that “mood scales could have utility in assessing mood disorder symptoms” (Wong *et al.*, 2021:529). Such an exercise in the counselling-setting would require asking the counselee a question such as “On the scale of one to ten, what are you feeling? One being very happy or calm and ten being very upset.” The following image gives a brief overview of how the emotion scale works in relation to stress and anxiety.

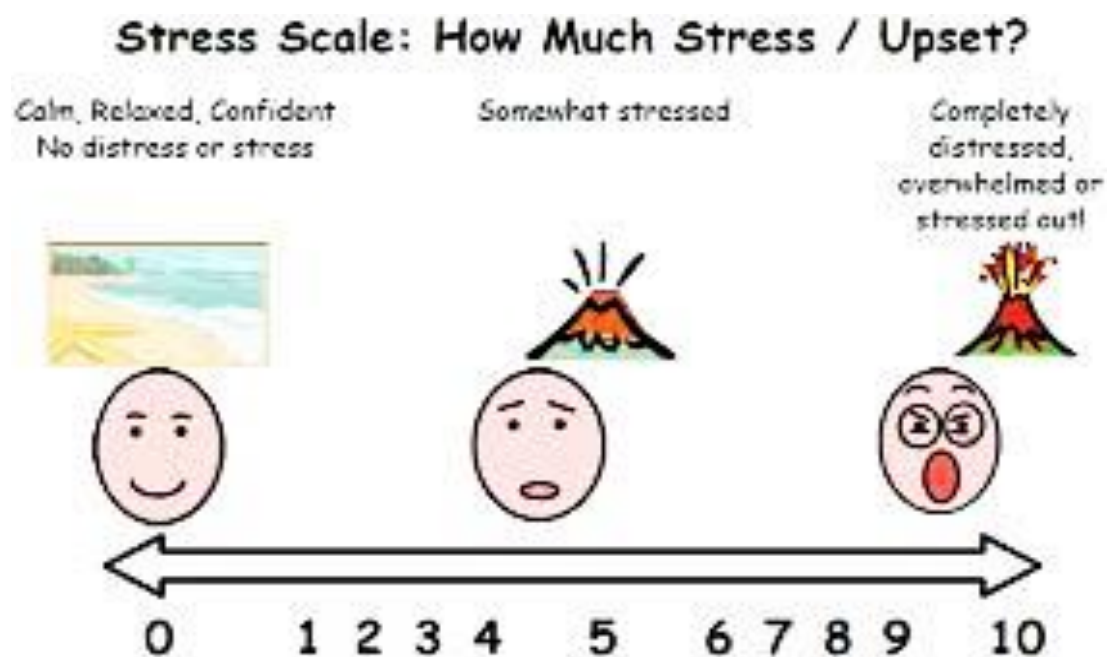


Figure 5:2: Emotion scale (Wong *et al.*, 2021:531).

Once the emotions of the counselee have been identified, it is imperative to ask the counselee to tell one (the counsellor) more about his/her identified emotions. The pastoral counsellor can ask a question like “Tell me more about the feeling of helplessness or anxiety that you are experiencing.” This question can make way for the counselee to open up in depth not only about the specific emotions, but through this question the counselee might relate specific emotions or certain memories or experiences of the abuse. When the counselee speaks about memories of the abuse it would then be useful to ask the core question presented in the diagram above, which is “How does --- make you feel?” (Lioi, 2018). For homework the pastoral counsellor can assign the counselee the task to write and track down any emotions – say, for a week or two. It is also important to ask the counselee to take note of events during the week which might trigger certain negative emotions.

2. Working through the memories of the counselee

In the case of a traumatic event like GBV and femicide, it is a normal reaction to struggle with the memories of the events (Brewin, 2015:1). However, it is important to mention that this may not be true for all victims of GBV as everyone's experiences are different. Furthermore, everyone copes differently with the pain that comes with GBV. Some victims might be prone to experiencing dissociation while others might experience the distressing memories through PTSD (Rees *et al*, 2014:6). In the poem and in chapter two it was mentioned that the little girl struggled with PTSD. Therefore, in this case the use of an interdisciplinary approach is essential. In the case of this little girl, it would be beneficial to work with mental health professionals like psychologists and medical doctors.

Furthermore, as part of this process the pastoral care giver would need to allow victims of GBV to speak about their memories in a safe, caring and loving therapeutic space. Doing this not only allows individuals to talk through the painful aspects of their trauma. This can then allow for inner healing to start taking place. For those struggling with PTSD, the memories are often continuous and debilitating (Ashley *et al*, 2013:1; Mitchell, 2014:121). Therefore, a counselee who is experiencing constant memories of his/her abuse would often be encouraged to keep a journal and practise other mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises. The researcher would encourage counselees to participate in activities like listening to worship music and meditating on the Word of God. The researcher believes that this process would be useful in helping counselees shift their focus away from crippling memories to focusing on God.

When working with victims of GBV it would be beneficial to utilise a narrative approach as the form of counselling. Opening up about abusive situations can be a very difficult process, so story-telling can create an atmosphere where individuals are open (to suggestions, ideas, advice, etc.?) in the counselling setting. The researcher holds that story-telling can be a powerful and liberating way of telling one's story of past trauma (Davies & Dreyer, 2014:6). One can see how making use of the narrative approach in counselling can be a helpful tool in helping counselees find their voice (Red Oak Recovery, 2021). This is essentially helpful when working with victims of GBV, because abuse tends to silence individuals (Masenya, 2012:206). According to Saint Arnault (2017:4) it has been proposed that "the psychotherapeutic use of narrative

is an intervention to promote healing and recovery.” Furthermore, it has been stated that a narrative approach is useful in: “bringing relief from emotional and psychological pain, anguish and suffering, and promoting the coping with violent crime and other abuses” (Saint Arnault, 2017:5).

In the context of a counselling session, it would be beneficial to help the counselee find “triumph over trauma” (Metcalf, 2017:63). In the book *solution focused narrative therapy* Metcalf (2017:63) maintains that the notion of “triumph over trauma” is especially useful when working with individuals who have been affected by GBV. As part of this narrative therapy approach Metcalf (2017) proposes asking the counselee to tell a story in response to the following questions:

- “Think back to a time when you went through a difficult challenge. What were the effects of that challenge on your life?” (Metcalf, 2017:73).
- “How would you describe the way you got through the challenge?” (Metcalf, 2017:74).
- “What would others say you did that brought you through the challenge?” (Metcalf, 2017:74).
- “What else?” (Metcalf, 2017:74).
- “Perhaps you have a current challenge. Glancing over your answers to this exercise, what might you apply for a few days to stand up to the challenge so that you experience life as you desire?” (Metcalf, 2017:74).

The researcher believes that making use of this approach will be useful in helping the counselee reflect on his/her struggles and realise how far along the journey he/she has come. Furthermore, as a homework exercise the pastoral counsellor can give the counselee a homework activity where the life story is written down from a past, present and future perspective. What the researcher hopes to achieve with this is that the homework activity should reflect the life story of the counselee from when the abuse began, where he/she currently is in his /her life and it should reflect the future goals that the counselee would like to achieve.

3. Work through understanding the beliefs that victims of GBV often have about themselves and about their experiences

GBV often leads individuals to feeling as if the abuse was their fault or something they deserved (Sinko & Saint Arnault, 2020:1617). Furthermore, victims of sexual assaults

tend to feel as if something is wrong with them (Denton, 2010:274). At other times victims tend to define themselves based on their traumatic experiences. It is important that the pastoral counsellor works with the victims to challenge these beliefs (Pretorius, 2021:4). The individual would need to be pointed towards the truth of what and who God says they are. However, the researcher acknowledges that leading these individuals to the truth is highly dependent on the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is through the ministry of the Holy Spirit that individuals can experience a changed perspective of any negative and limiting beliefs that they might have about themselves.

In John 14 the biblical text mentions that the Holy Spirit is the “Spirit of truth” (John 14:17). The researcher holds that it is out of this ministry of truth that victims of GBV can be set free and liberated from debilitating ideologies and beliefs. The researcher argues that this is an important aspect towards healing because where there is truth, there is freedom. These words are also reiterated in 2 Corinthians 3:17 which states that “Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom.”

In pastoral counselling the pastoral care- giver would need to ask the counselee to complete the following sentences:

- “This is what I believe about my experiences...”
- “This is what I believe about myself...”

After the counselee has identified beliefs, it would be useful to incorporate the scale factor in order to measure at which level the counselee holds his or her beliefs. This activity will be useful in order to identify any debilitating beliefs that the counselee has and to challenge these with the truth. After identifying negative beliefs, the pastoral counsellor should lead the counselee to speak truth into the negativity. The following is an example of what this task would entail:

The abuse was my fault.	The abuse was never my fault. It was outside of my control and there is nothing I could have done to stop it. I did not deserve it and I did not ask for it.
I feel unworthy.	I am worthy and I am loved.

4. Leading the counselee to the truth of God

In the context of pastoral guidance, it is imperative to mention that the Word of God is part in the counselling sessions (Pretorius, 2021:6). GBV often leads individuals to go through an existential crisis where they often question their identity, their experiences and the very nature of God. This is something which is seen in the poem above. Here the little girl was asking the question “why”, she was looking for answers pertaining to why she had gone through violence, why a good God allows bad things to happen to good people... Furthermore, she asked a very common question relating to identity which is “Who am I?” These are often very difficult questions which cannot be answered with our human intellect. They are questions which require the individuals to go back to the Word of God for answers as our identity and the true essence of our being, lies in Christ (Lack, 2017:iv).

The researcher maintains that an existential crisis is a normal response to trauma. In his book “*Network of the human soul*” Louw (2012:82-83) notes that the most common existential threats that people are prone to experiencing after a traumatic event include anxiety, guilt, despair, helplessness, vulnerability, disillusionment, frustration and anger. The researcher believes that these are amongst the most common feelings that victims of GBV and their families need to find healing for. As a result, it is imperative for the pastoral counsellor to lead the individual to the truth by making use of Scripture and identifying what the Bible says about these feelings. Freedom from feelings of guilt and shame is essential for victims of violence to experience hope and transformative healing that comes from Jesus Christ (Beste, 2005:97; Groth, 2015:2). Lyon (2010:240) adds that:

In order for wounded people to begin a life in Christ they must first experience the healing love of Christ that can be found in those churches that intentionally choose to provide a healing environment (Lyon, 2010:240).

The question then becomes: how can a healing environment for victims of GBV be created within the context of the church? The researcher realises that churches can create safe, non-judgemental spaces for women and children who are victims of GBV. These safe spaces are also of importance for families who have lost loved ones as a result of GBV and femicide. A safe space can be created through the implementation of support groups within the church. In these support groups the church can work with individuals who are from different multidisciplinary backgrounds and who can guide those who

have been exposed to GBV throughout their journey to healing. Churches can also become safe- houses for those who go through GBV in their daily lives. The researcher acknowledges that these safe houses should not only be limited for congregants. Due to the missional calling of the church, the church should also reach out to members of the broader community who are affected by GBV and femicide.

The notion of truth should remain central to the teachings of the church. What the researcher means by this is that the church needs to be interpret the Scriptures in context. Doing this can help to point victims of GBV to the truth of what God says about them and about their experiences. Throughout the writing of this section of the study the researcher was reminded of a question that someone, who had gone through an abusive situation, once asked her: “What does God see when He looks at me?” To answer this question, the truth would be that God saw someone who is loveable, worthy, beautiful, cherished, pure, irresistible enough and someone who matters to God, irrespective of their life experiences. The researcher also believes that for someone like the little girl in the poem who feels alone or who feels as if God has never protected him/her, the truth is that God was always present for her even though it did not feel like it. God is always with His children even in the midst of their pain. He is a God who keeps His promises and who never leaves nor forsakes His flock (Deuteronomy 31:6; Hebrews 13:5).

This step can be a continuation of what was started in step three. As mentioned above in step three it would be beneficial to identify beliefs that one has about oneself and one’s life experiences. In this step the counselee would then need to measure those beliefs with the truth found in the Word of God. A necessary exercise in this step would be to find a Bible verse for each negative belief that the counselee has. Therefore, for homework the pastoral counsellor can challenge the counselee to write down and memorise verses of what God says about his/her feelings and experiences. An example of what this task would entail may be as follows:

I am feeling anxious.	2 Timothy 1:7 states that God has not given me the spirit of fear, but He gave me power, love and a sound mind.
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5. Transformation

Transformation is a necessary part of the counselling process. This transformation is found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Forster, 2015:3-4). It is only through the power of Christ that true healing and wholeness can be found. Therefore, in order for transformative change to occur, it is imperative for the church to lead those who have encountered trauma before the face of God. As part of this stage, the pastoral counsellor would need to stand back and trust in the power of the Holy Spirit to work healing and restoration within the individual. This process would involve making use of prayer within the pastorate as a point of departure. In Psalm 34 the following is stated: “The righteous cry out and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the broken- hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit” (Psalm 34:17-18).

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher focused on the final task of Osmer’s methodology. The goal of this chapter was to focus on answering the question “How can the church effectively respond to GBV and femicide in South Africa?” To answer this question, the researcher worked on three main topics:

- The researcher discussed the role of the church by conducting a scriptural analysis on what it entails to be the church of Christ. As part of this discussion, it was clear that the church is called to imitate the character of Christ, to serve others and to identify with others in their suffering.
- The researcher then went on to discuss whether the church could effectively respond to GBV and femicide in SA. Here the researcher found that the church does indeed have a role to play in our societies and that it can implement strategies that can be useful in GBV and femicide response. These strategies include and are not limited to utilising the correct application of the Scriptures, being ambassadors of Christ on earth, addressing inequality and challenging the culture of patriarchy and toxic masculinity that is so prevalent in South African communities. Furthermore, it was found that it would be useful for churches to work hand-in-hand with secular organizations as part of an interdisciplinary team that strives to fight GBV in our communities

- The researcher identified a set of pastoral guidelines that can be applied when working with victims of GBV to find hope, freedom and healing in Christ. These guidelines are dependent on utilising a transformative hermeneutical framework. This transformative change will require pastoral counsellors to identify the emotions of counselees, to work through memories, to help the counselees identify debilitating beliefs and leading the counselee to the truth of God's Word.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Introduction

The final chapter of this study is aimed at linking the findings from all the previous chapters into one literary unit. Therefore, the researcher will first discuss the individual chapter findings. This will then be followed by discussing recommendations for future research.

6.2 Conclusions

6.2.1 Conclusions based on chapter one

Chapter one serves as an introductory chapter of the research study. In this chapter, the core focus of the research “A pastoral study on gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa” was introduced. As part of this introduction the key concepts, the background and motivation of the study, the central theoretical argument (CTA) as well as the methodology were stated. The problem statement of the study indicates that GBV and femicide are very prevalent issues in South Africa. It was also noted that GBV is a complex and multifaceted issue which needs to be addressed holistically. Part of this holistic approach includes involving the church to help in the fight against GBV and femicide. Therefore, it was indicated that it is imperative to involve various stakeholders such as organisations and churches to work together as a united front to fight this societal evil. The CTA of this study suggested that the church can address the issue of GBV and femicide from a pastoral perspective. The researcher utilised the methodology of Osmer (2008:4) as the foundation to answering the research questions. The *descriptive-empirical* task aimed at investigating the contexts of GBV and femicide. This was done through conducting a thorough analysis of scientific literature, books on current affairs and newspaper articles. The aim of the *interpretive* task was to develop an understanding of interdisciplinary perspectives related to GBV. As part of this task the researcher resorted to making use of journals, articles, theses and dissertations from interdisciplinary fields such as psychology.

The *normative* task was founded on a biblical foundation. This was essentially important, since the Word of God is a central point of departure in the field of pastoral care and counselling, for the Scripture is the authoritative Word of God. As part of this task the researcher identified relevant scriptural references which can be applied to gaining a biblical perspective of GBV. The Scripture would then be analysed through the method of exegesis as proposed by Stuart

(2008:139). The researcher made use of academic journals, Bible dictionaries and commentaries to answer the research question related to the normative task. The *pragmatic* task of this study is in alignment with the CTA where the goal was to investigate the role of the church in responding to GBV from a South African perspective. In order to adequately respond to the research question, the researcher made use of a hermeneutical framework that can be used to guide those affected by GBV and femicide in South Africa.

6.2.2. Conclusions based on the descriptive-empirical task

Before answering the statement proposed by the CTA, it was important to identify the context of GBV and femicide from a South African perspective. Therefore, as part of the descriptive-empirical task the researcher answered the question: “What is the situation, episodes and contexts of GBV and femicide in South Africa.” This was done through contextualising the concept of GBV. Through this contextualisation it was found that GBV is a violation of the basic human rights of women and children in South Africa. It was found that it takes away the freedom of women and children to feel safe in their respective environments. Research showed that in South Africa GBV continues to be a problem because in some cultures toxic cultural norms continue to be practised. A lot of children face the risk of experiencing GBV as a result of forced marriages. GBV also poses a threat to women’s health. This is seen in the manner in which GBV exposes women and children to unwanted pregnancies and various STIs and STDs. GBV is one of the leading causes for the ever-increasing HIV/AIDS epidemic in South Africa.

In chapter two it was noted that the increasing rate of GBV-related crimes poses a threat to South Africa’s ability to achieving the SDGs by the year 2030. It was argued that for the SDGs to be achieved it is imperative to bridge the gap between cultural customs and the law, because these two aspects are often contradictory to each other. Furthermore, research showed that it is vital to challenge stereotypes, attitudes and perceptions on the role of men and women in society. It is also important to challenge the discriminatory views that result in the murders and rapes of those who identify as part of the LGBTQ community.

The study showed the prevalence of GBV within the South African context by means of various graphs and tables. These graphs and tables were used as a way to show the current trends of GBV in SA which was important in order to show the extent of the problem in South Africa. However, the limitation is that these graphs and tables do not show the full extent of South Africa’s problem with GBV and femicide. This is due to the under-reporting of GBV- related

cases. Furthermore, the study did not show trends involving the cases of GBV perpetrated against men due to the focus being solely on women and children.

Research has shown that the church is not exempt from the issue of GBV and femicide in the country, for it has been noted that one in three women have experienced some form of GBV in their lifetime. It becomes evident that amongst these statistics some of these women and children, who are battling with GBV, are members of the church. It was also found that church leaders and members of the church are not exempt from perpetrating GBV-related crimes themselves. This issue continues to be perpetuated as a result of spiritual abuse where the Bible is used to manipulate women to submit to their male counterparts. This notion of submission often results in cycles of abuse.

As part of this chapter the researcher then developed a hermeneutical framework that investigated the effects of GBV on the three dimensions of humanity. Through this hermeneutical framework it was found that GBV affects the spirit, soul and body dimensions of mankind.

6.2.3. Conclusions based on the interpretive task

In the third chapter the researcher made use of the interpretive task to answer the research question. The goal in this chapter was to explore interdisciplinary approaches which can be applied in order to understand the situations, episodes and contexts which can result in the perpetration of GBV and femicide in South Africa. The researcher made use of interdisciplinary perspectives from the field of psychology in order to answer the research question. The first theory that was discussed was Bandura's social learning theory. As part of this discussion, it was found that individuals are likely to observe, imitate and model aggressive behaviour from their respective environments. If an individual experiences or observes violent behaviour and it becomes reinforced they are most likely to project this violent behaviour towards others. Furthermore, it was found that exposure to violence through various media sources often desensitizes individuals and puts them at risk of perpetrating violent behaviour towards others.

The second psychological theory that was explored was Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. It was argued that sociocultural perspectives play a role in the perpetration of violence and furthermore, it was argued that GBV and femicide are influenced by personal, relational, communal and societal factors. These factors are comprised of elements such as education,

unemployment, substance abuse and dysfunctional family backgrounds to name a few. The limitation of this study is that the researcher did not explore other interdisciplinary perspectives from other fields such as sociology and social work. Although the researcher believes that the theories provided give a sufficient background for understanding the motivations for GBV, it could be beneficial for other interdisciplinary perspectives to be explored. Scholars such as Buiten and Naidoo (2020), Ahmed *et al.*, (2020), Peretz and Vidmar (2021) have looked at the sociological perspectives to GBV.

Due to the theological nature of this study, it was important for the researcher to investigate the biblical perspectives which play a role in GBV perpetration. The first perspective indicated that the sinfulness and brokenness of the world perpetuates the culture of violence. As part of this discussion, it was found that modern day society has flawed perspectives on issues relating to love and sexuality and that these are the driving causes of GBV as they lead to the abuse and objectification of women. Another theological problem that leads to GBV and femicide is the misinterpretation of Scripture. It was found that wrong hermeneutical and exegetical approaches play a role in the ever increasing GBV cases in the country. The Bible is often used as a tool to encourage women to stay in abusive relationships and to blame women for the fall of man. Through the teaching of false doctrines, it has been indicated that women deserve to be abused because they are guilty for the fall of man. However, the reality remains that such doctrines deviate from the truth of God. A godly perspective of the role of women asserts that women are worthy and deserving of love and respect. The researcher holds that all false doctrines on the role of women in society need to be challenged and replaced with godly perspectives. False doctrines and the misinterpretation of Scripture tend to lead to destructive patterns of abuse. Scripture needs to be read within the correct context and this is something that involves trusting in the Holy Spirit for discernment and revelation regarding the messages portrayed in Scripture.

6.2.4. Conclusions based on the normative task

In chapter four the researcher answered the question “What is the role of Scripture in addressing GBV and femicide and how does Scripture encourage appropriate responses of GBV from the church?” In order to answer this research question the researcher made use of the normative task of Osmer’s methodology. This task takes into consideration that Scripture is the authoritative Word of God. The aim of this chapter was to explore biblical perspectives on issues relating to GBV. Research has shown that GBV is a moral issue that goes against the

nature and character of God and that the biblical text commands people not to murder in both the Old (Exodus 20:13) and the New (Matthew 5:21; Romans 13:9) Testaments. Research found that choosing to act against this commandment poses a threat to the sanctity of life. Furthermore, choosing to take a life is not only immoral behaviour that goes against the moral standards of God for humanity, but it also goes against the individual's right to life.

The researcher also investigated biblical perspectives on the sexual assault of women. As part of this discussion, it was found that the biblical text speaks out on the issue of rape. Deuteronomy 22:25-29 mentions that rape is a violation of those who encounter it. In this part of Scripture, it was evident that rape is equated to murder and that the biblical text regards the accountability of those who perpetrate crimes such as rape seriously. Leviticus 18 regards sexual behaviour within family systems as unethical. The view provided in Leviticus 18 was of importance considering that most sexually-related crimes are committed by people known to the victim. It was then also argued that to overcome GBV in SA it is important to also address it from a familial level. GBV goes against the holy and loving nature of God and is self-seeking and dishonours those who are victims

The core element of this chapter was the exegetical analysis of Judges 19. Although the Bible contains various stories of women who were raped, the story of Judges 19 remains central to this study because it involves the rape and murder of a woman. This is the terror and oppression that countless women and children in South Africa go through in their daily lives. In South Africa news involving the rapes and murders of women and children flood the headlines daily. Judges 19:30 presents a solution for humanity to get up and do something to fight this culture of violence against women and children. Part of this response involves taking the courage to speak up about this horrendous crime. This is not only a societal issue, but churches need to stand united and use their voices to speak up against GBV. Churches need to use their God-given authority to speak up and help fight for the justice of those who are oppressed and marginalised in society.

The researcher also discussed the concept of mankind being created in the image of God. Research shows that this biblical metaphor points to the fact that both men and women are equal before God. As a result, women should not be regarded as inferior or deserving of abuse by their male counterparts, because they are worthy in the eyes of God.

6.2.5. Conclusions based on the pragmatic task

Chapter five of this study was written in alignment with the pragmatic task of Osmer's methodology. The goal of this chapter was to answer the question "How can the church adequately respond to GBV and femicide from a South African perspective?" In order to answer the research question, the researcher discussed the role of the church in responding to GBV and femicide. This discussion involved understanding the role of the church from a biblical perspective. It was found that the church as the body of Christ should stand in unity to challenge issues pertaining to inequality and the abuse of women and children within the broader community. The church needs to be a place where those who are hurting can find refuge, healing and guidance to thrive throughout life. It was indicated that the church needs to portray servant leadership. Servant leadership within the context of the church requires faith leaders to be willing to serve and put the needs of others before their own. Furthermore, the church needs to show values such as humility, integrity, care and love to women and children who have been affected by GBV. Doing this would be part of discipleship and would reflect the character of Christ on earth.

The second part of this discussion involved investigating the question "Can the church effectively respond to GBV and femicide in South Africa?" To answer this question, the researcher maintained that the church could respond to the issue of GBV and femicide. However, in order to do this effectively the church would need to challenge its doctrines. Church teachings need to be rooted in sound doctrine in order to start seeing effective change with regards to GBV in society. Furthermore, it was held that the church needs to portray qualities such as compassion, love, care and empathy towards women and children who have fallen prey to GBV. Applying a godly approach and having a positive attitude can change the trajectory of how women are seen in society. Therefore, this can be the first critical step towards GBV and femicide prevention in South Africa. The church should strive to collaborate with various organisations in order to respond to GBV effectively and holistically.

Finally, the researcher answered the research question and the CTA through discussing pastoral guidelines for victims of GBV and femicide. These guidelines were proposed through the usage of a hermeneutical framework that strives to bring victims of GBV from a place of brokenness to healing through Jesus Christ. The goal of this hermeneutical framework is to bring transformative change into the lives of those who have been affected by GBV and femicide in South Africa. This framework was founded on the tackling of five key elements. These elements comprise of emotions, memory, belief, truth and transformation. As part of this

discussion, it was held that true transformation and healing can only be found through the finished work of Christ. The pastoral counsellor or faith leader serves as a vessel to facilitate the counsellee's approach to the hope which is found in Jesus Christ.

6.3. Recommendations

The researcher realises that there is an existing gap in current literature and in this study where focus on GBV is solely on female victims. It is, however, a reality that male victims of GBV do exist. Therefore, the researcher recommends that future research on GBV should investigate this problem from a masculine perspective as well. The researcher feels that doing this will help in bridging the gap between finding sustainable and holistic responses to GBV prevention. If we can strive to tackle the problem from a masculine perspective and encourage more men to speak out about their experiences of GBV, it could ensure that more men are helped and it could be the stepping-stone towards ending the cycle of violence in South Africa.

Furthermore, for future research the researcher would like to study GBV from the perspective of families. A lot of families lose loved ones as a result of GBV each year and it would be beneficial to gain an understanding of the impact of GBV from a familial perspective. Another gap is that GBV research hardly focuses on the perpetrators. This current study has attempted to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable for their actions. Therefore, for future research it would be beneficial to develop models of counselling aimed specifically at perpetrators of GBV. These models should serve as tools to not only counsel and rehabilitate perpetrators for their actions, but they should be used as a tool to help perpetrators avoid being multiple offenders of GBV-related crimes.

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